



DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

Steering Committee
Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club

- Present:** Dorothy Chambers, Ann Klein, Morley Eldridge, Sara Stallard, Vicki and George Blogg, Yogi Carolsfeld, John Mullane, Angela Hanes, Dan Henderson, Craig Elder, Jack Meredith, Ben Chow, Jack Meredith, Bill Thomas, Bruce Bevan, Gary Paton, Brian Koval, Brianne Czypyha, Julian Anderson, Kitty Lloyd, Natalie Bandringa
- Guests:** Matt Fairbarns, Aruncus Consulting;
Joanne Letkeman, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

DECISIONS			
Next Meeting:		15 January 2020	
ACTIONS		ACTION BY	DUE
1	Make available Transport Canada reports re: Gorge	Kitty	ASAP
2	Harbours Speakers Series topic: Stormwater monitoring throughout our harbour systems	Kitty/Barri Rudolph	Winter/Spring
3	Ask Barri Rudolph if there is stormwater quality information about proposed Gorge access sites, also if there's been any sediment sampling	Sara S	By next meeting
5	Request that CWS get back to us RE action on asking UVic to alter their race course next year	Kitty	By next meeting
4	Let Joanne Letkeman know if there are sites you know of that might be suitable for trembling aspen within Cuthbert Holmes Park, or Garry oak within 15km of the interchange	All	ASAP
5	Send dates for future forage fish sampling events (Peninsula Streams)	Brian K	ASAP

INFORMATION

Territorial acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are gathered tonight, and do our stewardship and advocacy work in the traditional territory of the Lekwungen speaking peoples.

Review of action items from September 2019 meeting:

- Reach out to First Nations – Songhees is establishing a special management zone for the Colquitz and Craigflower watersheds, we will wait to hear what's going to happen before proceeding further on this
- UVic canoe races still went ahead in Portage Inlet

ACTION: Request that CWS get back to us RE action on asking UVic to alter their race course next year

Presentation: Options Analysis for McKenzie Interchange Ecosystem Mitigation Plan
Matt Fairbarns, Aruncus Consulting (see attached presentation)

- Matt is a conservation ecologist, member of Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT)
- Lost some natural ecosystems in the parks and adjacent lands due to highway works at McKenzie interchange
- Not practical for MoTI to go through extensive mitigation process for every highway project, but this is an extraordinary ecosystem
- Garry oak (GO) and Trembling Aspen were the two extraordinary ecosystems lost in this project
- GO ecosystem was mostly near Spectrum School

Trembling aspen community in Cuthbert Holmes Park – assessed the characteristics: average tree height, open/closed canopy, size of trees, species composition. There were also 2 Oregon ash here, Matt was surprised to see these at this site – very rare in this area

- Native species in the shrub layer: lots of twinberry, red osier dogwood, Pacific crabapple, native black hawthorn, common snowberry; all of these species let us know that this is a wet site
- Had to use “forensic botany” as much of the foliage was gone before Matt was at the site
- Herb layer – not much due to heavy canopy above
- Want to create a plant community that is more or less like the trembling aspen community that was lost
- Best fit: trembling aspen - Pacific crabapple - slough sedge community

Garry oak ecosystem:

- Between schools and highway, there was a pretty good forest
- Tall Oregon grape, Nootka rose, Saskatoon; rocky site, lots of big trees for such a rocky site – drier site
- GO were rooting in pockets of soil; understory was characteristic of a drier site
- Not much information on the herbaceous layer
- Q: why did you have to do this work when plants were not really detectable?
 - Aruncus was brought on after MoTI knew about the trembling aspen
- Dorothy toured MoTI staff through Cuthbert Holmes Park and looked at the aspen etc well before all the work began
 - This was a special circumstance, so Aruncus was hired after work began
- Matt – not cost effective to move aspen, but can stick whips in the ground and they will root easily
- Missed the season to assess the understory, hence the forensic botany
- Target – typical herbaceous understory of a GO forest
- Matt has a large database of GO forests with associated plants that are found in various habitats
- Counted and mapped individual trees, height, diameter, condition of canopy
- Mitigation process (provincial) – history of terrestrial mitigation is fairly new in BC , aquatic/marine is more well-developed
- This may be the first instance of BC implementing the provincial terrestrial mitigation guidelines

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/laws-policies-standards-guidance/environmental-guidance-and-policy/environmental-mitigation-policy>

Two environmental values identified – Garry oak and trembling aspen ecosystems

- Hierarchy of mitigation options:
Avoid > minimize > restore on site > offset
- No option here except for offset, no restoration sites are available on site;
- Comment: avoidance was an option that was not chosen by MoTI
 - MoTI: several factors come into play. When they went through open house process, public did not like the tight diamond configuration of the interchange; preferred the partial cloverleaf option;
- Comment: the public did not have the benefit of the environmental review at that time, just traffic impacts

Mitigation Plan:

- Quantify impact > conservation mechanism > cost
- Restore similar GO/trembling aspen ecosystem in protected areas – cost \$1.45 million (value of what was lost)
- **Key considerations** of provincial mitigation strategy:
- Replace like for like, restore to an ecosystem that is comparable. Did not have the sites in Cuthbert Holmes Park where rocky sites for GO ecosystem could be reproduced, but trembling aspen – lots of potential sites in Cuthbert Holmes
- Ecological integrity – threats to proposed restoration site health and integrity will be eliminated or reduced as much as possible
- Proposed site will be resilient
- Want ecosystem to be self-sustaining
- Location – proposed sites should be within 15km of the McKenzie interchange where ecosystems were lost
- Cost effective
- Timely – mitigation is not considered successful until target conditions have been reached (e.g. 10 years for this site)
- Certainty – avoid high risk restoration sites
- Potential sites: Review of protected areas in the region; looked at 200 sites in local municipal parks, with input from all sorts of people
- Found 13 sites in municipal parks in the region, sites were scored for suitability
- For Garry oak – Highrock Park was the best fit
- The area to be restored may be much larger than the area destroyed, since the aim is to spend \$1.45million on restoring a variety of sites within the 15 km radius

Comment: Maintenance during the 10 years and beyond is crucial

Q: Any consideration to buying more parkland? Partnering with local government to purchase land they are considering buying anyway?

A: Costs about \$50/m² to restore a bare land “blank slate” restoration site, not cost effective; better to restore/rehabilitate a protected site that already has some of the key components

Q: How does this process relate to the affected area?

A: Comes down to issue of proximity, if you can't create same ecosystem in the park, need to look elsewhere

Q: Who makes decision about which sites will be chosen?

A: Up to MoTI; first step is to take options to the larger community; hope to have answers by spring

Trembling aspen – Flood plain ecosystem, have identified a site on Colquitz Creek in Cuthbert Holmes Park that is seasonally flooded; easy boundaries to work within. Saanich may be thinking of expanding this site. Near fish ladder along the creek, in the flood plain; similar in many regards to what was lost, capable of supporting trembling aspen; up to MoTI now to choose the sites for mitigation

ACTION: Let Joanne know if there are sites you know of that might be suitable for planting trembling aspen or Garry oak

Comment: MoTI did commit to a Saanich-first policy of replacement

MoTI: Likes Matt's approach of not looking at political boundaries when considering conservation, aim is to replace something that was lost, in best suitable place nearby

Matt: There were 2 sites identified in Saanich that scored very high, but these are not in CH Park, they're in Vic Derman Park;

MoTI: Wants to plant the berm with native species

- Proponents will be doing the restoration work for the GO ecosystem
- At this point looks like Saanich may be doing the trembling aspen restoration work

Presentation: Collaboration to Improve Access to the Gorge Waterway – Jack Meredith
(see attached presentation)

- Report from this project was sent to GWI members earlier in 2019
- Purpose of collaboration was to protect health of the Gorge, more eyes on the Gorge, and promote safe recreational access

Goals – establish environmental concerns, recreational needs, identify and prioritize access improvements, report to municipalities for planning purposes

- Was as inclusive as possible, reached out to all the groups that use the Gorge: swimmers, paddlers, local government staff, conservation groups
- Tried to reach out to First Nations, but not enough capacity for them to participate
- 21 potential sites were considered
- Over 6 month period Jan – Aug, brainstorm sessions, working groups
- **7 sites** were identified and reported on:
 1. **Banfield Park** swimming beach and forage fish habitat
 - Blast rock on the beach there now, lots of debris
 - Any contaminants? CRD may have done sediment sampling there
 2. **Banfield Park Dock**
 - Too small, regularly overcrowded on warm summer days
 - Sub-committee worked on the plan for an expansion to this dock. L-shaped, ramp into water, bike racks, etc
 3. **Burleith Park** in Vic West
 - Vision is for a viewing point, naturalized area for bird watching
 - Currently covered with invasive plants, there's a big storm drain there, # 757 that often creates a plume of sediment into the Gorge, needs to be fixed
 - Used to be a house there, 3 feet of the house was on City park land, house was eventually destroyed and rubble is still there
 4. **Esquimalt Gorge Park:**
 - 130 plants were planted in the riparian there by Esquimalt Parks
 - Investigate a forage fish beach there, stewardship signage, kayak ramp and dock
 5. **Saanich Gorge Park**, at Curtis Pt
 - Minimal changes, access into the water, concern about the Garry oaks there and soil erosion
 - Bike racks and stewardship signage

6. Arbutus Park at Cecelia Creek mouth

- Create a forage fish beach
- Remove debris, improve access, better parking and bike racks

Comment – this is a very productive mudflat, important for birds in the sanctuary, and currently protected from human interference since it's hard to access. Not the best place to add a forage fish habitat for above reasons

7. Arm St. Park

- Add a ramp and dock, promenade there is flat but well above the water level

Next steps:

- meeting with various municipalities: staff and politicians
- Want to help integrate ideas into parks plans
- Public review of these ideas with broader range of stakeholders
- Enjoy improved access to Gorge

Comment: Most of the locations have storm drains, look at water quality data, many have problems with sewage contamination, be aware of high fecal counts. Maybe improving public access will spur municipalities to deal with these ongoing issues with pollution

