

# WATERSHED CONNECTIONS



FVWC Newsletter: 2010 Winter

2010 Issue 1

[www.fvwc.ca](http://www.fvwc.ca)

## Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition Launches New Website!

[www.fvwc.ca](http://www.fvwc.ca)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Fraser Valley Regional Watershed Coalition website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Projects, FAQ, About Us, and Contact Us. Below the menu is a large banner image of a river flowing through a green landscape. The text 'FVRWC Fraser Valley Regional Watershed Coalition' is overlaid on the banner. On the left side, there is a 'FROG BLOG' section with a frog image and a 'FVRWC Newsletter' section with a 'Subscribe' button. In the center, there is a 'Welcome to the Fraser Valley Regional Watershed Coalition website' section with a paragraph of text and a 'Job Postings' section with a 'Click to see postings' link. On the right side, there is an 'Upcoming Events' section with a list of events. At the bottom, there is a 'Visitors Counter' showing '000050' and a footer with contact information and copyright details.

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### Upcoming Meeting Dates

**Date:** March 18 2010  
**Time:** 7:00-9:00 pm  
**Location:** Abbotsford UFV campus  
**Presenter:** Jeanne Hughes, Fraser Valley Invasive Plant Council (tentative)  
Contact Rachel (see below) or visit our website for updated information.

### Contact Information:

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After a lot of hard work, mostly on Laurie Stott's (our website designer) part, we are launching our new website. It will be a dynamic, up to date place to check out all the projects and activities that the Coalition is involved in. Plus – it will also be featuring the new Frog Blog! The Frog Blog will keep readers updated and informed about the exciting work of Biologist Monica Pearson towards saving the endangered Oregon Spotted Frog.

Check it out and let us know what you think!

# Watershed Connections

## Looking Back on 2009

By Rachel Drennan and Lance Lilley

### Happy New Year!

The beginning of a New Year is a time for reflection of the accomplishments from the past year. Thinking back on all of the activities the Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition has been involved in during 2009, we can't help but feel optimistic and excited for where the Coalition is going and for another great year ahead.

To start, of particular significance was welcoming our new Outreach Coordinator, Rachel Drennan, to the team. Rachel has quickly become the new face of the Coalition, and has helped substantially with coordinating community events, plantings, meetings, and communication material.

We also have new headquarters (at the Cascade Institute at University of the Fraser Valley Chilliwack), a **new name** (we dropped the 'Regional'), and a new website ([www.fvwc.ca](http://www.fvwc.ca)). A big year indeed!

After 4+ years of meetings, tours, and input, we finally produced a final report for the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy (available at: [www.chilliwackwatershedstrategy.ca](http://www.chilliwackwatershedstrategy.ca)). Congratulations and thanks to all involved. Finishing the Strategy is just a beginning however – now comes the hard part (implementation and monitoring)!

In addition to significant habitat restoration projects we worked on in Silverdale and the lower Stave River, we also helped prepare a plan to update the Hammersley Pumping Station (Mountain Slough, District of

Kent), establish a new stewardship group for the Upper Pitt (the Upper Pitt Stewards), and continue water quality and fish sampling in Camp Slough (Chilliwack). For new projects, we recently entered into partnership with the Stave Valley Salmonid Enhancement Society and others as part of the fisheries compensation associated with the recent widening of Lougheed Highway in Mission. This project will be sure to keep us busy for the next few years.

We offered two Streamkeepers trainings over the summer and fall in 2009. They were very successful thanks to a great bunch of community members who were eager to learn and a fabulous teacher - Nicole Marples from LEPS. Our hope is that these like-minded community members will begin to have a better understanding of the streams and sloughs in their back yard and have the tools to look after them.

The Coalition participated in the Fraser Basin Council's Youth Mentorship program for 2009. Our mentee was Daniel van der Kroon, who or-



Stream keeper training October 24th 2009

ganized spawner surveys on Stoney creek. Many thanks to Daniel for all his hard work!

