



Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative 2012 Annual Report



(Above: Sept. 11, 2012) BCI partners receiving the **Capital Regional District's 2012 EcoStar Award for Integrated Watershed Management** - sponsored by: Golder Associates Ltd. (left to right): Adriane Pollard, Ian Graeme, Councillor Judy Brownoff, Andrea Gleichauf, Jim Kirby, Mayor Nils Jensen, Rowland Atkins, Councillor Vic Derman, Steve Fifield, Mayor Dean Fortin.

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.

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. 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 ninth annual report since the establishment of the BCI.

Accomplishments



It was another watershed year for BCI, as the member municipalities and volunteers were honoured with receiving the Capital Regional District's 2012 EcoStar Award for Integrated Watershed Management. The award recognized the three member municipalities' (District of Oak Bay, July 2012; District of Saanich, October 2011; and City of Victoria, September 2011) endorsement of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-Year Action Plan to Restore the Bowker Creek Watershed (the Bowker Creek Blueprint)*, along with the dedication of the community volunteers. The implementation of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* continues to gain momentum throughout the watershed and is gaining attention across Canada.

The logo for the Capital Regional District (CRD), consisting of the letters "CRD" in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font.

2012 Annual Report



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

In 2012, we embarked on year one of the implementation of the *Blueprint*. 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 watershed over time. The *Bowker Creek Blueprint* has become provincially significant and precedent-setting.

The *Bowker Creek Blueprint* offers ways to deal with the flooding, water pollution and habitat loss that Bowker Creek has suffered due to its history of agriculture followed by urbanization. It also provides recommendations for a greenway corridor and pockets of nature within the urban core of Greater Victoria.

In 2012, the BCI focused on key short-term actions for implementation. Activities included:

- Provided input into new and revised municipal planning documents, including the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan, to ensure that they reflect the *Blueprint's* goals and watershed-wide principles



- Participated in the Shelbourne Corridor Action Plan process, to identify opportunities for creek restoration, rainwater infiltration and greenway development
- Provided input to Royal Jubilee Hospital 2013-2030 Master Campus Plan to include Bowker Creek goals and ensure that land is set aside for potential future restoration
- Provided input to Saanich regarding the proposed development adjacent to the creek at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre and surveyed creek channel and riparian area to ensure that the *Blueprint's* goals and watershed-wide principles are considered
- Developed the *Bowker Creek Developer's Guide* focused on educating builders and developers within the watershed
- Worked with Hillside Centre owners to ensure rainwater infiltration features were incorporated into the parking lot improvements
- Provided guidance to Oak Bay in the development of the rain gardens at Monterey Centre
- Supported volunteers at Monteith Riparian Restoration site
- Worked with School District 61, Oak Bay municipality and Oak Bay High School to begin planning for restoration work and curriculum development
- Hosted tours and outreach events to raise awareness and celebrate the Bowker Creek Watershed

A special thank you to departing long-time serving BCI members:



Steve Fifield
City of Victoria

Anne Topp
District of Saanich

Blueprint Implementation in Action



BCI's partners are making the Bowker Creek Blueprint's principles, goals and actions "regular business"

City of Victoria's Official Community Plan

(adopted July 2012) reflects the overall watershed management ethic of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* throughout the plan. The creek and watershed area is included as an integral part of stormwater management in the expanded infrastructure section. Mapping for a Stormwater Main and Natural Drainage Network map identified Bowker Creek as a natural part of this infrastructure network. The plan's environment section highlights mechanisms to protect, expand and enhance riparian areas, and also integrates creek restoration with greenways projects and place-making opportunities. The neighbourhood section also picks up on directions from the *Blueprint*, identifying areas where creek enhancements could occur as part of future local area planning or redevelopment opportunities.

Saanich's Shelbourne Valley Action Plan

conducted visioning, transportation and land use studies, open houses and focus groups. The first draft of the Action Plan, due in Spring 2013, incorporates many of the *Blueprint's* recommendations. These include: managing stormwater on redevelopment sites using bio-filtration, bio-swales, rain gardens and stormwater retention ponds; consideration to daylight Bowker Creek where it can be accessed and; interpretive displays at key locations in the watershed. Extending the Bowker Creek Greenway on the west side of Shelbourne Street, as shown in the *Blueprint*, is another possibility that received substantial public support. The draft Action Plan goes through another round of consultations before presentation to Saanich Council in the Fall 2013.