ACTION – Sara will get in touch with Barri Rudolph to see what stormwater quality is like at these sites, any if there's been any sediment sampling

Salmon fry Fin Clipping at Goldstream: Bill Thomas

- At Goldstream River, started with 130,000 to clip, have done 70,000 now
- Next date: Thurs January 9th
- Meet at 10:30am at 2979 Sooke Lake Rd
- Drive in as convoy through CRD park, you'll be there for 4 hours; bring lunch, Bill will provide the coffee
- Ideally about 14 people, in shifts of 6
- Chum numbers are dramatically low this year, DFO does not know why, there's been no commercial fishery

Partner Updates

Victoria: Completed pipe lining projects on Carroll St in Cecelia Creek watershed, this should address some of the issues in the Washington Ave area. Currently lining pipes upstream of Cecelia, this should help reduce cross-contamination with sewer flows. At council tomorrow – directing staff to investigate what it would look like to amend parks plans to incorporate Jack's ideas for Gorge Waterway access; UVic Environmental Law Centre recently did an update on their earlier CRD stormwater quality report; council is looking into implementing some of the recommendations; looking at improving the stormwater bylaw. Tomorrow there is a public town hall meeting to discuss budgeting, this is an opportunity to provide input to this; go to the website, fill out survey, get issues on the priority list

Ben Chow: Still has concerns along the shoreline in his area (near where the landslide occurred a couple of years ago); trying to resolve issues with the municipality

Esquimalt Anglers: Salmon counting on Craigflower Cr, at 260 now and some very big fish going up the creek

Golden Rods & Reels: Long time member Robert McConnell recently passed away, Robert was very involved with Elk Beaver Lake Initiative and often at GWI meetings; R&R has been doling out funding for various projects in the area

WFT: Focused on Olympia oysters recently, what happened to the ones moved off the Craigflower Bridge; Christie Pt. reefs: 80% covered with sediment, but oysters keep growing on the tips of the shell piles; bridge footings: total number of oysters has gone down, live numbers are stable; oyster reef at Nature House – it's on the shoreward side of the eelgrass, eelgrass has grown around it, seems to protect oysters from the sediment; now lots of oysters there

Peninsula Streams: It's the season for forage fish sampling, always looking for more volunteers; we go to sandy beaches to look for eggs all over Greater Victoria area; also doing lots of riparian planting

ACTION: Send dates for future forage fish sampling events

PISCES: Beach survey along 500m of shoreline; interacting with MoTI about highways issues, e.g. graffiti removal

View Royal Advisory Comm (Angela): Very concerned about the proposed Handi Dart maintenance facility on Craigflower Cr; handed out a flyer about this, created a campaign to look after their backyard; the province is circumventing View Royal and their land use zoning; Angela has been in discussion with MoTI; doing a media campaign and has set up a Facebook page; need facts to back up passion for the creek;

Vic West Comm Assoc: New CoV parks staff are very helpful and open to suggestions

Saanich: This is Ann's last meeting; Saanich recently adopted a new strategic plan, climate action strategy – terms of reference for technical advisory committee to review draft goals and objectives; opportunity for GWI to join this committee; Saanich will put out a call

SISKA: Held a couple of Gorge loop paddles, will help Brian Koval with forage fish studies on beaches with no road access

Colquitz Cr: Amphibian experts joined her at the new wetlands at Cuthbert Holmes Park, with Sean Wong; commissioned Barb Beasley to do an amphibian study; wants to make more ephemeral wetlands and snake hibernacula; met with Jaroslaw Szczot of FLNROD at Craigflower and Colquitz and discussed provincial regulations around the water licensing, and flow data; salmon have gone up as far as Swan Cr; 119 salmon so far altogether

Sara: lots of work doing in-depth storm water sampling, bacterial source tracking, caffeine, personal care products; this testing ensures that any fecals are from human sources

World Wildlife Fund (via email from Jacklyn Barrs): We have a report that just came out for WWF-Canada on the Environmental Law Centre website <http://www.elc.uvic.ca/projects/publications/>. It is looking at regulations around the foreshore environment and how well it protects fish and fish habitat, with recommendations.

CRD Harbours Program and Coordinator Updates (Natalie and Kitty)

CRD Harbours Ecological Inventory Pilot Project:

- Hosted a workshop today by Archipelago Marine Research presenting results of the harbour inventory pilot study, lots of attendees, various levels of government, consultants, community; Archipelago is recommending an orthophoto survey with special interpretation of that, will do a gap analysis of what doesn't get covered by that method
- Along with that is an update to the Harbours Atlas, better meshing of data, e.g. storm drain monitoring

Bird Survey: went out to RFP, received 6 submissions, 3 passed technical requirements, but all of the proposed budgets were above our threshold; will need to re-scope the project and put to RFP again in Feb. 2020

Natalie – This is her last GWI meeting, she has a new job in active transportation planning at CRD; thanks for all the help, keep up your great work; so important to have community support for conservation work.

Adjournment: 9:40 pm