This fall also brought with it a very productive and successful planting season. The Coalition was involved in three major plantings: on the Little Chilliwack River, on a tributary of Atchelitz Creek (Chilliwack), and in Harrison Hot Springs (Miami River). The sheer number of volunteers that participated in these events was amaz-



Community planting along Miami River in Harrison (Nov, 2009)

ing. We can't thank them enough for making these plantings possible. Also a big thank you goes out to the two land owners in Chilliwack: Gwyn Joiner and Woodtone Industries, who were generous enough to allow us to take over their riparian areas for a day.

### Looking Ahead:

The good turnout and contagious energy at recent Coalition meetings and at various community events and plantings suggests we have momentum on our side. We are very enthusiastic that 2010 will prove to be another excellent year.

## Watershed Connections

FVWC Newsletter: 2010 Winter

### Looking back on 2009 Cont'd...

From our AGM in November, we are entering 2010 with a knowledgeable and passionate Board of Directors, consisting of Mike Pearson (Chair), Detmar Schwichtenburg (Vice-Chair), Dick Bunbury (Secretary-Treasurer), David Urban, Marion Robinson, and Jim Taylor. The one sad note is the departure of long time uber-passionate director, Tom Cadieux, to well-deserved retirement. His departure leaves a substantial void and some big shoes to fill!



Hope slough at Kinsmen Park, Chilliwack BC.

For 2010 we will be continuing water quality monitoring and stewardship activities along Hope and Camp Slough as part of the ongoing Evans Road compensation project. We will also be initiating exciting habitat restoration initiatives in Silverdale as part of the Lougheed Highway (Mission) compensation work, and will have continual involvement in

ongoing stewardship initiatives such as the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy, the Cultus Lake Aquatic Stewardship Strategy, and the Upper Pitt Stewards. Additionally, we are hoping (pending funding) to do more fish habitat work on the Lower Stave and pilot a watershed monitoring program for the Chilliwack River watershed using indicators of water-

shed health. Of course other projects will likely arise as well!

We are looking forward to a great year ahead of us and welcome your questions, comments, or concerns. If you would like to find out more about the Coalition, have ideas for a watershed project, or would like to become involved in helping your local watershed, contact Rachel Drennan at [fvrwc@live.ca](mailto:fvrwc@live.ca) or 604-791-2235.

Thanks everyone!



Tree planting at Woodtone. Over 500 trees planted in 1 hour!!!!



Daniel van der Kroon looking for Coho and Chum salmon in Stoney creek, Abbotsford BC.

## Watershed Connections

### A Day Through the Eyes of a Stream Mapper

By: Steve Clegg

*Steve has been working with Taara Environmental for the past 6 months on a Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory mapping project on Sumas Mountain.*

5:30am

Up early with the sun, I throw on the same dirty clothes I had worn while working in the streams and wetlands of Sumas Mountain the day before. With the distinct smell of wet moss still lingering on my wool sweater and the satisfaction of saving on laundry costs, I set out to meet up with my co-mapper.

As the newest member of the Taara Environmental mapping crew, I soon realized why there was a vacant position. The job posting might as well have read: Do you like tramping through kilometers of blackberry bushes? Do you prefer wet feet over dry ones? Do you enjoy pulling out salmonberry thorns from your fingertips? Do you like hiking terrain that a mountain goat would have second thoughts about? Do you love the feeling of mosquitoes sampling your red blood cells? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this is the right job for you!

To be honest, stream mapping is a wonderful job in many ways. Not only does it provide great experience for someone entering the environmental sector, but it also supplies valuable information to biologists, stewardship groups, and municipalities. Since the City of Abbotsford took over area 'H' on Sumas Mountain, they have proactively gathered data on its water features and species-at-risk. For consistency and accuracy in accumulating this data, Taara follows the Sensitive Habitat Inventory & Mapping (SHIM) protocols. Ac-

ording to the Community Mapping Network, the primary functions of SHIM are to:

- Identify sensitive habitats and resources;
- Integrate property boundaries and roads with locations of sensitive resources to facilitate community plans and development permit applications;
- Establish partnerships with governments, stakeholders, and the public to protect and manage fish habitat.