As future voters, decision-makers and community leaders, young people have an important perspective on what they would like Victoria to be in 30 years. The Community Café for Youth, organized with the Victoria Youth Council, hears what people aged 13-24 want for Victoria's future.

The final draft of the **Royal Jubilee Hospital Master Campus Plan 2013-2030** integrates watershed-wise planning and green infrastructure initiatives into the Campus Plan, including designating a piece of land for future creek restoration. Vancouver Island Health Authority's document is an excellent example of how institutions can take responsibility for planning and stewardship in their area of the watershed. The hospital is situated on land adjacent to an open section of Bowker Creek, which straddles the municipalities of Victoria and Saanich.

Blueprint Implementation in Action



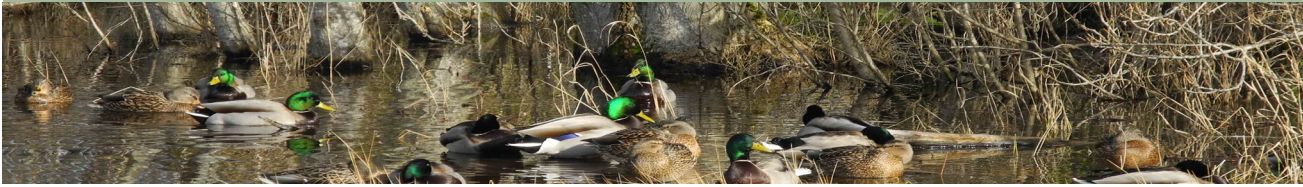
Hillside Centre started phase one of their watershed-wise parking lot improvements—complemented with rain gardens along Hillside Avenue. Tree wells, native plant gardens and rain gardens contribute to slowing down and reducing runoff from the parking lot and road, which helps in managing creek flows. This innovative partnership between the owners of Hillside Centre and the City of Victoria is an excellent example of implementation of the *Bowker Creek Blueprint*. Hillside Centre is the single largest impervious surface in the watershed.

A **rain garden** was created in the southeast corner of the **Monterey Centre** parking lot. It is designed to collect runoff rainwater and naturally filter out pollutants, such as oils and grease, before the water flows into the City's storm drain system. Diverting rainwater to rain gardens limits the amount of water entering pipes during heavy rainfalls and helps minimize potential flooding to nearby properties and roadways. Native plants adapted to wetter winters and drier summers are used in the rain garden. A beehive drain allows excess water to overflow without becoming clogged with debris. Its location at a community recreation centre that also serves as a seniors centre, church and library, gives this rain garden great exposure and provides an excellent learning opportunity for the public.

The Bowker Creek Riparian Garden - Monteith is now flourishing with native plants and buzzing with community volunteers. This successful restoration project was made possible by a TD Friends of the Environment grant, the cooperation of Oak Bay Parks and a team of dedicated volunteers. The Community Association of Oak Bay officially adopted and now cares for this site, located behind Fireman's Park. The shift toward increased local responsibility for the Riparian Garden reflects the strong local ownership and community development principles embodied by BCI. Volunteers focussed on the garden's "food forest" theme — planting and caring for local native shrubs and small trees with edible fruit. Work sessions continue on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m. All are welcome!



Volunteers are busy as bees, at the Bowker Creek Riparian Garden at Monteith, restoring a riparian area that was infested with invasive species and now is blooming with native plants.



Outreach Events, Activities and Tools

Urban watershed education increases opportunities for celebrating and appreciating nature in the city. Outreach Committee members (Andrea Gleichauf, Carolyn Knight and Gerald Harris) hosted the BCI information display at a number of outdoor events in 2012. Stream Team Society Coordinator, Angus Stewart, set up the popular watershed model and Soren Henrich hosted the Bowker Creek Pennant Printing workshops. Outreach keeps the BCI in the public eye, develops and nurtures community connections, and helps grow the movement for watershed renewal.

