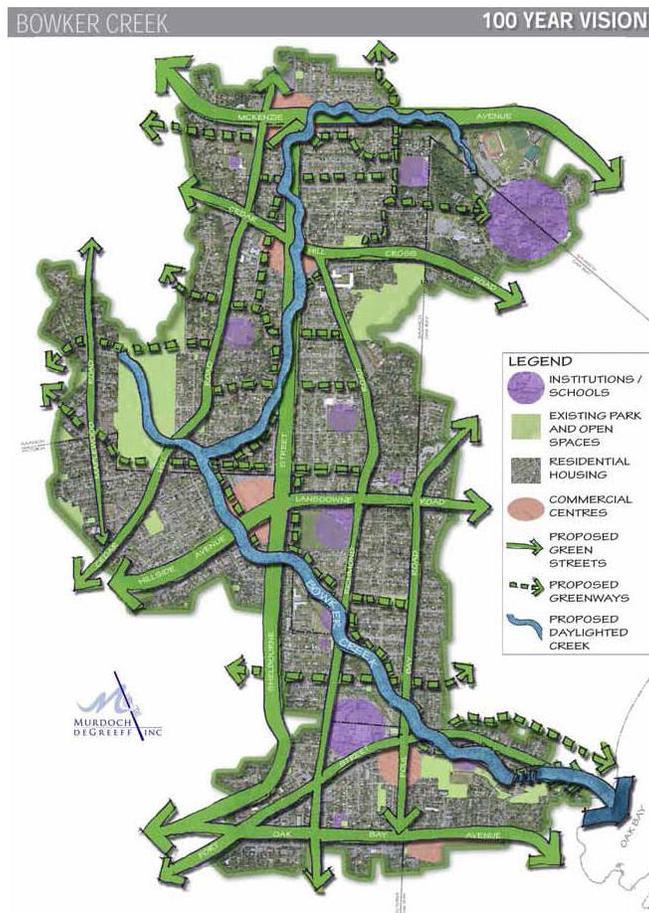




## Shared Responsibility: Local Government Perspectives on Developing and Implementing the 100-Year Action Plan for Watershed Restoration

Bowker Creek Forum Showcases Commitment to the Regional Team Approach



# Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-Year Action Plan to Restore Watershed

Water Bucket Web Story #4 posted February 2010

## Preface

Leading up to the Bowker Creek Forum, a set of four stories progressively foreshadow and/or elaborate on the core content for the Forum. A fifth story will document the Forum outcomes:

- 1. Week of January 25, 2010:**  
Story #1 titled *Convening for Action in the Georgia Basin: Bowker Creek Blueprint establishes precedent for moving from awareness to action* described the Bowker Creek Blueprint, summarized the process that culminated in the 100-Year Action Plan, and synthesized lessons learned.
- 2. Week of February 1, 2010:**  
Story #2 titled *Convening for Action in the Georgia Basin: Bowker Creek Forum promotes inter-regional sharing and collaboration* introduced the vision for collaboration among the three regions (CRD, north of the Malahat, Metro Vancouver); and described the 'regional team approach' to achieving water sustainability through implementation of green infrastructure.
- 3. Week of February 8, 2010:**  
Story #3 titled *Shared Responsibility: Community Perspectives on Developing and Implementing the 100-Year Action Plan for Watershed Restoration* described the role played by community groups and associations; and explained how community values influenced the plan development process and are reflected in the Bowker Creek Blueprint.
- 4. Week of February 15, 2010:**  
Story #4 titled *Shared Responsibility: Local Government Perspectives on Developing and Implementing the 100-Year Action Plan for Watershed Restoration* elaborates on what on-the-ground implementation means for municipal staffs which are tasked with making things happen.
- 5. Week of March 1, 2010:**  
Story #5 titled *Call to Action: Bowker Creek Forum advances a 'regional team approach' to watershed restoration in the Georgia Basin* will summarize what was accomplished by the Forum, and will foreshadow where the outcomes may lead.

These stories serve as resource materials for participants; and as a publicly accessible record of the Forum process.

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# Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-Year Action Plan to Restore Watershed

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## 1. Context

This article is the fourth in a series of resource materials for the 2010 Bowker Creek Forum. The organizing team is encouraging participating planners, engineers and other practitioners and community members to take the time to read and reflect on these articles in preparation for the interactive segments at the Forum.

### The Bowker Creek Initiative

Established in 2004, the *Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative* (BCI) is a unique multi-jurisdictional effort. Local governments, community groups, post-secondary institutions and private citizens are collaborating to improve the health of Bowker Creek and its watershed.

