



## DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

**Steering Committee**  
**Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club

- Present:** Yogi Carolsfeld, Dorothy Chambers, Jack Meredith, Rick Daykin, Craig Elder, Alia Johnson, Trish Demacedo, George Blogg, Melissa Huston, Derek Jenkins, Don Monroe, Jacques Sirois, Julian Anderson, Sara Stallard, Becky Goodall, Kitty Lloyd, Jody Watson
- Guests:** Gary Darrah, *Saanich Parks*; Jane Robson

DECISIONS				
1	GWI will submit a coordinated response to the Cuthbert Holmes draft management plan			
2	Update GWI display materials for 2015 season			
<b>Next Meeting: 20 May 2015</b>				
ACTIONS			ACTION BY	DUE
1	Make name cards for new members		Kitty	Next meeting
2	Identify potential MBS sign locations along waterfront		Jacques	Spring/ Summer
3	Send information about MBS to Gary Darrah to include on Cuthbert Holmes Park signage		Jacques	ASAP
4	Prepare and submit coordinated response to the Cuthbert Holmes Park draft management plan		All	ASAP
5	Send comments on draft 2014 GWI annual report to Kitty		All	March 23
6	Fill out matrix regarding proposed criteria for evaluating harbour and watershed development proposal referrals		All	April
7	Outreach subcommittee meet to discuss outreach for 2015 season		Outreach subcommittee	April
8	Send Kitty info used by BGCA for Cecelia Cr watershed outreach		Sara	ASAP
9	Send out GTCA poster of Colquitz River counting fence		Kitty	ASAP
10	Contact Dr. Jonn Matson regarding a speakers series talk on herring for the fall		Kitty	Spring
INFORMATION				

**Review of action items from January meeting:**

**Jacques:** Migratory Bird Sanctuary signs from CWS will be ready in new fiscal year, will have to work with each municipality to install there; discussion of more signs for the area ongoing

Welcome to new members and representatives to the meeting: Melissa Huston, Burnside Gorge Community Association; Derek Jenkins - alternate for VCKC; Jack Meredith – Gorge Swim Fest Society

**Presentation: Cuthbert Holmes Park Draft Management Plan, by Gary Darrah, Saanich Parks**

- 64ac (25ha) zoned P4-N (natural parks) includes Cuthbert Holmes and Tillicum Park, 12ha is leased from the province on 100 year lease to 2086
- Includes Colquitz River and estuary, lots of invasive plants, but many native species as well
- Westland Resource Group undertook background information reporting, environmentally sensitive areas including some species at risk, plant communities, important habitat areas, buffer areas
- Community-driven initiative to create a management plan, concern about interrelated factors
- Key issues prompting management plan:
  - Natural areas management: unlimited access has led to vegetation trampling, understory disruption, compaction of soil, spread of invasive species that now form dense thickets
  - Trails: identify and build trails in appropriate areas, discourage proliferation of “unauthorized” trails
  - Recreational opportunities: identify and accommodate suitable recreational opportunities, install wayfinding signage
  - Safety and security: discourage undesirable/illegal activities, some people currently consider park unsafe to walk in
- Many planning resources and key stakeholders involved in process starting in 2010; many events held to raise awareness, over 250 participants
- Feedback from public:
  - support for dog walkers
  - stay-on-trails strategy (people, bikes, pets)
  - little support for active recreation
  - protect natural environment
  - combat invasive species
  - provide access and amenities for recreation that respect natural environment
  - multi-use, dogs off-trail open space
  - clear out dense undergrowth and address undesirable activities
- Vision statement for park is based on the public input, four primary goals with related actions for each were identified
- **Natural areas management goal:** Protect and restore natural areas
  - **Actions:** analyze park to identify where restoration efforts are needed, develop detailed restoration plans, develop multi-year work plan, build support for those measures through education and outreach component
- **Trails management goal:** Refine trail system to support park’s recreation and environmental goals. There are several sanctioned trails, and many more that are unofficial, these are having negative impact on habitats.
  - **Actions:** finalize trail pla; incorporate some of the ‘goat’ trails; decommission most unsanctioned trails; install orientation, wayfinding and interpretive signs; promote voluntary compliance to keep people, bikes, dogs on trails
- **Recreational opportunities goal:** Create opportunity for recreation that complements park’s natural environment
  - **Actions:** improvements to trail system is a big part of this goal; add few more amenities like garbage cans, benches and access to view points; create a multi-use area behind Silver City; plan is to remove invasive plants and replace 2/3 of that with natural areas, 1/3 open area
- **Safety and Security goal:** improve sense of safety and security without compromising natural character of park
  - **Actions:** reduce invasive plant cover in problem areas, create key connections with trail system, way-finding signage, formal and informal surveillance, make it easier for police to survey area
- Special management areas – based on sensitivity map from Westland report
- High priority areas are riparian and forested areas and heronry habitat
- Move some trails away from riparian area where it floods sometimes, move it further inland away from creek where a hawthorn thicket is now (thicket will be removed)

