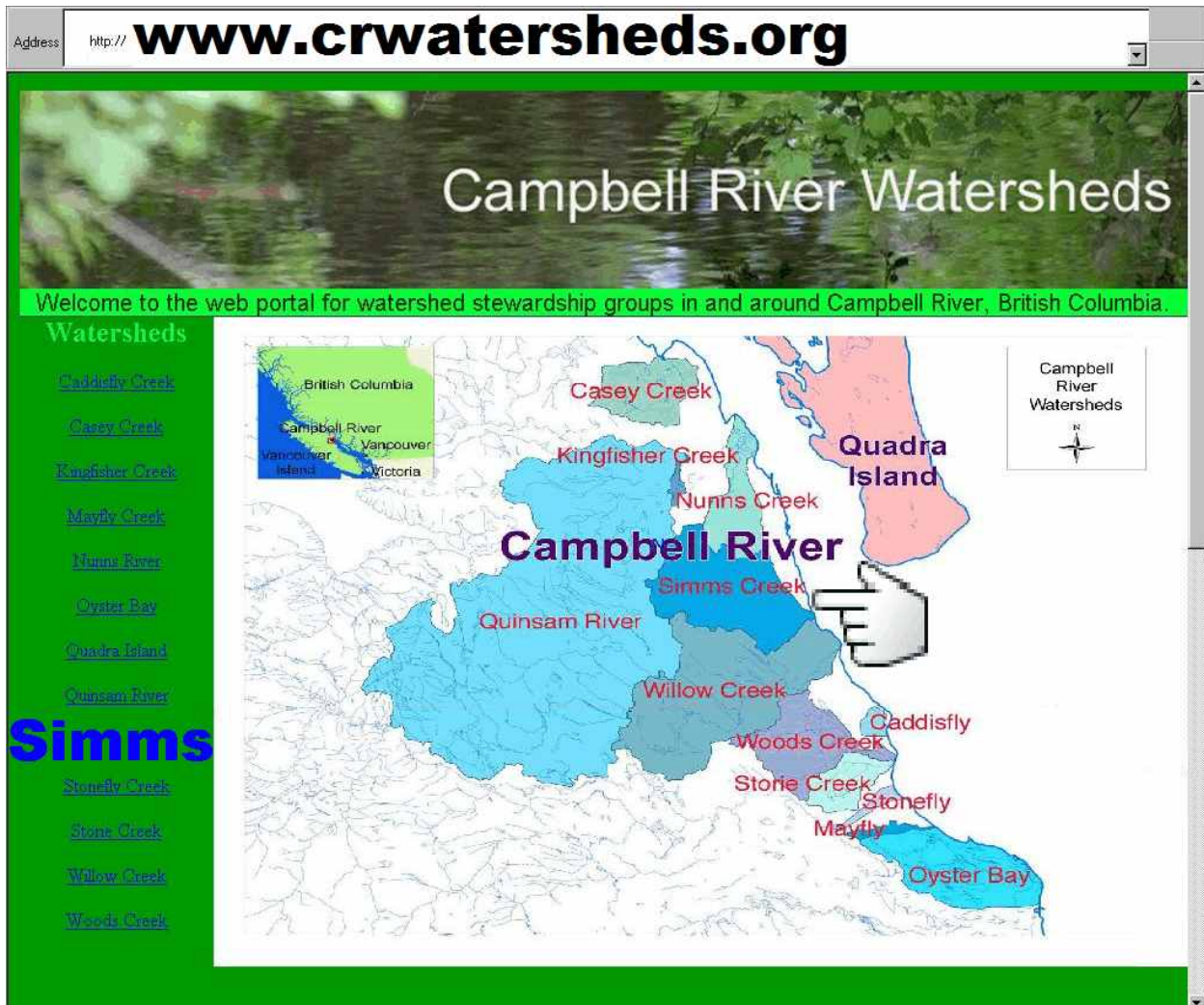


Simms Creek Stewardship Society Annual Report 2007



Cover Figure: The home page of the Campbell River Watersheds web site. The Simms Creek stewards spearheaded the production of the web site. The image is slightly retouched.

