



Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative 2011 Annual Report



In 2011, the annual Bowker Creek Celebration was held at Browning Park, co-hosted by BCI and the Camosun Community Association.

Goals

The BCI is based on the four goals from the watershed plan:

Goal 1: Individuals, community and special interest groups, institutions, governments and businesses take responsibility for actions that affect the watershed.

Goal 2: Manage flows effectively.

Goal 3: Improve and expand public areas, natural areas and biodiversity in the watershed.

Goal 4: Achieve and maintain acceptable water quality in the watershed.

The BCI Partners

District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, Capital Regional District, University of Victoria, Friends of Bowker Creek Society, Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association, Camosun Community Association, North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association, Community Association of Oak Bay, Urban Development Institute, Tri-Eagle Development Corporation and members of the public.

Background

The Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative (BCI) is a coalition of communities, governments and institutions working together to protect and enhance the ecological, social and economic health of the Bowker Creek watershed. The BCI was established in 2004 following the completion and adoption of the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan by the District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, the Capital Regional District (CRD) and community groups.

The BCI is led by a consensus-based steering committee chaired by the CRD. The committee's role is to implement the watershed plan. Another subcommittee focuses on outreach activities. A part-time coordinator at the CRD initiates and manages projects, seeks funding and organizes the BCI. This position is funded by the partner municipalities of

Saanich (59%), Victoria (23%) and Oak Bay (18%). This is the eighth annual report since the establishment of the BCI.

Accomplishments

Truly a watershed year for BCI, 2011 saw the three member municipalities endorse or accept the *Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100 Year Action Plan to Restore the Bowker Creek Watershed*. The implementation of the *Blueprint* got off to an impressive start with BCI, in partnership with the District of Oak Bay, receiving \$738,000 from the Federal and Provincial Gas Tax Innovations Fund, via the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, to restore Bowker Creek where it divides the properties of Oak Bay High and the Oak Bay Recreation Centre. Welcome to Urban Development Institute and Tri-Eagle Development Corporation as new members of the BCI Steering Committee.

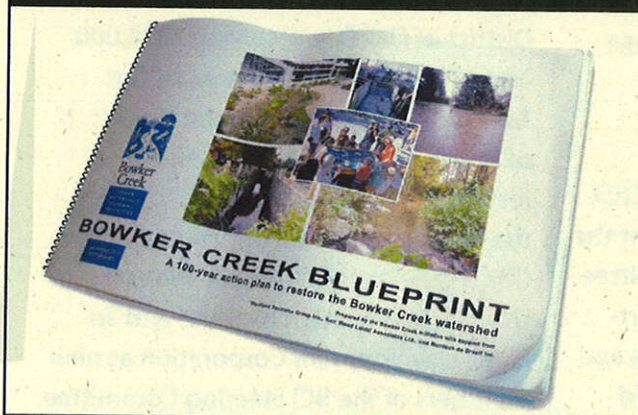


Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-year action plan to restore the Bowker Creek watershed

The *Bowker Creek Blueprint* is a first-of-its-kind, opportunistic plan that lays out a number of principles of integrated watershed management and specific reach-by-reach actions that the municipalities and community groups can undertake to improve the Bowker Creek watershed over time. The *Blueprint* is a version of an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan unique to the BCI. The *Blueprint* offers ways to deal with the flooding, water pollution and habitat loss that Bowker Creek has suffered due to urbanization. It also provides recommendations for a greenway corridor and pockets of nature within the urban core of Greater Victoria.

In 2011, with the acceptance by all three municipalities of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-year action plan to restore the Bowker Creek watershed*, the BCI moved forward with implementation, focusing on key short-term actions and integrating the principles of integrated watershed management.

Development of the Bowker Creek Blueprint was a major milestone for the BCI and will support stewardship efforts in the years to come.



Highlights of *Bowker Creek Blueprint* implementation activities include:

- Completed conceptual restoration designs for Bowker Creek where it runs between Oak Bay high school and the Oak Bay recreation centre. The BCI, in partnership with Oak Bay, received a \$738,000 grant to restore this section and to support student involvement in designing the creek and curriculum development, ensuring that students are learning about the importance of healthy functioning urban creeks for years to come.
- Continued work at the Monteith Street demonstration riparian native plant garden in Oak Bay behind Fireman's Park by establishing Friends of Monteith Indigenous Plant Area, a community-based volunteer group that will maintain the native riparian garden long term.
- Continued to work with Vancouver Island Health Authority to integrate the *Blueprint* into the Royal Jubilee Hospital Master Plan (2010–30).
- Provided feedback to the City of Victoria on their Draft Official Community Plan, encouraging them to integrate the watershed wide and specific reach actions of the *Blueprint*.
- Initiated discussions with the new owner of the Hillside Centre regarding opportunities for parking lot improvements during upcoming mall renovations and encouraged the use of innovative rainwater management techniques and monitoring to measure potential improvements to flow and quality of water entering the creek.
- Participated in the Saanich Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Stakeholders committee to encourage integration of the *Blueprint* into all aspects of the plan, emphasizing the watershed wide and specific reach related actions of the *Blueprint* within the planning area.

