



The Steward

Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre **The dream becomes reality this winter!**



As you might remember from our Spring newsletter, the Cowichan Land Trust submitted an application to build a nature centre in Cowichan Bay. After a number of successful fundraising events and campaigning throughout the summer, we were able to raise the necessary \$35,000 to be eligible for funding. We are happy to announce that funding has been approved and construction of the new nature at Hecate Park will begin this winter!

"The importance of the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre as a focal point to promoting environmental stewardship and protection of the ecological attributes of the Cowichan Bay estuary cannot be underestimated", states Electoral Area D (Cowichan Bay) Director Lori Iannidinardo. "The location of the nature centre at Hecate Park provides both a base to host environmental programs and education about the estuary and an opportunity to create greater

awareness of the influence of human activities on the estuary ecosystem. The Cowichan Valley Regional District is pleased to be able to support the Cowichan Land Trust's efforts to establish this much-needed environmental education centre within the Cowichan estuary."

The Land Trust also successfully received funding through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement Job Creation Partnership project. This allowed us to hire four participants, who will be busy clearing invasive species from CVRD parkland around the estuary, and building a trail and landscaping the undeveloped stretch of land to the west of Hecate Park over the next few months.

The project is being managed by the Land Trust's Estuary Nature Centre Management Committee. We are looking to create an Advisory Committee for the interpretive design and educational programming elements of this project. If you're interested in being part of the Advisory Committee, please contact Kai at kai@cowichanlandtrust.ca.

Donate!

Make a donation online at:
www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/help

or by cheque to: **Cowichan Land Trust**
6 – 55 Station Street, Duncan, BC V9L 1M2.

Please indicate that your donation is for the
Cowichan Estuary Interpretive Nature Centre.

www.cowichanlandtrust.ca

Sansum Point

Saved for future generations!

On September 1, 2011, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) took ownership of the 128-acre property, turning it into parkland for current and future generations to enjoy. The Land Conservancy (TLC) and the Cowichan Land Trust jointly hold a conservation covenant on the entire parcel.

With only five months to raise the necessary funds, assistance from the CVRD allows TLC and the Cowichan Land Trust more time to fulfill their remaining financial contribution of \$495,000. This three-way partnership is an important step for building future parkland acquisitions in the Valley.

"The CVRD is exceptionally pleased to have developed a working partnership with TLC and the Cowichan Land Trust to acquire Sansum Point. We look forward to continuing to work with these groups and with others to ensure that parkland and open spaces are available in the Valley. Sansum Point is a wonderful community asset and over time will become even more of a treasure," says Gerry Giles, CVRD Chair.



The two land trusts along with the Cowichan Valley community have done an amazing job of fundraising for the campaign. Renowned artist, Sue Coleman, created a beautiful limited edition giclee print titled Sansum Point, with a significant portion of each sale going to Sansum. Wilderness International and the Cowichan Tribes joined the cause through their fundraising event 'Take a Walk for the Wild'. As well, recent events by Wilderness Kayaking and Godfrey-Brownell Vineyards

brought in another \$5,000 for the campaign and, with the support of the Duncan-Cowichan Chamber of

Commerce, businesses like Godfrey-Brownell have agreed to take Sansum Point under its wing for the next year by hosting various fundraising events to keep the cause top of mind in the community.

So much of the energy driving this campaign has come from the local residents. It's amazing what can be accomplished when a community comes together. "Support to date has been overwhelming and we are extremely grateful for each gift. With a little more time, I'm confident we will reach our goal," says Bill Turner, TLC's Executive Director.



"We have created an action-oriented partnership that will ensure the protection of important areas for our grandchildren to enjoy," says Roger Hart of the Cowichan Land Trust. "This is a gift from our generation to the next."

Submitted by The Land Conservancy



We still have \$495,000 to raise! If you're interested in making a tax-deductable donation to the acquisition fund, you can send in or drop off a cheque to our office. Alternatively, you can donate using a credit card directly through our website at: www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/help

Friends of Cowichan Creeks

It's that time of year again when the days get cooler and shorter, the leaves begin to fall and the salmon return to our creeks to spawn. Through this project, we aim to make the creeks and the surrounding habitat better for the fish and wildlife that depend on them.

This past summer, we were busy undertaking habitat surveys of creeks in the Valley. We contacted landowners for permission to access the creeks then walked the streams, collecting data using the "Streamkeeper" methodology. This included assessing each habitat unit ("riffle" and "pool") within the stream for its fish value, including channel width and depth, percent cover, type and depth of riparian vegetation, bank stability and stream bed substrate, among others. This information will be used to write a Restoration Plan for the creeks, with activities that can be carried out by volunteers.