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The Society and the Creek

Simms Creek Stewardship Society received its registration as a non-profit organization at the beginning of 2003. It was established as a community based group dedicated to the stewardship of Simms Creek. The society's goal is to work with local residents and businesses, other non-profit organizations and all levels of government to maintain and restore the existing ecological integrity of Simms Creek, its tributaries and associated wetlands.

Simms Creek was named for Hubert and Lottie Simms who ran a farm at the mouth of the creek starting about 1920. The creek empties into Discovery Passage at the meeting with the Strait of Georgia. The main stem of Simms Creek is about seven kilometers long and it has about ten kilometers of tributaries. The watershed includes working forest, an experimental forest, a major highway, and residential neighborhoods of Campbell River, British Columbia. The experimental forest, called Beaver Lodge Forest Lands, is 520 hectares that is held in trust by the Province of British Columbia. Roughly half is covered with seventy- to ninety-year old second growth.

President's Message

2007 continued to be a year of development pressures which, as this report is written, show no sign of abating. If anything, the pressure of development is increasing and approaching ever closer to the creek and will remain a concern.

The return of over 100 adults in the fall was encouraging, especially when compared with the previous two years, but still needs to increase to get back to "historical levels". Once again, we added about 5,000 coho smolts to the creek, but this time after a "fin clipping party" to remove the adipose fin to allow for identification.

Our 2007 projects, major and minor, were for water augmentation purposes. These included a weir on the South Fork at the Rail Trail bridge, and four small weirs at the Butterfly trail near the pond. The performance of the weir has been disappointing so far with what looks like excessive drainage through the structure. It may be necessary to do some remedial work at this site in the future. There was also quite a bit of time spent on investigating the potential for expanding the Butterfly pond. This will likely be a major project for 2008.

The website for stewardship groups in the Campbell River area was more fully developed during the year, with the Simms Creek page, the prototype site now on-line with only some "fine tuning" needed.

A proposed development in an area thought to possibly have some significant wetlands and unmapped streams prompted comments to city planning officials. While this subdivision will be allowed to proceed, our concerns were met by having appropriate "officials" do on-site inspections and not just dismissed offhand as of no importance. Maybe there is hope that some riparian areas will eventually get protected.

Mr. E
March 2008

Members

For the year 2007, Simms Creek Stewardship Society had twelve members. Members voted to have all officers return to the same posts.

Mr. E, President
Mr. T, Vice President
Mr. G, Treasurer
Mr. M, Secretary
Mr. C
Ms. G
Mr. K
Mr. L
Mr. Mc
Ms. R
Mr. S
Mr. S

Financial Statement

Balance forward	\$ 126.56
<u>Income</u>	
Memberships	\$ 120.00
Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust contribution	\$ 64.00
Interest	\$ <u>0.10</u>
Total income	\$ 184.10
Total	\$ 310.66
<u>Expenditures</u>	
Society annual report filing	\$ 25.00
Volunteer insurance: Speirs & Co. Limited	\$ <u>100.00</u>
Total expenditures	\$ 125.00
Balance	\$ 185.66

Note that the 2007 project costs do not appear on the balance sheet, as Fisheries and Oceans Canada Public Involvement Program (PIP) paid costs directly.

The Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust contribution made up for the rise in insurance cost as a minimum premium came into effect.

Projects

The stewardship in the society's name, Simms Creek Stewardship Society, involves two broad classes of activities: monitoring and action.

Monitoring activities never have the appeal that direct action does. However, knowledge of the creek and its riparian areas has shown itself to be critical to our ability to speak for the creek as urbanization nears its banks. The "Investigation" subsection outlines some of the activities that extend our knowledge of the creek.

The projects in the "Remediation" subsection constitute the action that stewards generally are expected to do. For 2007, those clean-up and fix-up projects emphasized water retention. The stewards have done more with regard to action, however. The "Input to Government" subsection describes the members' interaction with various levels of government. The interaction with the general public, to raise awareness about the watershed and its problems, comes under the "Public Outreach" subsection.

Finally, some of the assistance that members of Simms Creek Stewardship Society gave to other organizations in the community is listed under the "Helping Other Organizations" subsection.

Investigation

Exploration and Site Selection: Analogous to basic research and applied research are pure exploration and evaluation of sites for projects.