- Side note re herons: none are nesting this year in CHP, in the past 65 nests have produced 165 fledglings, may have been chased by eagles back to Beacon Hill and Cadboro Bay; still many herons feeding there in the creek; crows are now using heron nest material to construct their own nests
- Create new more robust buffer between park and highway, establish a new forest in open brushy area
- Question: would a new interchange on McKenzie use some of the park area?
  - Current plan does not address that issue; propose to add wording to plan to include that issue, impacts to park should be minimal; part of approvals process should be to create a buffer, haven't finalized that wording
- Discussion re PCC lands: Saanich is not in any danger of losing the lease on those lands
- Amenities and infrastructure: orientation signs at main entrances, interpretive signs, benches, garbage cans, doggie bag dispensers
- **Next steps:** gather public feedback, on-line survey open to end of April, present to Parks, Trails and Recreation (April) and Environment and Natural Areas (May) committees, then Saanich council (June) for approval
- Q: what about interpreting the MBS in signage?
  - Yes, good opportunity to raise awareness about MBS

ACTION: Jacques will provide Gary with information to include on signage

- Q: what is policy on dogs in park?
  - Asking everyone to stay on trails in sensitive areas, pets must be under effective control, though not necessarily leashed at all times, share-the-trail etiquette, hoping that there will be a self-policing effort in park reinforced with signage, trying to protect areas on either side of trails, many conversations around dog management issues, Citizen Canine involved in last open house, probably more productive to use carrot approach rather than the stick; creating opportunity for off-leash areas in the multi-use area
- Q: In areas where trails are coming right down to estuary can these be on-leash only?
  - Yes, if they feel they have to ramp up dog control efforts this will happen; voluntary compliance initially with education and outreach
- Migratory Bird Sanctuary goes to Dysart Bridge, Canadian Wildlife Service is willing to put signs up that far to mark MBS
- Can use split rail fencing to deter people from traversing riparian, planning a view point near estuary, can control access with fencing
- View supporting documents and fill out the survey online:  
<http://www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/projects/current/cuthbert.html>

DECISION: GWI will prepare and submit a coordinated response to draft management plan

#### **Coordinator Updates:**

- Kitty and Caren met with VCKC executive in February, GWI can continue to hold meetings at VCKC club house, Kitty offered to give a presentation about the GWI to VCKC members at a general meeting; this was done on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, well-received by membership; also submitted an article to VCKC March newsletter focused on importance of Colquitz estuary to birds and other wildlife; sent poster for upcoming Speakers Series talk to be included in April newsletter
- 2014 GWI annual report draft presented for committee review
- Tour of restoration sites along the Gorge to be held March 22 with Victoria Natural History Society, 10am – 1pm. All welcome, meet at Esquimalt Gorge Park for tour of Nature House
- Welcome to new GWI member: Gorge Swim Fest Society; Jack Meredith is the GWI representative and alternate is Stephen Childs
- Many members attended home heating oil tank forum in February held by NDP MLAs Lana Popham and Rob Fleming; outcome – they will request a meeting with Minister of Environment to discuss concerns and request consideration of a provincial policy and plan to address this problem

ACTION: send comments on the draft 2014 annual report to Kitty by March 23

ACTION: Send out the GTCA poster of Colquitz river stewards

- Colquitz 2014 total fish count: 1584; Craigflower: 1821 fish

**Criteria for municipal development referral review:**

- Draft provided; input requested
- Jody led discussion of matrix provided at meeting to help decide which referrals from municipalities should be forwarded to the GWI committee for input
- For some of the developments, could let people know it's out there, available at city hall, on a website, etc, direct people to look there and solicit comments
- Have we missed anything? Need different categories?
- Comment: This is too simplistic, should be broken down further – e.g. rezoning could be minor or major
  - A: that's addressed in subdivision types; evaluated in view of several parameters
- Discussion re scope, parameters
- Location - is it outside our area of interest?
- Suggestion: Go through documents and see what the core changes are, may be many documents that are really about a small change or permit
- Suggestion: Every development within 100m should be considered, with significant alterations, high impact, any of the criteria where parameters are high or "bad", send those out for consideration
- What about considering everything within 100m of shoreline including creeks?
- No definite conclusion – leave it to Jody and Kitty's discretion as to which documents are forwarded

General guidelines:

Is proposal within our geographic area of interest?