Major breakthroughs happen when decision makers in government work with grass-roots visionaries in the community to create desired outcomes. This is the essence of the Bowker Creek story.

The BCI is of provincial significance because it is demonstrating how to apply a 'regional team approach' to urban watershed management and restoration in the Georgia Basin.

**Regional Team Approach:** Historically, the Province has enabled local government by providing policy and legal tools in response to requests from local government. Local governments can choose to act, or not.

"This enabling philosophy has become a driver for a *regional team approach* as the way to achieve water sustainability outcomes. The CAVI team believes this desired future will happen through implementation of green infrastructure policies and practices," states **John Finnie, Chair** of Convening for Action on Vancouver Island, known by the acronym CAVI. In his day job, he is General Manager, Regional & Community Utilities, with the Regional District of Nanaimo.



**Collaboration and Alignment:** The *regional team approach* is founded on partnerships and collaboration; and seeks to align actions at three scales – provincial, regional and local.

"Everyone needs to agree on expectations and how all the players will work together; and after that, each community can reach its goals in its own way," states **Eric Bonham, Past-Chair** of the Highlands Stewardship Foundation. A founding member of CAVI, he is a former Director in both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.



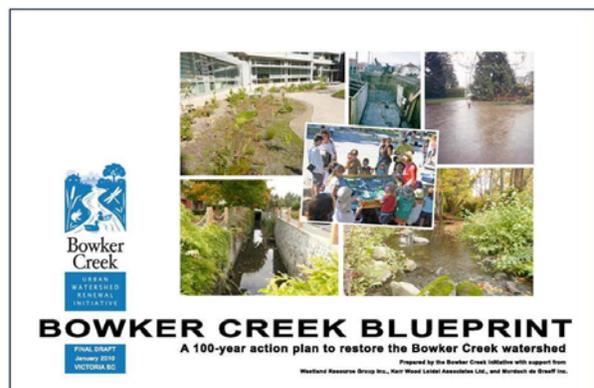
"The Bowker Creek Blueprint is an example of a 'top down bottom up' approach that demonstrates collaboration, shifts values and inspires action."

### Bowker Creek Blueprint

"The BCI developed the Blueprint to guide watershed and creek corridor restoration as the watershed redevelops over the next 100 years." states **Tanis Gower, BCI Coordinator**.



"Because change can be slow in the urban environment, implementation will take decades. Having an action plan in place will ensure that positive changes can happen incrementally, and that opportunities for major improvements can be realized as they arise."



# Bowker Creek Blueprint: A 100-Year Action Plan to Restore Watershed

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## 2. Local Government Engagement

The Bowker Creek Blueprint represents the new way of doing business. According to **Jody Watson, BCI Chair**, “The plan could easily have been creek-centric and engineering-oriented; in other words, a glorified master drainage plan. Instead, the BCI collaborative approach in tackling watershed restoration holistically has resulted in a Blueprint that is truly integrated in connecting the dots between land use and stream health.”



“Our Bowker Creek experience shows that municipal staffs and community representatives must be hands-on in developing a watershed restoration plan. Involvement is what creates the sense of ownership.”

### Municipal Staffs Provide Leadership

This article tells the story of four of the many municipal staff members who helped develop the Blueprint. Through their participation on the BCI Steering Committee, this foursome has contributed to the successful demonstration of the regional team approach:

- **David Marshall** – Director of Engineering Services, City of Oak Bay
- **Steven Fifield** – Manager of Underground Utilities, City of Victoria
- **Adriane Pollard** – Manager of Environmental Services, District of Saanich
- **Anne Topp** – Manager of Community Planning, District of Saanich

“When I met with each of the four to learn their stories, our conversations provided me with insights into how the integration of their planning and engineering perspectives has had an influence on the BCI process,” states **Kim Stephens, Program Coordinator** for the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia.



### Lessons Learned from BCI Process

The BCI Steering Committee has identified seven distinguishing characteristics that capture the essence of lessons learned and experience gained. Listed below in order of significance, this set of key messages provided the backdrop for conversations with the four municipal leaders:

1. Community Values Drive BCI and Blueprint
2. Coordinator Role is Crucial
3. Outreach – A Powerful Tool
4. Commit to the Vision
5. Integrate Watershed & Creek Actions
6. Regional Alignment Starts with a Regional Team Approach
7. Blueprint Allows for Climate Change

Story #1, which is titled *Convening for Action in the Georgia Basin: Bowker Creek Blueprint establishes precedent for moving from awareness to action*, elaborates on each of these key messages.