Some of this work has already begun! At the end of September, we participated in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup on Shawnigan Creek with students from Dwight International School (see picture, bottom right). In early October, Canada World Youth participants helped us clean up Averill Creek

Park in Duncan. In June and October members of the Treffery Creek Streamkeeper group joined our volunteers to clean up the Cowichan Valley Trail, which follows Holmes Creek. A big thank you to everyone for your support, including the Municipality of North Cowichan for providing supplies and picking up the garbage collected and John Scull for hauling away our scrap metal!

We will be hosting several work parties in the upcoming months, so be sure to check out the "Upcoming Events" section of our homepage. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer streamkeeper, would like to be added to our streamkeeper email list or want to sign up for one of our courses, please contact Jen at **250-746-0227** or email: jen@cowichanlandtrust.ca.

Streamkeeper Feature

Dear Jen,

This past year, I signed up for the Streamkeepers Course and the Bioengineering workshop.



Though I have been passionate about the environment for a number of decades, I had never learned about our waterways. I found these courses very interesting and have been using what I have learned in my daily job as a teacher at Dwight International School in Shawnigan Lake, BC.

This year I chose to hold an after school activity on Streamkeeping. This was a direct result of the course I took. I had 12 students sign up for this course, and have been teaching them how to measure a local stream. I am about to use the information I learned during the Streamkeepers course to teach my new Environmental Systems and Society class how to monitor the water around us.

As some of the courses I teach are at the International Baccalaureate level, the students must also do many experiments, preferably with an environmental focus. The courses I took have really helped me teach the classes in a more educated fashion, and the students have been very enthusiastic about our trips to the lake and rivers.

I just wanted to say thank you for offering these valuable courses because water is a very important part of our ecosystem.

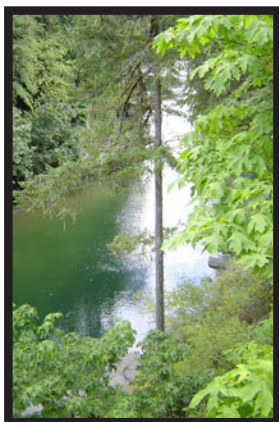
Sincerely,

Valerie Russell
Maple Bay, BC



Riparian Protection and Stewardship Project

This November, the Cowichan Land Trust applied for funding for the Cowichan Watershed Riparian Protection and Stewardship Project. The application was prepared and submitted in partnership with the Cowichan Watershed Board, Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society, Quamichan Watershed Stewardship Society, Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, Cowichan Lake Salmonid Enhancement Society and Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



This five-year project would begin in April 2012, with the intention of shifting the culture within residents and landowners of the Cowichan watershed to a "stewardship first" approach. The project focuses on a simple, clear classification of riparian habitat identifying benefits and threats, and forms the basis for priority setting. It will also focus on educating stakeholders and supporting riparian stewardship initiatives.

Project objectives include:

- *Developing a science based easily understood classification of riparian habitats.*
- *Establishing agreed upon habitat acquisition, protection, restoration and enhancement priorities.*
- *Establishing a "stewardship first" culture among Cowichan watershed residents/landowners.*

We are very excited and hopeful that our application will be accepted, allowing us to continue and expand on the work we are already doing in the Valley.

Did you know??

You can donate monthly to the Cowichan Land Trust through Canada Helps. Visit our website at: www.cowichanlandtrust.ca/help and click on the "Donate Now" icon:



You will be directed to Canada Help's website, where you can indicate you'd like to make a repeating donation, deducted monthly from your credit card. It's that simple!

Cowichan Land Trust: In and around the Valley



Patrick & Bruce Holms look for fish in Quamichan Lake at the 1st annual Quamichan Lake Fishing Derby



Sansum Point is a welcome stop for kayakers paddling in the Narrows



Enjoy the stunning views of Mt. Prevost from Cowichan Bay at sunset



Quamichan Watershed Stewardship Society Update

In May of 2011 the Quamichan Stewards hosted wetland specialist Tom Biebighauser to give a presentation on wetland restoration and assist them in identifying suitable wetland restoration sites. Several sites were visited and the Stewards are working with Nature Conservancy of Canada to complete a restoration at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve in the summer of 2012. Restoring and creating wetlands in the Quamichan watershed will help improve the water quality of Quamichan Lake by helping remove pollution from surface run off.

