

# Simms Creek Stewardship Society Annual Report 2008



Cover Figures: The Butterfly pond after excavation. The black and white image contains the outline of the original pond. The labels outside the original pond indicate the two newly excavated areas.

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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

2008 continued to be a year of development pressures, although activity abated somewhat in the final quarter. The long anticipated development to the west of the Inland Highway began with the clearing of land adjacent to, or indeed part of, the headwaters of the north fork of Simms Creek. An application has been made by the City of Campbell River to have several parcels of land in this area removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve. As of this date, the Agricultural Land Commission has not made a decision. Our viewpoint on the removal was presented to City council at a public meeting in November.

The encouraging returns of adults in the fall of 2007 did not continue in the fall of 2008, unfortunately. There was, once again, the addition of 5000 hatchery coho smolts (adipose fin removed). Again, there were not enough hatchery chum fry available this year for any addition to Simms Creek.

We did two major projects in 2008. The Butterfly pond was enlarged to cover up to three times the original area and provide perhaps twice the volume. This will extend the time of continuous flow significantly. This project was funded by the Pacific Salmon Foundation. A second project saw the addition of gravel to the area below the counting fence location where spring salmon have been observed spawning in the past. We were able to purchase and add about 40 yards of spawning gravel to the creek, thanks to the financial assistance of the Campbell River Salmon Foundation and the Campbell River Community Foundation. For 2009 we will be looking for other areas where Butterfly pond - type projects might be done.

Mr. E  
March 2009

## Members

For the year 2008, 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. L  
Mr. McD  
Ms. R  
Mr. R  
Mr. AS  
Mr. WS

## Financial Statement

Balance forward	\$ 185.66
<u>Income</u>	
Memberships	\$ 120.00
Pacific Salmon Foundation grant (for Butterfly pond expansion)	\$ 1810.00
Interest	\$ <u>0.27</u>
Total income	\$ 1930.27
Total	\$ 2115.93
<u>Expenditures</u>	
Society annual report filing	\$ 25.00
Volunteer insurance: Speirs & Co. Limited	\$ 100.00
Pacific Streamkeepers Federation	\$ 15.00
Butterfly pond expansion	\$ <u>1109.00</u>
Total expenditures	\$ 1249.00
Balance	\$ 866.93

Note that the portion of the grant from Pacific Salmon Foundation in excess of the costs will be returned.

The cost of the gravel addition project was paid directly by the Campbell River Salmon Foundation, including funds from the Campbell River Community Foundation.

## Projects

The year 2008 saw the passing of the fifth anniversary of the founding of Simms Creek Stewardship Society. The society has matured enough to show that it has two voices.

One voice manifests itself in the opinions that it gives to officialdom, as described in the "Input to Government" subsection, in the interactions with the general public, as described in the "Public Outreach" subsection, and in the obvious changes brought about by the water retention and salmon related projects of the "Remediation" subsection.

The other voice only becomes manifest if it ever were to go quiet. The "Remediation" subsection also contains projects that the public should never notice because the result is a creek and surrounding forest that are restored to natural. The "Investigation" subsection outlines some of the activities that extend our knowledge of the creek, so that we improve our ability to speak for the creek in the future.

As in previous years, members of Simms Creek Stewardship Society continue to give to other organizations in the community. Some of that work is listed under the "Helping Other Organizations" subsection.

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### Input to Government

**Development Applications:** Simms Creek Stewardship Society members continued to provide input to the City of Campbell River with regard to the development on South Alder Street, including during a significant reshaping of the terrain. The society also provided input to the still pending application to remove land at the headwaters of Simms Creek from the Agricultural Land Reserve.

**French School:** The French language school district considered building on the School District No. 72 vacant lot on South McPhedran Road. The Simms Creek Stewardship Society comments, in combination with those of other groups in Campbell River, dissuaded the school district board from following through at that lot.

### Public Outreach

**Haig-Brown Symposium:** Simms Creek Stewardship Society presented an information display at the Haig-Brown Symposium.

**Website:** Ms. R published on [www.CRWatersheds.org](http://www.CRWatersheds.org) a description of her first year of activities with the Simms Creek Stewardship Society. The document conveys to anyone contemplating stewardship the wide variety of tasks that make up creek stewardship, and simultaneously, the plethora of ways that a person can contribute.

### Remediation

**Additions of Salmon Fry:** The adult return in fall of 2007 was much better than the previous year, but in no way could be considered stellar after reviewing records from even five years ago. Once again in June 2008, members, their families, and acquaintances all helped in clipping five thousand adipose fins, and then in distributing the coho fry into Simms Creek.

**Butterfly Pond Enlargement:** Below the water table, the ground does hold water, perhaps at about ten percent of the volume of what is usually called earth. Removing the dirt at the sides of an existing pond allows the full hundred percent of the volume to be water. Furthermore, evaluations of the forest in the Simms Creek watershed noted a lack of open water habitat. A grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation allowed the Simms Creek Stewardship Society to excavate the sides of the Butterfly pond. The approximate tripling of water surface hopefully will extend the flow of the tributary farther into the summer drought, as well as develop an open water habitat. In anticipation of new arrivals, bird boxes have been added to the forest-open water interface.

**Springbok Weir:** At one time, beavers had created a large pond just off the Springbok sewer line access road. As is typical after the beaver moves on, water found a way to break through the beaver dam. A group from the Lutheran church in town provided most of the muscle power to fill in once again the breach in the dam.

**Gravel Placement:** In previous years, chinook salmon have spawned in the short stretch of creek between the counting fence and the highway bridge. This year, a grant from the Campbell River Salmon Foundation and the Campbell River Community Foundation allowed us to add spawning gravel to that section of Simms Creek. There is now plenty of room for spawning. However, this fall's scarcity of adult salmon did not allow us any immediate satisfaction of seeing the gravel put to immediate use.