“There is a story behind each ‘learning’; and these stories are central to the founding of the BCI and the development of the Blueprint,” comments Jody Watson.



David Marshall



Steven Fifield



Adriane Pollard



Anne Topp

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## **3. Commitment to the Regional Team Approach**

David Marshall and Steven Fifield have been involved with the BCI since 2006, whereas the participation of Anne Topp and Adriane Pollard dates back to the 2002 Watershed Forum. The outcome of that event was the *2003 Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan*, which in turn led to the Bowker Creek Initiative.

### **Reconnecting with the Vision**

“Looking back, the turning point occurred in November 2008 when the steering committee brought in a third party to facilitate the internal conversation. That allowed us all to take a step back and look at the big picture instead of getting stuck in the details,” recalls Jody Watson.

“Out of this renewal process came a reaffirmation and a recommitment to the Bowker Creek Vision by all the partners. At the same time, the partners developed a Members Agreement to work cooperatively. This agreement created a better understanding of the desires, constraints, and job realities of everyone around the table.”

“The US versus THEM way-of-thinking changed to the WE paradigm. The players around the table realized that they can help each other.”

### **Adriane Pollard: In Her Own Words**

“The Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay portions of the Bowker Creek watershed are very different. Yet, it is essential that we be supportive of each other and work as a team.”

“When we get together, we talk about what part can we all play in reaching a mutual goal, whether it involves funding, expertise, or facilitation.”

“Implementing the Blueprint is all about shared responsibility. We often need to remind ourselves to move beyond the attitude that we are not involved simply because something is not within our boundaries. The message is that WE all want this done. So we must help each other in any way that we can.”

### **Steven Fifield: In His Own Words**

“My experience when we day-lighted Cecilia Creek in the late 1990s has shaped my thinking about collaboration, partnerships and integration. I have learned that it’s all about relationships.”

“The Cecilia Creek project involved a multitude of agencies and groups. A lot of people had to think differently to make the day-lighting come together, and they did. There were no roadblocks, and the project was a success.”

“Similarly, with the BCI, everyone is committed to the watershed. As people come up with good ideas, we determine how to frame those ideas so that those ideas will be successful.”

### **Anne Topp: In Her Own Words**

“Having a coordinator was huge; and the decision to designate municipal staff to sit on the BCI committee was equally important. This gave us a mandate to help direct and inform the process.”

“It also allowed us to draw on other departments as needed. This meant that we had the right expertise to oversee the right work. Everybody had a place in this initiative, and the community kept us grounded.”

“A number of key people have been involved since Day One. This has ensured consistency. Also, the 100-year context for the action plan gives us the ability to work towards the vision.”

### **David Marshall: In His Own Words**

“The City of Oak Bay is a fully developed municipality, and redevelopment is generally limited to replacement of single family homes.”

“As the housing stock turns over, this means that Oak Bay’s contribution to watershed restoration will flow from the City’s requirements for stormwater volume reduction on single family lots. This is a long-term commitment. The City is cognizant of the benefits that accrue over time.”

“Onsite rainwater management is new territory for Oak Bay. So, we will be looking to learn from and apply the experience of Saanich, Victoria and other municipalities.”

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## 4. Rain Gardens on the Road to Watershed Restoration

Steven Fifield and David Marshall are enthusiastic about rain gardens and how these green features can make a difference in achieving the watershed restoration vision over time.

### Bowker Creek 'Greenprint' in Victoria

"Within the City of Victoria, we are branding the Bowker Creek Blueprint as the GREENPRINT. We are doing this to emphasize that the road to watershed restoration will be green. In 100 years, Victoria will be much greener," states **Steven Fifield**.

"When undertaking infrastructure projects, we now ask ourselves what are the opportunities to do business differently so that there will be long-term benefits for the watershed."



**Trent Street Rain Gardens:** "The City decided to showcase green infrastructure in Victoria by constructing the Trent Street Rain Gardens. This is our demonstration project. Rainwater that previously flowed directly into Bowker Creek through the storm drain system is now directed into two gardens. This both treats and reduces the runoff volume."

"This type of green feature is the future of good watershed management in Bowker Creek and other watersheds in our region."



### **Collaboration, Collaboration, Collaboration:**

"In undertaking Trent Street, I had the benefit of the Cecilia Creek day-lighting experience: that is, a successful project where everyone worked together. Over 34 years with the City of Victoria, these two projects are my career highlights," continues Steven Fifield.