6:34am

Parked precariously on the edge of a mountain-side gravel road, Natasha Cox and I gear up for the day. Digging through our Rubbermaid storage container, I find the clinometer and slip it into my safety vest pocket. Scraping out the twigs, leaves, and soil that accumulated at the bottom of my hip waders, I find that my insoles are still wet from the day before and pull those out too. Natasha reaches into the trunk and pulls out the heavy Trimble GPS housed in its own backpack and connects the handheld data logger. Before heading out, I pack our lunches and the first aid kit as we will be out of civilization's sight for eight hours—batteries willing.

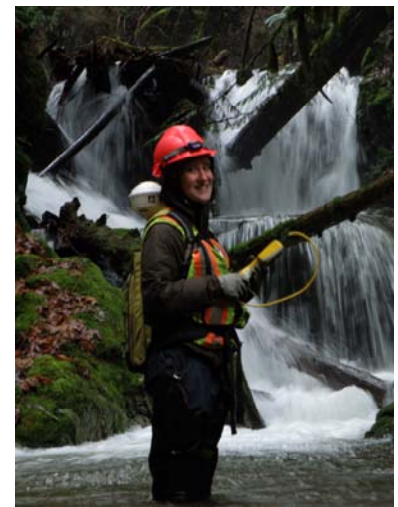
6:40am

Before dropping into the stream valley 49 meters below, I pull out the clinometer for interest's sake and measure the angle of our first decent: 58 degrees! Sliding down the shale slope, we scramble for the odd clump of sword fern or a vine-maple branch to stabilize our otherwise uncontrolled decent to the stream bed. After reaching the bottom we both do the first of many daily appendage counts. Two arms... check, 10 fin-

gers... check, one head... check.

Beads of moisture roll off the brims of our hardhats as the indecisive sky settles on rain for the day. After opening a new GPS file, we superimpose a property line map over our previously collected data. This shows our current location in relationship to our mapping boundaries and past work. As human digitizers we begin walking the stream's centerline to accurately mark its winding path through the dense second-growth forest. At each point where the stream changes character we stop and collect data such as:

- Stream gradient and bank slope,
- Stream bed composition,
- Forest/ vegetation traits,
- Stream width and depth, etc.



Steve's stream mapping partner, Natasha Cox, on Sumas Mt.

Each data entry point provides an incremental view into the ecological make up of the stream and its surrounding area. When combined in a geographic information system (GIS), this produces a digital representation of the area that is far more interactive and informative than a traditional topographic map.

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## Watershed Connections

### Miami River Streamkeepers Group

By: Janne Perrin

A group of interested citizens from Harrison Hot Springs met on October 9, 2009 with Mark Johnson, DFO Community Advisor for the Eastern Fraser Valley, to set up an official Streamkeepers Group. Two people present were former members of the Village of

Harrison Hot Springs' (VHHS), now disbanded Miami River Committee (MRC). Also present were two current members of the VHHS' s Parks and Recreation Commission.

After a walk from Spring Park to the mouth of the

river on Harrison Lake, a group discussion revolved around what had been done in the past by the MRC and what was doable in the future. Questions about the river's source, its flow, and environmental health led to the group wondering how the gates work at the mouth

"COHO SPAWNED IN IT IN THE RECENT PAST. CAN THE MIAMI SUPPORT THEM AGAIN SOON?."

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### A day Through the Eyes of a Stream Mapper con't.

1:19pm

As we slosh farther upstream towards its headwaters, the canyon narrows and the forest cover thickens. Our GPS reception fades as it is negatively affected by cloud cover, exposed bedrock, steep canyon walls, and dense tree cover, all of which we face in this situation. While the Trimble hums away searching for satellites, Natasha and I pull out squished pieces of lunch from the bottom of my backpack. To escape the relentless rain, we find an old uprooted hemlock tree to huddle under while enjoying our soggy sandwiches and deformed bananas.