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On the exploration side, members continue to learn about the entire Simms Creek watershed, by walking it and observing it. Areas with beaver activity were hard to find in 2007. However, the activity that we did observe was poorly placed from a human-centric perspective: the upper McPhedran pond where a beaver attempted to fill up the gap between the weir and the Beaver Pond trail bridge, and the double culvert under Rockland Road.

On the site selection side, we came up with both negative and positive results. A low-relief terrain made siting of a weir on the South Fork at the Inland Island Highway undesirable. However, the enlargement of the Butterfly pond has already taken several steps to fruition.

Fish Counts provide an overall diagnostic of how livable the creek is for salmon. Two accurate counts are made each year. A count of adults that are returning to the creek to spawn provides an idea of how many eggs might be laid. A count of year-old Coho in the spring shows how many completed their fresh water stage.

Two thousand Coho left Simms Creek for their sojourn in the Pacific. That number could be characterized as fairly typical. However, it is valuable information in that very few adults returned in 2006 and five thousand hatchery Coho fry were placed in the creek in July. That means a survival rate of roughly forty percent. Funding for the spring counting services of Mr. C came from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and its Public Involvement Program.

The fall count of Coho adults returning to Simms Creek to spawn, allowed us to sigh with relief. The abysmal counts of the previous two years made the eighty-nine coho and the handful of chinook that arrived in 2007 seem a wealth of fish. However, on a longer time scale that richness only matches what previously had been considered a low-return year. Simms Creek still has plenty of capacity for recovery. Funding for the counting services of Mr. C came from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and its Public Involvement Program.

Mapping: For larger scale mapping, a GPS unit is used. For finer scales, especially for elevations, a surveying total station is used. Both are loans from Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust.

The GPS unit gave a streamline for a tributary in the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands, and an outline for the wetland near its source. As with a number of other tributaries, construction of a road or two (the rail bed of the Rail Trail, and possibly South Dogwood Street near Rockland Road) interfered with the original water flow. In what could be considered retribution, the tributary currently attempts to wet human feet by overflowing the Rail Trail for six months of the year.

The surveying equipment allowed the creation of contour maps, both of possible weir sites and of final construction.

Remediation

Additions of Salmon Fry: Because of the low adult return in fall of 2006, few Coho fry were expected for the spring 2007 hatch. To more accurately evaluate the survival rate, out came the scissors to clip the adipose fin of the hatchery fry destined for Simms Creek. Mr. P, the Community Advisor with Fisheries and Oceans Canada found our surgery skills superb, as he found only a few mortalities from the five thousand patients. Members, their families, and acquaintances all helped in distributing the fry into Simms Creek.

South Fork Weir: For the first time, a major water retention project took shape on the South Fork of Simms Creek. In previous years, observations noted Coho fry near the site (Rail Trail), but also noted their loss when pools dried up each summer. Hopefully, the slow release of water behind the weir will start to bridge the two or three week gap between the historical dry-up time and the fall rains.

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Huckleberry Weirs: Near Huckleberry trail in the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands, members created two low-height weirs from logs in 2005. One of the weirs lost its water-holding effectiveness because of undercutting. Large rocks were placed on either side of the weir to break up the spill and thereby to halt the undercutting.

Butterfly Ditch Weirs: A ditch along Butterfly trail carries water to join a tributary at the newly created Butterfly pond. A small expenditure in terms of funds and of effort saw the creation of several weirs. The water retention capability also was expected to be small and not measurable. However, it does fit with the philosophy of incremental improvements, countering the small negatives that each additional urban structure adds to the total stress on Simms Creek. Over the winter, the Butterfly ditch weirs have leaked far too much to hold back water. Sealing with mud will be attempted during the coming summer.

Gravel Placement: No additional gravel went onto the creek bed in 2007. However, an adult salmon was hanging around two of the gravel placements of previous years. One location was the Main stem at Rail Trail, and the other was the Main stem at the Huckleberry weirs. Apparently, our handiwork looked good enough for some serious consideration. Spawning at these locations could not be confirmed.