"The main difference between the two projects was that Cecilia had a finite goal whereas Trent Street is the first project in a long-term strategy."

"The commonality is the collaboration that ensured a successful outcome. In both cases, collaboration fostered collegiality among the participants. This good feeling, in turn, released an energy that fed on itself and got people really excited about what we were constructing."

### **Connecting with the Community:**

"Over the course of my career, the relationship between the community and municipal staff has been changing. In the old days, we sent a letter and then showed up on-site to do the work. Now we engage the community to get early buy-in."

"On Trent Street, we recognized the proximity of Bowker Creek and we saw the opportunity to retrofit the rain gardens. We also involved St. Patrick's School so that the children could learn about the importance of the rain gardens in protecting stream health."

"The positive publicity that the rain gardens have generated has been great. Trent Street is a momentum-builder. It is changing the culture in the City in terms of how we look at projects."



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## Opportunities in Oak Bay

“The vision and passion that Taylor Davis, an Oak Bay resident, has demonstrated by constructing a rain garden on his single family property.....has obviously had an impact on David Marshall,” observes Kim Stephens. “David’s enthusiasm was evident when he showed me a series of images generated by Taylor Davis.”

**Taking the First Incremental Steps:** “I have introduced the rain garden concept to our mayor and council and they have expressed an interest in incorporating such treatments into our day-to-day operations,” reports **David Marshall**.

“I would say that Oak Bay will continue to improve day-to-day operational procedures in an environmentally responsible fashion. In doing so, many of the objectives aspired to in the Bowker Creek Blueprint will be addressed.”

“Taylor Davis has provided examples of how we could incorporate rain gardens in our boulevards.”



**Application of LIDAR:** David Marshall also sees the potential to apply LIDAR optical remote sensing technology to drainage planning. LIDAR is a tool for accurately determining flow paths in order to locate rain gardens in optimum locations. Taylor Davis is again the source of inspiration.



**Creek Restoration at Oak Bay High:** “The second tier of the Blueprint involving major capital works (e.g. increasing capacity, ‘day-lighting’ the creek, acquiring property etc.) would be further down the road. The Oak Bay High replacement project will no doubt consider Bowker Creek in its design,” continues David Marshall.

Bowker Creek runs along the edge of the property in a narrow, deep ditch with a concrete bottom. The school is aging, and the school board has decided to construct a new building. This creates an opportunity. The Bowker Creek Blueprint provides specific guidance for stream and corridor restoration.



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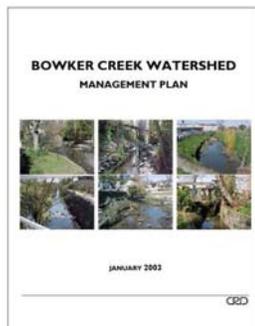
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## 5. 2003 Watershed Plan Guided the BCI Process

In 2002, the CRD's Rob Miller and community steward Ian Graeme collaborated to convene the *Bowker Creek Watershed Management Forum*. This gathering of municipal representatives, community organizations and residents developed the following Vision Statement for the watershed:

- *The varied human uses and natural areas in the Bowker watershed are managed to minimize runoff and pollution, making Bowker Creek a healthy stream that supports habitat for native vegetation and wildlife, and provides a community greenway to connect neighbourhoods.*

In 2003, the municipalities of Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria, and the CRD Board approved the *Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan*. The BCI was established and a part-time coordinator was hired in 2004. Adriane Pollard and Anne Topp both emphasized the strategic importance and the enduring value of the 2003 plan in laying the foundation for the Blueprint.



### Less is Better

"In 1997, the CRD established an order-of-priority for developing watershed plans. Bowker Creek rose to the top in 2000 following completion of the Craigflower and Millstream plans, both of which we had heard quickly became documents that sat on a shelf," recalls **Adriane Pollard**.

"At the 2002 Forum, the Craigflower and Millstream experiences were fresh in our minds. One of the lessons learned was that 'less is better'. Those two plans were overwhelming. So, in commencing the Bowker Creek process, we decided that we had to focus our efforts and stick to what is important and of interest; we had to resist the temptation to try to do everything."

### Four Goals and Nine Actions

"The 2003 watershed plan is concise. We kept it relatively simple. It only has four goals and nine actions," continues **Anne Topp**. "Four is a manageable number. We did not want to dilute our focus."

