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Oak Bay High School's outdoor classroom at Bowker Creek opens

Michael D. Reid / Times Colonist

MARCH 2, 2016 06:00 AM



Bowker Creek, during habitat enhancement work last summer near Oak Bay High School. Peter Fassbender, B.C. minister of community, sport and cultural development, said Tuesday: "We are thrilled to see not only the restored creek, but also a new community greenspace and outdoor classroom that will let everyone learn more about this great natural amenity."

Photograph By DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

The public got its first look Tuesday at the restoration of a section of Bowker Creek that flows alongside Oak Bay High School property.

B.C. minister of community, sport and cultural development Peter Fassbender and Oak Bay Mayor Nils Jensen spoke during the unveiling at the high school's outdoor classroom.

The restoration is one of 10 short-term actions in the Bowker Creek Blueprint, a 100-year vision for restoring the health of the urban watershed that will improve water quality, habitat and flow conveyance.

"We are thrilled to see not only the restored creek, but also a new community greenspace and outdoor classroom that will let everyone learn more about this great natural amenity," Fassbender said.

The project, made possible with a \$738,000 contribution from the federal gas tax fund, integrates watershed management with the creation of new public spaces.

Features include a winding creek that mimics a more natural watercourse, native plantings by students and community members, an accessible pathway and a viewing area.

"The outdoor classroom and new curriculum designed around the creek gives our students the chance to learn about freshwater biology, creek hydrology and the adaptive capacity of waterways," Jensen said.

"We couldn't be more pleased to be a partner in this innovative project."

Amarjeet Sohi, federal minister of infrastructure and communities, said the restoration project underscores the value of B.C.'s partnership in the federal gas tax program.

"Through this restoration project, we have cultivated a beautiful green space for community connections and student studies, while at the same time putting in place infrastructure to protect the health of this area and improve its long-term sustainability and natural resources," he said in a statement.

The Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative, supported by the Capital Regional District, urges municipalities, residents and local businesses to help achieve its vision by installing rain gardens, planting native species, re-using water on site and other conservation measures.

The federal government provides \$253,276,892 in annual funding for municipal infrastructure in B.C. through the federal gas tax fund. The Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) administers the fund in B.C. in collaboration with the federal and provincial governments.

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