McPhedran Settling Pond: For the third rainy season in a row, the settling pond at a storm sewer outlet next to the McPhedran parking lot filled with material quickly. The pond received another round of dredging in 2007. Also, the flow from the pond received a bit of tweaking to encourage more water to take a path through a wetland instead of the shortcut to the Heritage Meadows subdivision. Perhaps the longer route through the wetland will sustain the flow in Tributary 3 longer into the drought season.

Trail Deactivation: As the number of recreational users of Beaver Lodge Forest Lands increases, so do the number of feet that stray from the authorized trails. Once vegetation is trampled, other people follow to find out what attracted the trailblazer. Too often, the result is a breaking of the creek bank, the start of an erosion gully. Trail deactivation and rehabilitation attempt to let plant roots hold slopes in place. A small group tackled a particularly steep spur trail off of Simms West trail. So far, the new vegetation is holding on, and has not been trampled. Unfortunately, a new spur appeared just a couple of meters away.

Trail Maintenance: Mr. Mc provided virtually all of this effort, improving the trails near the Sportsplex.

Invasive Removal: Invasives are non-native plants that spread easily and crowd out native flora. Almost always during removal of invasives, evidence of refuse dumping comes to light, suggesting that nearly all infestations could have been avoided if humans did not dump yard-waste at the forest edge.

The Campbell River Christian School Grade 10 class took on a patch of comfrey - twice - and the comfrey is still kicking. Comfrey has an amazing ability to continue growth from root fragments left in the ground, and even from those pieces of root left out to roast in the summer sun. Undoubtedly, a few more attacks will be needed just to keep even with the incredible productivity of this plant.

Opening up a new front, Mr. E and Ms. E removed English holly from along Rockland trail. English holly is far from spectacular in its spread from a single plant. However, birds probably are the reason for its spread into the forest, and many birds result in many plants. Scientists are finally awakening to the possible detrimental effects on the forest, after English holly has had plenty of time to exercise its stealth approach to invasion,

Along the lower stretches of Simms Creek, the battle against a *Lamium* patch that began in 2006, was at best a stalemate in 2007. The density of the patch and the vigorous re-growth did not allow the completion of the critical first clearing pass.

The *Lamium* patch used for the 2006 public awareness event near Juniper Street, has come back with a significant re-growth from seed. This is unusual for the *Lamium* battled so far. However, this patch always did have far more flowering than any other patch. Another significant effort at removal this year

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improved the look of the area - perhaps too much so. Within days, a neighbor thought it looked like a good place to dump more yard waste.

Several Lamium patches are in a low-effort maintenance phase. Patches near at the McPhedran parking lot and at the intersection of Huckleberry and ERT trails on the one hand were quick to clear (6 stems and 169 stems), but on the other hand have been cleared for several years now. The patch near the corner of Parkway and Alder was a surprise for its low effort, even though the patch was first cleared only in 2006. It also recovered with abundant mountain sweet cicely, rather than the more typical pacific bleeding heart.

The effort needed against Scotch broom along Rockland Road finally seems to be easing (118 stems) in its fifth year.

The Japanese knotweed at two locations along Airport Main continues with slightly reduced vigor. However, some stumps sprouted again in open air, after two years out of the soil. Some encouragement does come from more abundant pacific bleeding heart.

A very small patch of English ivy on Hideaway trail, after two full calendar years without re-growth, now can be declared eliminated.

Garbage: Mr. Mc continued his year-long battle against garbage near the Sportsplex.

Input to Government

Development Applications: As a matter of course, the City of Campbell River sends notice of proposed zoning applications and of proposed development applications to Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust, which forwards the notice to the appropriate stewardship group for comment. In 2007, an application on South Alder Street came with a note saying that there were no known streams or wetlands on the lot. The Simms Creek Stewardship Society response pointed out two streams and a wetland. Eventually, the biologist for the proponent concurred.

Coalbed Methane: Proponents of a project to drill for methane in coal seams made presentations to various groups in the City of Campbell River as a first step to obtain tenure. The first test wells would have been drilled in the Willow Creek and Quinsam River watersheds, but all were very close to Simms Creek, and the eventual production field of wells would have included the upper Simms Creek watershed. Several members of the Simms Creek Stewardship Society attended presentations by the proponent and a meeting sponsored by our MLA, Ms. Claire Trevena. So far, the project has not come up for action before either the Council of the City of Campbell River or the provincial government.