"Another critical consideration was early acknowledgment that the plan would not be fish-based. There was recognition that Bowker Creek is an urban watershed."



"This meant that the plan emphasis would be on livability, quality of life, and respect for the environment. We wanted to introduce our children to the environmental qualities that we value."

### Too Many Unknowns to Make a Decision:

"While limiting the number of goals was a smart decision, years later it became apparent that there were unintended consequences associated with the proposed action statements, even though they too were few in number," states Adriane Pollard.

"Once we began looking at specific applications, we found that there were just too many options associated with various action statements; and



there were too many unanswered or unanswerable questions. From the municipal perspective, this had a paralyzing effect on the decision process."

"The generic action statements in the 2003 plan were not sufficiently practical because they did not address the many unknowns." However, we used the plan and the time to raise the profile of the watershed and conduct studies which were identified in the original plan."

### Knowledge-Sharing to Develop Solutions:

"This problem had a silver lining. It led us along a path to a different approach; it led us into a reach-by-reach discussion and a sharing of knowledge to determine the best use and best solution for each reach. This was a transformational experience, and had major implications for the Blueprint development process as a whole."

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## 6. Knowledge-Sharing Resulted in 'Integration'

According to Adriane Pollard, the reach-by-reach sharing of knowledge had two unforeseen consequences: first, it enabled the BCI to truly achieve integration; and secondly, it culminated in the decision to step away from an approach that relied on the 'ISMP Template'.



The ISMP Template is built around a data-intensive process. It is also output-rather than outcome-oriented. The template was originally developed in 2002 for the Metro Vancouver regional district to support integrated stormwater management planning (ISMP).

### What Distinguishes the Blueprint?

"A distinguishing feature of the Bowker Creek Blueprint is the level of planning detail that characterizes each of 17 creek sections," states **Tanis Gower**. "This includes rating how proposed actions address the Watershed Management Goals; as well as identifying the lead agency, the type of work, and the source of funding."

**Inter-Disciplinary Roundtable Process:** "The desired solution for each creek reach was a group decision," explains **Adriane Pollard**. "There was considerable information available in previous reports, some of it conflicting. It was a matter of compiling the information in a way that allowed us to have an informed discussion."



"Then we applied our best judgment reach-by-reach. We integrated the information. The integrating process was a reflection of all the professions and interests around the table. The people may have changed on occasion, but the various perspectives were still represented."

### The ISMP Became the Blueprint

"We had been going down the road to develop the Terms of Reference for an ISMP. But we saw that we were losing integration in the process. We already had all the information that we needed. We just had to get on with integrating it," continues Adriane Pollard.

"In a sense, the ISMP became the Blueprint. We left the ISMP idea behind. By going in a different direction, we removed the single focus of stormwater. By then, it had become clear that we could not decide what to do with stormwater unless we dealt with the other issues first."

"Another reason for stepping away from the ISMP Template is that we did not want to do another study. Also, it wasn't about integrating stormwater; it was about integrating EVERYTHING."

"Looking back, the failure to get funding was probably the key to stepping away from the ISMP Template and moving forward with the Blueprint."

**This is What We Need to Do:** "Once there was a consensus that the ISMP Template does not help municipal staffs and would not give us an integrated solution, we then focused our attention on *'this is what we need to do'* and we moved away from an engineering-centric approach," continues **Jody Watson**.

"We asked ourselves: what tasks do we have to pay someone to do; and what tasks can we do ourselves. We said, for example: do we really need to do drainage modeling!"

"We had considerable discussion about who to hire to help us through an iterative process, especially when we would be the ones making the decisions as to what solution is most appropriate for each reach. This led to the decision to hire an experienced facilitator who worked directly with the committee and coordinated the inputs from a team of specialist consultants."

"The Blueprint is not a creek corridor plan. Land use is the biggest part of the Blueprint. The BCI evolution from a creek to a watershed perspective happened organically. This underscores the importance of stepping back to look at the big picture and getting the context right."

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## 7. Moving from Planning to Implementation

Anne Topp emphasizes that having a designated Coordinator since 2004 has been an essential ingredient in Blueprint development. This raises the question about a continued financial commitment by the three municipalities.

### Coordinator Role is Crucial

“I am convinced that the BCI success started with the hiring of a Coordinator,” states Anne Topp. “It meant one person was responsible and had dedicated time for setting up meetings, writing up minutes, and getting work done. Also, having a Coordinator helped us obtain grants.”

