

Bowker Creek Initiative

Year in Review 2022

Capital Regional District

The Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI), supported by the Capital Regional District (CRD), is a collaboration of community groups, local governments and institutions working together to manage and improve the health of Bowker Creek and its watershed. The District of Saanich, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, the CRD and community groups established the BCI in 2004, following the adoption of the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan. A part-time coordinator at the CRD, funded by the municipal partners, manages projects and provides administrative support. BCI's 2022 updates include:

Municipal Achievements

The BCI municipal partners worked to improve the Bowker Creek watershed through various actions in 2022. Highlights included:

- The District of Saanich led a public engagement process to explore a vision statement, goal, and possible management models for the newly acquired Kings Community Nature Space.
- City of Victoria staff applied for grant funding to daylight the creek at Clawthorpe Park, the Spirit Garden and Doncaster Green.
- District of Oak Bay staff supported the Coolkit program to mobilize climate action at the local level, which sparked community conversations about ways to make Bowker Creek more climate resilient.

All three municipalities and the CRD committed funding for the update of the Bowker Creek Blueprint (scheduled for 2023-2024).

Celebration of the Blueprint's 10 Year Anniversary

Beginning in 2021 and carrying over into 2022, BCI partners celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Blueprint in a variety of ways:

- Municipal Councils received presentations on the 10-year achievements in Blueprint implementation alongside the Daylighting Feasibility Study.
- The 10-year Blueprint anniversary was celebrated at World Rivers Day in September 2021, with music, speakers, and the BCI display.
- The Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC celebrated the Blueprint in its September 2021 Watershed Blueprint Case Profile Series, featuring interviews with multiple BCI partners. This publication culminated the BCI's participation in the Ecological Accounting Process program, led by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC to develop a methodology for integrating natural assets into municipal infrastructure.



Land Use Consultation

BCI members participated in consultation and advocacy for several sites in the watershed, most notably the Kings Community Nature Space and Lansdowne Middle School South Campus. Through the District of Oak Bay's Coolkit program, the Friends of Bowker Creek and other BCI partners engaged the community and municipality in exploring potential improvements to Bowker Creek at the Oak Bay Recreation Centre.

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Outreach and Education

The BCI commissioned a new, more portable watershed model in 2022, which proved to be an excellent public engagement tool. Through a partnership with the Friends of Bowker Creek, the public learned about the BCI at three Creekside Concerts, Fern Fest, Quadra Village Days, the Bowker Creek Brush-up, and more. Several teachers also accessed the model for use in schools.



Restoration Projects

BCI partners continued to be involved in various restoration projects throughout the watershed:

- Friends of Bowker Creek's volunteers participated in their chum salmon recovery program, Monteith riparian restoration, and invasive species removal at Oak Bay High
- Friends of Cedar Hill Park helped with habitat restoration of Reach 17
- The Friends of Browning Park began to implement their restoration plan for riparian areas.

Partnership Building

The BCI welcomed multiple new partners to its steering committee including the Mount Tolmie, Camosun, and

Oaklands Community Associations and new staff representatives for School District 61.

Water Quality

The CRD monitors water quality in Bowker Creek at least twice a year and conducts more in-depth analysis every 5 years. The latest comprehensive watershed assessment was completed in 2019 and will be repeated in 2024.

In 2022, staff collected water quality data twice at the mouth of the creek. Water quality data included analysis of bacteria, temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, metals, and polycyclic hydrocarbons (PAH). The 2022 water quality results were within the range of previous years data indicating that several parameters are at levels that are potentially harmful to aquatic life, however, recent *E.coli* measurements are lower than previous years indicating there may have been improvements in sewage inputs in the lower watershed. Finally, PAH which have not been measured in creek water previously, were not detected in the winter or summer samples during dry weather.

In 2022, CRD staff also worked with a consultant to collect in-stream flow measurements. The flow data will result in a more refined estimate of creek discharge through different water levels at the CRD hydrometric station in Browning Park.

Focus for 2023:

- **Blueprint Update:** The BCI's primary focus will be the update of the Blueprint, including determining new reach-specific and watershed-wide actions, and the integration of new information including the Daylighting Feasibility Study.
- **Advocacy:** BCI members will continue to advocate for the protection and enhancement of the creek and watershed in ways that align with the Blueprint.
- **Outreach:** The BCI will support public engagement and education at events using the new watershed model and updated BCI print materials.