Outreach Events and Activities

Outreach activities also continued with the help of dedicated volunteers from the BCI Outreach Subcommittee and the community at large:

- Created a five-minute video as a new educational tool about the urban watershed renewal activities highlighting the *Blueprint*; to be completed early 2012.
- In partnership with the Camosun Community Association at Browning Park, co-hosted the annual Bowker Creek Celebration.
- Aided the 13th Annual Rubber Ducky Race and Bowker Creek Clean-up hosted by Oak Bay High School in May.
- Spoke at a University of Victoria hosted event encouraging students about the value of volunteer opportunities with the BCI as a learning and career development opportunity.
- Participated in the Saanich Family Bike Ride by hosting the BCI display and watershed table.
- Participated in the annual Bowker Creek Brush-up by hosting the BCI display and watershed table.
- Continued with the creation of the Monteith riparian native plant demonstration garden in Oak Bay with high participation from individuals, community groups and student groups.
- Displayed the Bowker Creek pennants at City of Victoria municipal hall, November 2011.
- Supported Saanich's Bowker Creek restoration work at Browning Park through community volunteer labour and supplying of tools for native planning events and several Pulling Together Program events for invasive plant removal.

Restoration and Monitoring

The section of Bowker Creek that runs along the border of Oak Bay High School and Oak Bay Recreation Centre will soon become an outdoor classroom and a natural amenity for generations to come. This innovative project will showcase and demonstrate how this reach of Bowker Creek can be transformed from a degraded, highly urbanized creek to a naturally functioning creek; restore green infrastructure that will reduce flooding, improve water quality and aquatic habitat, and create opportunities for flow and water quality monitoring, all while creating a learning space for students and a beautiful community greenways amenity.

The District of Oak Bay, in partnership with the BCI, succeeded in receiving \$738,000 for this project from the Innovations Fund, Water and Wastewater Investment Category. This fund is administered by the UBCM as part of the Gas Tax/Public Transit funds.

Currently, this reach of Bowker Creek is contained in an open concrete channel, sustaining no aquatic life or native riparian habitat and is known for flash flooding in times of heavy rainfall. The Greater Victoria School District, in cooperation with the District of Oak Bay, is undergoing a redesign process for a new school, a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (including a theatre, learning and daycare facilities) and new sports fields. This is an excellent opportunity to restore this section of the creek.

**In 2011, BCI volunteers logged
approximately 420 hours of work towards
improving the Bowker Creek watershed!**

Thank you all!

2011 Funding

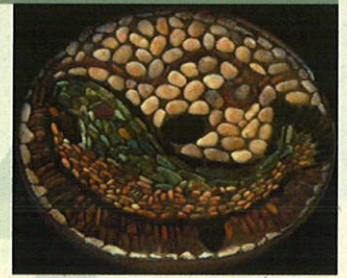
In 2011, funding was provided for the BCI through various sources. The municipalities of Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay provided funding for the BCI Coordinator. In 2011, funding acquired through grants from previous years was used to complete the Blueprint and begin implementation.

Funding Source	Funding (\$)*	Item
Coordinator Funding		
District of Saanich	\$39,763	BCI Coordinator
City of Victoria	\$15,500	BCI Coordinator
District of Oak Bay	\$12,130	BCI Coordinator
Project Funding		
Capital Regional District	\$8,550	Blueprint, outreach and administrative costs
TOTAL 2011*	\$75,943	

*Figures in this table do not include the value of municipal staff and volunteer time

What's Next?

In 2012, activities will focus on the *Blueprint's* recommended "key actions for short-term implementation" and on encouraging municipalities, landowners and community groups to do their part by applying the identified "principles and actions for watershed management" along with specific reach actions. With focused collaboration between School District 61, Oak Bay High School and the District of Oak Bay, the planning and implementation of the various stages of the restoration of the Bowker Creek at Oak Bay High will begin, including engaging students in the design of the reach of the creek to be restored at Oak Bay High School. As well, the BCI will continue to participate in the Shelbourne Valley planning process and assist supporting municipalities to find funding to implement the top ten items laid out in the *Blueprint*.



Summary

Acceptance by all three municipalities of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-year action plan to restore the Bowker Creek watershed*, and receiving the grant to move forward with the Oak Bay High project made 2011 a true "watershed moment" for the creek and the community. The Bowker Creek Initiative further grew a positive profile in the community and began the exciting new phase of implementing the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* over the short and long term.



Children planting native plants at the Monteith riparian restoration and native plant demonstration garden.

For more information visit:
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