

Thinking outside the pipe

The City of Courtenay and the Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards are using a unique web-based tool called the Water Balance Model for British Columbia to calculate the impact of development on rainwater run-off and streams.

What is the best combination of rainwater management practices that will reduce run-off and maintain creek flows for salmon? As the Comox Valley embarks on another growth spurt, the answer to this question can mean the difference between a stream that is able to support salmon and one that can't.

The Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards (the Stewards) and the City of Courtenay are pleased to bring the team of Kim Stephens and Doug Backhouse, representing an inter-governmental partnership, to Courtenay to lead a hands-on training workshop on the Water Balance Model specifically for members of community environmental organizations.

"The Partnership developed the Water Balance Model to help communities explore alternatives to piping rainwater," says Stephens. He adds, "It's an educational and decision-support tool that allows the user to quantify the effectiveness of site designs and make commonsense improvements in rainwater management practices at the site level."

Under an outreach and continuation education program funded by the Real Estate Foundation and the Georgia Basin Action Plan, Stephens and Backhouse have been delivering work-



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shops over the last year to a variety of audiences encompassing elected officials, local government staff, municipal advisory committees and the land development community. "Application of the Water Balance Model encourages all design professionals to think about the built environment in balance with the natural environment. The goal is greener communities that achieve higher levels of watershed and stream protection," says Stephens.

"This will be a useful tool for community stewardship groups," says Angela Smailes, program co-ordinator of the Stewards.

The workshop takes place Saturday, June 5 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Courtenay campus of North Island College on Ryan Road. The workshop is free of charge and lunch is provided. Space is limited, so register early. Phone Angela Smailes at 336-2498 or e-mail asmailes@shaw.ca to book a place.