If within 100m of shoreline or creek, information to be sent to group for consideration and comment

Summary of feedback from six matrices submitted at the meeting:

- For each of the 8 criteria listed, these were the ones given highest priority:
  - Type of development: within or close to an EDPA
  - Size of development: Subdivision, industrial
  - Proximity to harbour or creeks: 0 – 100m
  - Shoreline or stream impacts: significant alteration, some alteration
  - Habitat alteration: high impact, moderate impact
  - Habitat restoration: net negative impact
  - Imperviousness: >50% change
  - Runoff impacts: significant degree of change

ACTION: Kitty send matrix to the group; please fill out and return if not already done at the meeting

**Discussion: Outreach for 2015**

- What are the main things we want to focus on for outreach?
- "Does your neighbourhood drain to the Gorge?"
- Maps of all watersheds that flow into Gorge, provide handouts of those
- Impacts of stormwater
- WFT work with Craig and others to discuss what impacts people most from their experience working at events
- Develop some key speaking points to capture interest at events

ACTION: Yogi, Craig, Dorothy volunteered to work on education materials

ACTION: Sara will send Kitty materials that are part of what Burnside Gorge Community Association used for their outreach in the Cecelia Creek neighbourhood a few years ago

Events to attend in 2015:

- Vic West Fest (early May)
- Selkirk Waterfront Festival (late May)
- Oceans Day (June)
- Canada Day (July)
- Gorge Swim Fest (Aug)

Speakers Series:

- Posters for Jacques Sirois' talk April 29<sup>th</sup> handed out for distribution

- Suggestion to contact Dr. Jonn Matson from Squamish Streamkeepers to present a talk on Squamish Herring Recovery Project. He gave an excellent presentation in Cowichan recently,  
ACTION: Contact Dr. Matson about giving a talk here in the fall

**Update on CRD Harbours Program:**

- Meeting with municipalities next week to discuss draft Water Quality Objectives; Deb Epps from Ministry of Environment will give a presentation on the draft report CRD staff and MoE have prepared
- Information can go to outreach events when summarized in a easily-read format (i.e. not 400 pages)
- Lots of information in this report including land cover, land use types, creek flow data, water quality data from creeks and marine receiving environments and so much more
- Regional Sustainability Strategy is still in draft format

**Partner Updates:**

**BGCA/Sara:** Cecelia Ravine Park – work parties continue monthly planting native species and removing invasive plants; if anyone has a need for volunteers and willing to use community service workers, there is a need for placements on suitable community projects

**Friends of Vic Hbr MBS:** Winter bird surveys were done in MBS, numbers will be out soon; quick summary:

11,600 birds, 85 species at 14 sites, from Esquimalt Lagoon to Cadboro Bay; will do a summer solstice survey; balls of herring have been seen off Chain Islets in Oak Bay now as well as a trickle of herring in the Gorge

**VCKC:** Lots of courses are on offer posted on the website including different levels of lake water, moving water; course instructors are all volunteers, courses are all high value at a low price. Events: March 28, Paddle for the Kids to go to Camp Shawnigan, 34<sup>th</sup> year of this; Brentwood Bay around past Sidney and to VCKC, 11 or 12 hrs; April 12 – Wake up the Gorge race; Apr 25 - Clean up the Gorge, 19<sup>th</sup> year for this event

**BGCA:** CoV is developing a local area plan for Burnside Gorge Area, putting together an advisory committee, will happen during Apr – July period, public engagement events to solicit input and concerns, developing a 30-year plan, not sure how this will be communicated, Melissa will act as conduit for that committee

**PISCES:** Heard from a member of BC government that Portage Park will be transferred to View Royal from former PCC lands, including lands that are technically in Saanich

**Esquimalt:** New urban forest initiative: Branch Out – tree inventory, will hire same company that CoV is using, developing a new Tree Preservation bylaw; Earth Day in High Rock Park, there will be a herd of goats coming from Parksville, electric fence for goats, 1300 kids will come out and pull invasives, then next day will feed ivy and blackberry to goats; many other groups will be there.

**GCTA:** Community garden – fundraising event on April 11<sup>th</sup>; Gorge clean-up Apr 25;

**Swan Creek:** Did 1<sup>st</sup> official count in the fall: 44 in 10 weeks observed spawning; smolt trap in place now, will count until May. First time this has been documented.

**CoV:** Mayor and council going through budget and strategic planning process, 4 year plan, \$4.5 million surplus this year, soliciting input from residents on budget and strategic planning processes; town hall meetings being held and surveys on-line for residents of Victoria; no update re boats in Gorge

**Swim Fest:** August 9<sup>th</sup>; enthusiastic swimmer in Vic West has a monthly swim in the Gorge; there's been a Polar Swim, Valentine's Swim; upcoming Equinox Swim, all held at Banfield Park dock

**CSSSES:** 1584 fish counted at the fence in 2014; no smolt fence yet, still a plan for smolt counting and cutthroat trout counting; Ron Ptolemy involved

**WFT:** Herring fishing from the bridges over the Gorge was quite successful this year, lots of people who haven't fished for 15 years are out there; creel survey: collected some biometrics and DNA samples; some of the fish collected had already spawned; plankton tows near Fort Rodd Hill contained larval herring; internet reporting opportunity has not worked, Sidney Anglers have wrapped some pilings with landscape cloth to try and attract herring spawn in Deep Cove.

**Adjournment: 9:40pm**