Public Outreach

Web Site: Simms Creek Stewardship Society spearheaded an effort to produce a web site for all of the stewards in the Campbell River area. The domain name www.crwatersheds.org is the starting point for access to information of any of the stewardship groups. The cover of this annual report shows the home page. The Simms Creek specific pages are largely filled in. Other stewardship groups will fill in their sections on their own timetables.

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Volunteered Time on Society Projects

The following table lists the hours that members and other area residents contributed to projects initiated by the Simms Creek Stewardship Society. Each of the projects has been described in earlier sections of this report.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Member hours</u>	<u>Other hours</u>
Exploration and Site Selection	4.6	0.0
Fish Counts	81.5	93.3
Mapping	22.7	45.4
Additions of Salmon Fry	26.0	22.5
South Fork Weir	46.4	5.8
Huckleberry Weirs	2.8	0.7
Butterfly Ditch Weirs	20.0	4.4
Gravel Placement	0.0	0.0
McPhedran Settling Pond	7.5	1.5
Trail Deactivation	2.0	8.0
Trail Maintenance	5.3	0.0
Invasive Removal	29.4	81.7
Garbage	11.0	0.0
Development Applications	7.7	3.0
Coalbed Methane	18.0	0.0
Web Site	18.0	0.0
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Total	442.0	378.2

Helping Other Organizations

Members of the Simms Creek Stewardship Society helped out other organizations in the community with the following events and projects. The hours volunteered total forty-seven.

Science Fair: Members helped out with the Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust booth at the fair. The focus was on the newly constructed watershed model that attempts to bring to the public an awareness of the myriad actions that affect watersheds throughout the region. Mr. E spent a considerable amount of time as a docent, presenting the watershed model and communicating with visitors about creek-related issues.

Watershed Walks: Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust and the City of Campbell River sponsored a series of walks throughout the summer. Ms. R led one walk with a theme about the problems caused by yard waste dumping in the forest. Mr. M and Mr. E led another walk with a theme about the need for a reliable flow of good quality water to keep the Coho salmon fry alive throughout the summer drought.

Regional District Walk: Mr. M led a walk along Stories Creek. He presented issues that apply almost equally to Simms Creek.

ElderCollege Walk: Mr. E led a walk of ElderCollege participants through the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands.

Ministry of Forests Walk: With their significant knowledge of Beaver Lodge Forest Lands, Mr. E and Mr. M helped Ministry of Forests personnel acquaint recent additions to the Nanaimo office staff with the research opportunities available in Campbell River.

Pacific Salmon Foundation: Its annual fund raising dinner took place on March 24.

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Oceans Day: Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust had a booth at the annual event.

Carcass Fertilizer: Nunns Creek and riparian area received a bin of spent pink salmon carcasses to use as fertilizer. The carcasses were spread along suitable stretches of the creek system.

Chum Eggs: A Fisheries and Oceans Canada project to start a chum salmon run in area creeks required egg collection from chum returning to the Campbell River.

Acknowledgment of Support

Simms Creek Stewardship Society could not have accomplished a number of projects in 2007 without support from other organizations and from the general public. We would very much like to thank:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada Public Involvement Program for financial support
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada for archiving services
- Mr. P of Fisheries and Oceans Canada for technical assistance
- Quinsam Hatchery for training and facilities use
- Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust for financial
- Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust for equipment loans, supplies and donated services
- Campbell River Christian School grade 10 students for project labor
- Ministry of Forests for invasives disposal
- Montana State University Extension Service for information on coalbed methane
- Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources for information on water quality baseline surveys

Simms Creek Stewardship Society also would like to thank the members of the community who contributed time to projects during the year.

Invitation to Participate

Membership in Simms Creek Stewardship Society is open to anyone in the community. The society is not just about fish counting. A broad spectrum of personal focus (e.g. nature interpretation, fund raising, publicity, web site master) can find a place in the society, thereby allowing us to expand our activities and to become better at stewardship of Simms Creek. The community calendars in the local newspapers lists the meeting times and locations, which usually take place on the third Wednesday of each month.

Membership is not the only path to contribution. Ideas for projects and communication of opportunities to acquire resources can be given to any member.