



A decade into the 100-year blueprint for restoring the Bowker Creek watershed, Soren Henrich, director of the Friends of Bowker Creek Society, feels positive about the future of conservation and daylighting of the creek. (Nina Grossman/News Staff)

# Ten years in, Greater Victoria's 100-year Bowker Creek blueprint gets a boost

## Victoria council passes several restoration recommendations

[NINA GROSSMAN](#) / Mar. 6, 2021 2:30 p.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)

Ten years into a 100-year restoration plan, the narrative of Greater Victoria's Bowker Creek is changing stream.

The creek is being viewed again as a resource for native plants, diverse wildlife and local residents.

“Despite having covered it up, urbanized it with all the hard surfaces in the watershed, it’s still here,” said Soren Henrich, director of the Friends of Bowker Creek Society. “Instead of just a ditch to move stormwater or carry away pollution out into the ocean, we’re looking at it as an environmental asset.”

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In 2011, the Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI) a coalition of government, community members and organizations, created the Bowker Creek Blueprint, a 100-year plan to restore the watershed, that runs through Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay.

The creek – only partially ‘daylighted’ – runs from the University of Victoria, past the Cedar Hill Golf Course, Hillside Mall and the Royal Jubilee Hospital before reaching Oak Bay, where it meets the ocean beyond Beach Drive.



**Derek Shrubsole**

@djshrubsole



Thanks to the efforts of volunteers from the Friends of Bowker Creek, we resumed our restoration of Bowker Creek this weekend. COVID plan in place, we made some great progress! @ORnulse @OakBayNews

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A significant portion of restoration efforts revolve around unearthing some parts of the creek currently underground. Henrich says daylighting will not only help return salmon and trout back to the creek, but will breathe life into the vision of a biodiversity corridor, accessible to people across the municipalities.

“It would give people in the city a place where they can see and come into contact with flowing water,” Henrich said.

“Imagine bike paths close enough to the creek so people could connect to Oak Bay, eventually connecting Oak Bay to the rest of the regional trail system.”

Along with salmon return, the blueprint includes goals to provide for habitat protection, water quality and restoration of natural areas.

On Feb. 11, Victoria council supported recommendations from Coun. Jeremy Loveday, who requested that impacts on the watershed be considered in future deliberations on land use matters and public works projects in the area, and that the city continue to raise awareness of restoration work and report annually on the project.

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“Bowker Creek is one of the only waterways in the core of the region that hasn’t been completely covered over and put into pipes,” Loveday told Black Press. “I think it’s an opportunity to tell the story of the natural systems that were here before a city was built on top of them.”

Loveday said many people don’t realize how extensive the watershed actually is.

“They don’t know something they are doing on land, a decent distance from the creek, could impact the health of the creek,” he said. “I think the potential of chum salmon swimming in that creek in just the next couple of years, I hope that can really inspire residents to steward and take care of the natural world around them.”

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