**Beaver Dam Control:** Beavers, on the whole, are beneficial to the watersheds in which they take up residence. On occasion though, their activities stress human structures. The beavers in the pond behind the northern McPhedran weir needed a bit of a curb on their ambitiousness. It seemed as if the speed of

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the beaver's construction exceeded the speed of humans pulling out material, but the occasionally lower water level avoided loss of trail and bridge.

**Beaver Emulation:** For reasons unknown, the south fork weir leaks significantly. Taking inspiration from beavers and their methods of dam construction, the Simms Creek Stewardship Society applied mud to the upstream side of the weir. Working without the skill set of a beaver, the leaks were not plugged, but there probably was some slowing of the leaks as observed over the winter.

**Re-placing Weir Rock:** Apparently, a dog is to fetching a stick as a human is to making splashes with rocks. Unfortunately, the rocks that are holding a weir in place are not good splash candidates. On two weirs, the lower McPhedran pond and the beaver baffle weir, rocks were pulled out of the water and re-placed on the weir tops.

**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 once again took on a patch of comfrey. 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. There is some suspicion that the tide of the battle has turned, although complete extirpation is still a long time in the future.

Along the lower stretches of Simms Creek, an important first complete cleaning of *Lamium* came to fruition. Future cleaning passes should proceed more quickly.

An isolated several-meter-diameter patch of *Lamium* along the paved bike path near Alder Street seemed suddenly to break out of its originally infested area in 2008. Thus, its priority level soared. A first complete cleaning pass was completed.

Several *Lamium* patches are in a low-effort maintenance phase. Patches at the intersection of Huckleberry and ERT trails and near the corner of Parkway and Alder were quick to clear. The patch near the McPhedran parking lot might have been declared extirpated at the end of 2008, but someone threw in a new bunch of *Lamium* still in its pot. By fall it had spread a few feet in several directions. Two other new infestations were caught early near the north gate on ERT trail and near the large sign on Rockland Road. Even though few stems are growing in any of these locations, years of occasional removal will be needed before extirpation is accomplished.

The following sites required only an hour or two of effort for their annual cleaning passes. The lower effort level does not imply that extirpation will come anytime soon.

- Scotch broom along Rockland Road
- Japanese knotweed at two locations along Airport Main
- Periwinkle at two locations on Hideaway
- Periwinkle at the junction of Norma's Loop and Huckleberry

**Garbage:** Mr. McD again this year picked up garbage near the Sportsplex.

When the City of Campbell River picked up garbage every two weeks, several cans worth of garbage appeared in the woods near the McPhedran parking lot. The garbage was finally removed this year, tickling hidden archeologist instincts, given the mix of items from daily living and of peculiar gee-gaws.

Mr. M cleaned the forest edge along Dogwood Street from Rockland Road to the Springbok sewer line access road. Then a month later, he repeated the task. From the second pass, he estimated that 10-20 pounds of garbage accumulates in that stretch in one month.

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Investigation

**Fish Counts:** 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.

Nearly twenty-four hundred (2384) Coho salmon left Simms Creek for their sojourn in the Pacific Ocean. A good third (819) were missing an adipose fin. Because five thousand hatchery Coho fry were placed in the creek in July of 2007, the survival rate was roughly twenty percent. Funding for the spring counting services of Mr. Dave Cuning came from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and its Public Involvement Program.

The fall count of Coho adults returning to Simms Creek to spawn was disappointing, only five. Funding for the counting services of Mr. Dave Cuning came from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and its Public Involvement Program.

**Mapping:** Even as maps achieve very high precision, the accuracy of the map might still be lacking. The map of Simms Creek still has holes.

The hole that is the tributary across Dogwood Street from Timberline / North Island College has been filled in, using the GPS unit borrowed from Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust.

Ms. R filled in a gap in the map of a section of lower Simms Creek. She plotted a number of wetlands on a bench next to the creek gully.

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>
Development Applications	1.3	0.0
French School	7.0	0.0
Haig-Brown Symposium	5.0	0.0
Website	5.0	0.0
Additions of Salmon Fry	21.2	25.6
Butterfly Pond Enlargement	14.5	3.0
Springbok Weir	2.0	8.0
Gravel Placement	11.0	6.0
Beaver Dam Control	10.5	0.0
Beaver Emulation	4.8	2.4
Re-placing Weir Rock	4.7	1.0
Invasive Removal	58.0	37.1
Garbage	9.5	0.0
Fish Counts	109.4	40.5
Mapping	29.5	19.4
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Total	293.4	143.0

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### 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 fifty-eight.

**Watershed Walk:** Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust and the City of Campbell River sponsored a series of walks throughout the summer. Mr. M led a walk through the Beaver Lodge Forest Lands with a stop to show off the new south fork weir.

**Campbell River Salmon Foundation:** Its annual fund raising dinner took place in March.

**Oceans Day and Rivers Day:** Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust had a booth at both annual events.

**Chinook Eggs:** A project to enhance a chinook salmon run at Philips Arm required capture of brood stock from the river running into Philips Arm.

**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 2008 without support from other organizations and from the general public. We would very much like to thank:

- Pacific Salmon Foundation for financial support
- Campbell River Salmon Foundation for financial support
- Campbell River Community Foundation for financial support
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada Public Involvement Program for financial support
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada for archiving services
- Mr. Barry Peters of Fisheries and Oceans Canada for technical assistance
- Quinsam Hatchery for training and facilities use
- Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust for equipment loans, supplies and donated services
- Campbell River Christian School grade 10 students for project labor
- Bethany Lutheran Church youth group and minister for project labor
- Ministry of Forests for invasives disposal

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 calendar in the local newspaper 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.