“The Coordinator function is cost-shared inter-municipally and in Saanich inter-departmentally. This was a commitment arising from a Council decision to support implementation of the 2003 Watershed Plan. While we may not have expected the core funding to be forever, the question now is this: Going forward, will the decision on whether or not to have a Coordinator make or break implementation of the Blueprint?”

### Embedding the Blueprint

“The trick will be to take many of the individual actions in the Blueprint and move them into capital budgets over time. It is only through funding that they will be assured of implementation,” reflects Anne Topp.

“Creek day-lighting is one initiative that could be particularly challenging because it depends on the stars being aligned just right to co-ordinate the many elements needed to achieve day-lighting within a built-up urban area.

“Getting the Blueprint to be part of the organizational culture of each municipality is a critical element. This is why the experience continuity is so important. Those of us who have been involved from the beginning have the context that we can share with our colleagues.”

“Implementation requires ‘careful management’. We need to be out in front, but not too far in front. Timing is everything.”

### Blueprint Linkage to Shelbourne Corridor Action Plan

The intent of the Shelbourne Corridor Action Plan is to develop a comprehensive, long range (20 to 30 year) vision for an area 500 m on either side of Shelbourne St. from North Dairy Road in the south to Feltham Road in the north. This Corridor includes 4 Centres of mixed use (commercial, institutional, residential) development.

The creation of a balanced transportation corridor that accommodates walking, bicycling, transit and private motor vehicle use is a major objective. Other Plan objectives encompass protecting and enhancing the Corridor’s natural environment, including Bowker Creek.



**Visualizing the Future:** “The Shelbourne Plan could help through policy connection to institutionalize and help drive early implementation of the Blueprint. reports Anne Topp. “How the story of the Bowker Blueprint and the vision for the Shelbourne Corridor are blended and the story articulated to mayor and council will be important. How the two are linked may be crucial to the ultimate success of both plans.”



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## Engaging the Elected Representatives

“The BCI steering group has always been cognizant of the need to inform the elected representatives at key junctures in the process,” states Anne Topp.

“The watershed tour for politicians really raised the profile of the BCI,” adds Adriane Pollard. “Our approach to securing Council buy-in has been low-key.”



“The BCI has focused on engaging politicians at all three municipalities. Beyond the regular council presentations and updates, local councillors have participated in many outreach events, sign unveilings and tours of the watershed so that they are informed about what the BCI is doing and they have a clear understanding of what the residents living in the watershed want,” elaborates Jody Watson.

**Blueprint Sets a Direction:** “The Blueprint is a good tool for bringing the three municipalities and their communities together,” continues Adriane Pollard. “The BCI steering committee believes we will see more action now.”

“Because there is no price-tag attached to the Blueprint, our sense is that Councils will not feel that they are committed to spending large sums of public monies.”

“Overall, we anticipate that the three Councils can support the Blueprint because it sets a direction without having to make a specific commitment to a particular project. On the other hand, if there is a willingness to invest in watershed restoration, then the Blueprint identifies WHAT can be done, and HOW it can be done.”



## Ten Key Actions

“The BCI will be asking the three municipal Councils to formally endorse the Blueprint,” states Jody Watson. “The BCI steering committee believes that a key factor in securing political commitment will be the way recommendations are provided at two scales: watershed-wide activities and policies; and specific on-the-ground actions for each of the 17 creek sections.”

**First Steps in the First Five Years:** To generate early momentum, the BCI has identified ten key actions that are important first steps for municipalities and other land stewards in the first three to five years, as follows:

1. Review and revise municipal plans to include Bowker Creek goals and actions;
2. Adopt requirements to reduce effective impervious area for new developments;
3. Remove specific invasive species beginning to colonize the watershed;
4. Complete a pilot project to locate and build a demonstration rainwater infiltration/retention structure in each municipality;
5. Support development of an urban forest strategy in Oak Bay to complement those underway in Saanich and Victoria;
6. Develop a strategy to acquire key properties as they come available;
7. Work with Oak Bay High School to design and implement creek restoration on school district property;
8. Participate in the *Shelbourne Corridor Action Plan* process, to identify current and future opportunities for creek restoration, rainwater infiltration and/or greenway development;
9. Work with creek-side landowners between Pearl and Trent Streets to achieve the long-term vision; and,
10. Continue with restoration at Browning Park.

“Other municipal initiatives, such as the **Urban Village Centres** and the **Urban Forestry Stewardship Initiative** in Saanich, will definitely help advance the Blueprint vision and goals,” concludes Anne Topp.