2012 Outreach Highlights

- Launched a five-minute YouTube video as a new educational tool about the urban watershed renewal activities highlighting the *Bowker Creek Blueprint*
- Co-hosted the 5th Annual Bowker Creek Celebration at Fireman's Park in Oak Bay, in partnership with the Community Association of Oak Bay
- Hosted the BCI display and watershed model at Creatively United for the Planet Festival; YesBC Off the Grid Festival; Annual Bowker Creek Brush-up; Camosun Community Association Annual Picnic; and the 14th Annual Oak Bay High School Rubber Ducky Race and Bowker Creek Clean-up
- Supported Saanich's Bowker Creek restoration work at Browning Park through community volunteer labour, supplying tools for native planting events and several Pulling Together Program events for invasives removal
- 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

Bowker Creek Developer's Guide

was developed in partnership with the Urban Development Institute.

This outreach tool educates developers about watershed-wise steps they can take and what green infrastructure initiatives are optimal to consider for their site, large or small.

Visit the BCI website for more information.

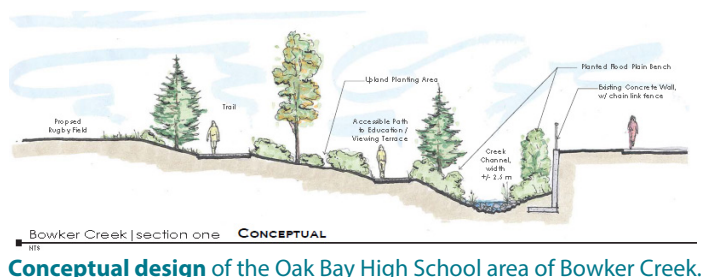
- Presented the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* to community groups
- Hosted tours of the watershed to school and university classes and a Scout group
- Launched the *Bowker Creek Developer's Guide* as a resource to assist large- and small-scale land owners to develop their site implementing watershed wise planning



5th annual Bowker Creek Celebration - Microsoft Studio Victoria designed and hosted a Bowker Creek obstacle course to teach participants about the importance of caring for our urban watersheds. Pictured above: a child enters a "box culvert" full of "urban runoff pollution."

Restoration of Bowker Creek at Oak Bay High School

In 2012, the BCI and the District of Oak Bay partnered with School District 61 and Oak Bay High School to restore the reach of Bowker Creek that runs along the Oak Bay High School and Oak Bay Recreation track. The project includes the naturalization of the creek, taking it from its current state in an open concrete channel to a meandering creek with a healthy riparian zone, a creek-side classroom and improved greenway. Students and staff are involved in the design of the restored section of the creek and in the development and delivery of a new integrated watershed curriculum. This work is made possible through a \$738,000 grant from the Innovations Fund, Water and Wastewater Investment Category, received in December 2011. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities administers this fund as part of the Gas Tax/Public Transit funds.



Conceptual design of the Oak Bay High School area of Bowker Creek.

“This is an excellent example of how collaboration between local governments, senior levels of government and the school district can produce such positive results for the entire community.”

Nils Jensen, Mayor of Oak Bay

2012 Funding

In 2012, BCI received funding through various sources. The municipalities of Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay provide funding for the BCI Coordinator. Funding acquired through grants from previous years was used to complete the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* and begin implementation.

Funding Source	Funding (\$)*	Item
Coordinator Funding		
District of Saanich	\$41,772	BCI Coordinator
City of Victoria	\$16,284	BCI Coordinator
District of Oak Bay	\$12,744	BCI Coordinator
Project Funding		
Microsoft Studios Victoria	\$500	Outreach
TD Friends of the Environment	\$2,000	Restoration
Capital Regional District	\$9,554	Printing Blueprint, outreach and administrative costs
TOTAL 2012*	\$82,854	

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

What's Next?

As the BCI moves into a three-year phase to make the *Bowker Creek Blueprint* a part of regular business, 2013 activities will focus on succession planning, achieving the identified key actions for “short term implementation” and addressing actions for specific reaches as they arise. The major project is to undertake the required planning to successfully implement the Oak Bay High School project. The BCI will continue to support municipalities to implement the *Blueprint*.

For more information visit:
www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca
 or contact the BCI Coordinator at:
info@bowkercreekinitiative.ca
 250.360.3302.

