



## Englishman River Watershed Recovery Plan - Factoids

- The Englishman River watershed was inhabited by the Coast Salish People for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. It was a land supporting dense old-growth forests, cougar, wolf, and bear, rivers and streams lush with salmon of all kinds, fertile estuary life including tens of thousands of migrating birds, clam beds and richly varied vegetation.
- The area was first surveyed in 1855 by the Hudson's Bay Company. By 1873 non-native settlers, attracted by cheap, land (1 dollar per acre), began to stake claims on the south eastern bank of the river.
- By 1886 a wagon road was built from Nanaimo to service Parksville, which brought an influx of new colonizers to the area. A dike was built near the mouth of the Englishman to expand arable croplands, and by 1904, intensive logging operations had begun in the watershed. These dramatic changes in land use within the region continue to this day.
- The Englishman River remains a point of destination for many people, drawn to its cool waters and lush riparian zone. The watershed however, remains heavily impacted by logging, agriculture and urban settlement of more than one hundred years.
- The watershed needs to "recover" due to
  - increased winter flooding , higher summer water temperatures and less recreation due to reduced riparian areas (riparian areas = vegetation zone 100 metres beside river)
  - Reduced health and function of estuary due to urban development
  - Degraded habitat, and increased channel instability due to high sedimentation from upper watershed
  - Salmon, symbol of ecosystem & cultural health for the west coast native and non-native peoples, are significantly at risk
  - Questionable water quantity and quality due to stormwater runoff
- In 2001 the Englishman River was declared the most endangered river in B.C. Implementation of the Englishman River Watershed Recovery Plan (ERWRP) has brought that rating down, but there is much left to complete
- In 2001 the Federal Government created the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society (PSEF) a \$30 million endowment fund dedicated to conserving and rebuilding salmon stocks in British Columbia. ERWRP received funds through the PSEF until 2006. ERWRP continues thanks to the strength of partnerships.
- Locally the Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES) acts as the advisory/coordinating group. A Steering Committee consisting of provincial, federal, regional governments, biologists, consultants, stewardship

- groups and private industry meet regularly to provide input to the ongoing restoration of the watershed.
- Partners on the Steering Committee include BC Conservation Foundation, The Nature Trust, Ministry of Environment Parks, Ministry of Environment Fisheries, Fisheries and Oceans Canada Habitat, Fisheries and Oceans Canada Community Advisor, Fisheries and Oceans Canada Stock Assessment, Island Timberlands, Regional District of Nanaimo Parks, Community Fisheries Development Centre, Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society, private biologists.
  - Other government agencies provide assistance as needed including Ministry of Environment Water Lands and ..?????, Regional District of Nanaimo Planning and Environmental Services,
  - The goal of the Englishman River Watershed Recovery Plan is to develop and implement activities that restore the whole watershed to a healthy state and thereby benefit all wildlife and residents, including the recovery of coho and steelhead populations.
  - ERWRP is about having a sense of place. It is about restoring as much as we can to what once was. ERWRP is about our present day quality of life but it should also take us safely into the future—perhaps back to a world of natural flood control, lush riparian areas, outdoor recreation, healthy salmon runs, a rich and well-functioning estuary, and a continued and healthy water supply.
  - Over 1 million dollars invested in healing the watershed to date.
  - Types of projects include riparian planting to stabilize banks and restore natural functions of flood control, storm water management, wildlife habitat.
    - Two sidechannels created to expand habitat for fish spawning and growth away from fast moving waters.
    - Water flow monitoring to track amount of water flowing at different points in the river during various seasons.
    - Experiments with nutrient loading, or dumping of dead fish into upper reaches of river to provide natural food and nutrients not always available to fish and invertebrates.
    - Installation of Large Woody Debris to provide new habitat for steelhead and salmon in the fast-moving waters
    - Swims to count various fish species
    - Eelgrass mapping to determine extent of habitat for salmon leaving the streams before they head out to sea, and also for salmon returning to spawn before they enter the river.
  - Latest project includes bio-inventory of Englishman River Estuary – measuring populations of vegetation, birds, mammals, invertebrates, invasive species, and also water quality and quantity.
    - Nearshore areas included in unique approach to estuary monitoring involving eelgrass and forage fish mapping, and inventory of hardened vs. natural shorelines

- Public education programs including Salmon Friendly Lawn Program. A yellow fish sign for your lawn if you promise to not water it, or use pesticides or fertilizers. Also,
  - Demonstration rain garden
  - Storm drain marking with youth
  - Invertebrate sampling and beach seining
  - Junior and Adult Streamkeepers courses
  - Various workshops for scientists and lay people

***Contact us:***

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