Many residences in the Quamichan watershed have old and possibly failing septic systems and the Quamichan Stewards would like to bring this important issue to everyone's attention. They have recently produced a brochure about septic system care and maintenance, and it is available at the Cowichan Land Trust and the Municipality of North Cowichan, or online at www.quamichanlake.ca.

If you visit Sterling Park on the shores of Quamichan Lake you may notice some new plants and shrubs. These were planted with the Young Naturalists Club to help restore the shoreline and absorb excess nutrients and pollution from surface run-off. The Quamichan Stewards are also working with the District of North Cowichan to extend a trail out to the fishing dock at Sterlings Park so that it can be accessed through the winter when the park floods. If you have never been to this park, it is well worth the visit!

Support the Nature Centre!

Fundraising to support the Centre continues. Right now we have limited edition giclée prints of "Fir Tree



on Mt. Tzouhalem #3" by local artist Peter Spohn available for \$140 – the perfect Christmas gift! \$100 from each purchase goes directly to the project. And we still have a few founding donor spots left.

Check out our website for more information!



Cowichan Volunteer Opportunities

Cowichan Land Trust

- Treffery Creek Youth Streamkeepers. Group meets on 2nd Saturday of the month, 10am-12pm.
- Riparian restoration work parties, including invasive species removal and tree planting. 1-2x/month, 2-4 hours.
- Member/volunteer management &/or fundraising. 1-2x/month, 2-4 hours.

Contact: info@cowichanlandtrust.ca

Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society



- Monitoring marine mammals (seals) in Cowichan Bay. 1x/month, 3 hours.
- Removal of invasive plants at Eves Park &/or Mt Tzouhalem. 3-6x/year, 2-4 hours.
- Forage fish sampling on beaches. 1x/month, 1-2 hours.

- Christmas Bird Count. January 1.

Contact: cvns@naturecowichan.net

Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society

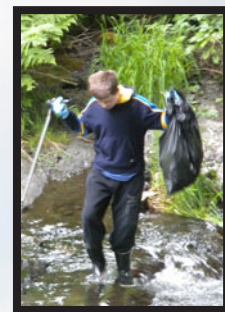
- Develop a communications strategy for the SMWS.
- Research and write history of Somenos.
- Member/volunteer management &/or fundraising. 1-2x/month, 2-4 hours.
- Help the SMWS develop an online presence.
- Water quality testing in Somenos Lake. 1-2x/month, 1-2 hours.

Contact: info@somenosmarsh.com

Young Naturalists Club

- Lead programs for children and families in the Young Naturalists Club. Jan-April. Group meets on one Tuesday and one Saturday each month, 10am-noon.

Contact: ync@naturecowichan.net



Western Toad Migration Project

This summer, we had the amazing opportunity to assist in the migration of Western toadlets from Wake Lake, located between Riverbottom and Barnjum Roads in Sahtlam with Biologists Shari Willmott and Elke Wind.

Each year, toadlets are run over by vehicles when they attempt to cross the road. Unlike frogs, toads only breed in water and spend most of their lives on land.

With the help of some enthusiastic volunteers, a plastic fence was built along the road edge with pitfall traps dug every 10-20 metres.



When the toadlets reached the fence, they were directed along the fence edge to the traps. Toadlets were then counted and carried across the road to wetted areas. Traps were emptied regularly both in the early morning and evening. In 16 days, we transported approximately 253,757 toadlets!

The data has been compiled into a report for Ministry of Transportation, who will then use the information to determine if they need to install a permanent fence and/or culverts. A big thank you to all who came out!!



Other ways to donate!

Next time you're doing some "spring cleaning" take your scrap metal to Steel Pacific and donate it to the Cowichan Land Trust. Make sure you sort your metal into two piles: ferrous and non-ferrous. You can do this by simply using a magnet. The metal that sticks (ferrous) is worth less than the stuff that doesn't (non-ferrous). By simply sorting your goods, you could increase the amount of money received.



You can also donate the money from your bottle returns to the Cowichan Land Trust. Just say you want to put it on our account. With this one simple action, you can help protect our environment, twice!

Membership

Membership to the Cowichan Land Trust is an important contribution to our continued presence in the Cowichan Valley and makes it possible for us to continue our work to conserve our natural heritage.

If you are interested in becoming a member or making a donation, please contact the office at:

(250) 746-0227

or visit our website at:

www.cowichanlandtrust.ca

Thank you to all our current members, volunteers and Directors for your support!

We would like to thank our Fall/Winter Newsletter contributors Jen Morgen, and Kai Rietzel.

And a special thanks to Amber Leigh Creative Design for the design layout!

The Cowichan Land Trust thanks our current funders!



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