1:30pm

Clouds continue to build aloft and fog slowly sifts through the cedar trees towards us. Still no satellite reception. We take this opportunity to search for species-at-risk that are a part of our SHIM data collection process. Scrambling around side slopes, peeking into rock crevasses, and checking back eddies; we find an Oregon Forest Snail as well as a Red-Legged Frog—registered as "Endangered" and of "special con-

cern" with the Species at Risk Act (SARA), respectively. After adjusting a few GPS settings, we are able to start collecting data again. Standing overtop each of our recent finds, we map the locations while recording each sites characteristics. This information will soon be used to further understand the habitat and distribution of all the species we record in the area.

2:32pm

After mapping numerous tributaries we continue towards the ridge-top. As the stream narrows it also deepens letting the cold water in through cuts in our boots from blackberries the day before. Upon reaching the streams headwaters, we take a GPS reading and type "stream starts from seep here". Ironically, the start of the stream marks the end of our day. Ducking under distorted limbs of vine-maples and shimmying along tree trunks that have fallen overtop of the dense underbrush like natural bridges, we slowly progress towards a clearing. Popping out of the rugged bush we stumble onto a manicured residential lawn. Standing at the

boundary between nature and nurture for a moment to adjust, we quickly snap back to the present when a stern faced landowner emerges from a shed nearby. After a few quick questions we are invited inside for a bowl of chili and a chance to warm up.

3:01pm

Back at the car, we compare water levels in our boots before putting away the rest of our gear. Clamoring inside, Natasha reaches for the heater and cranks it up to high. We exchange smiles and laughs as we do our last appendage count and plan for tomorrow. Driving off the mountain, we both sit silently thanking the creators of Gore-Tex after listening to Environment Canada deliver a severe weather warning for the next two days.

*Acknowledgements: Special thanks go out to the City of Abbotsford, Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Taara Environmental Ltd., and the Fraser Valley Conservancy for their roles in the Stream Mapping project on Sumas Mt..*

## Watershed Connections

### Miami River Streamkeepers Group con't.

of the river, who is in charge of the gates and whether the pumps are fish friendly. The engaging of partners, other knowledgeable individuals and funding was also talked over. As a result of this meeting an official application was submitted for membership in the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation and invitations to join the group were made to local citizens.

For our first "official" meeting November 7, 2009 as "Miami River Streamkeepers" (MRSk) twelve people turned out. To start the get-together the group viewed a comprehensive visual presentation produced by two MRC members. It showed

the Committee's work from 2006 to 2008 including mission, goals, objectives, drainage, wildlife, flood-gates, public education, revitalization, partnerships, and threats to the system.

Viewing this production gave rise to much discussion on the new group's direction and focus. To understand and improve the Miami was set as the goal for the MRSk. We decided to pull together a set of orthographic maps and look into the history of the river as first steps to achieving this goal. Other priorities discussed included surveying and water quality testing of the stream and review-

ing previously published reports on the Miami.

It is hoped through partnerships, networking, education, training and hard work, the MRSk can achieve its goal of understanding and improving the river. Coho spawned in it in the recent past. Can the Miami support them again soon?

MRSk meetings are held every 2 months, with the next date being March 16th. All are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Janne Perrin at [djperin@uniserve.com](mailto:djperin@uniserve.com).



Miami River at Spring Park and Lillooet (Dec. 23 2009)



Miami River at Spring Park footbridge (Dec 23 2009)

### Our Mission Statement

"To promote the understanding and action of communities in the Fraser Valley area to achieve healthy watersheds and the communities that they support".

The Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition is a non-profit society made up of dedicated individuals, groups, and agencies interested in improving the health of watersheds throughout the Fraser Valley.



#### Directors:

Michael Pearson (Chair)  
 Detmar Schwichtenberg (Vice-Chair)  
 Dick Bunbury (Secretary-Treasurer)  
 David Urban  
 Marion Robinson  
 Jim Taylor