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Project Watershed invites you to connect with us:

[Google](#)  [Facebook](#)  [YouTube](#)

Visit Our Website: www.projectwatershed.ca
Who Are We?
Project Watershed is an enterprising non-profit society that was established in 1993 by a small group of citizens concerned by declining fish stocks, water quality, and rapid urban development in Comox Valley watersheds. Often working in partnership with local stewardship organizations, industry and all levels of government, we promote community stewardship through education, information and action projects. We offer professional conservation mapping and related technical services, host regular Streamkeeper & Wetlandkeeper courses, maintain a stewardship information library, and currently manage research, restoration, assessment, protection and awareness raising projects in the Courtenay River Estuary and Puntledge River Watershed.

Project Watershed’s Social Enterprise, The Mapping Centre recently held an open house at our new location, 2356A Rosewall Crescent, Courtenay. Read more information inside….Or visit The Mapping Centre Website: maps.projectwatershed.bc.ca

Project Watershed has moved. Partnering with like-minded organizations we now maintain offices at the "Comox Valley Conservation Center" at 2356A Rosewall Crescent in Courtenay.

Our Activities: Click on titles for details

**Puntledge River Projects**

- **Saving the Summer Chinook.** Learn about our Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program projects that are focused on increasing Summer Chinook survival in the Puntledge River Watershed.

**Estuary Projects**

- **Keeping it Living. Protecting the Courtenay River Estuary.** Read about our Estuary focused projects and activities.

**Education & Outreach**

- **Keeper Courses**, Elder College, event participation, stewardship library, volunteer update, our upcoming Puntledge River Geocache Project and more.
Project Watershed’s Social Enterprise
The Mapping Centre, Year-at-a-Glance

The Mapping Centre has been an active place over the last year. We have moved along with Project Watershed into the new Conservation Centre at 2356a Rosewall Crescent in Tintown. We also have a new logo, some new equipment and been mapping our hearts out. Our new logo, designed by Brand and Bridge Creative Services, features the Project Watershed newt and can be seen on any of our new maps. Speaking of new maps we designed a color airphoto map of the Comox Valley, it shows the names of Comox Valley's watersheds, lakes, rivers and mountains. At 9 x 7 feet it is quite impressive, visit our new office and check it out on our display wall. If you are so taken this map is available for sale as a 2 x 3ft map for $50 (other sizes can be special ordered).

Another exciting map we have been working on is a Commuter Bike Map for the Broken Spoke. As far as we can tell a map of this kind has never been made for the Valley. It shows the Valley from a cyclist’s perspective and highlights roads that have bike lanes, are cycle friendly or experience high traffic. We plan to launch the maps early in the New Year and after that they should be available in stores near you. If you are involved in a type of recreation that would benefit from having a map created visit maps.projectwatershed.bc.ca/ContactUs.htm and we will get mapping.

The New Year will also bring the long awaited Comox Valley Conservation Strategy Atlas. This is an online interactive map much like Google Maps; in fact the atlas even has a Google map layer. The Comox Valley Conservation Atlas will display hyper-local environmental information for all of the Comox Valley. You will be able to zoom into an area of interest, turn on or off data layers (map data is organized into layers), find place based information, print and much more. The Conservation Strategy Atlas will have information from version two of the Nature Without Borders report coming out mid 2011. The Mapping Centre has been heavily involved in the revision of the report and it will contain new information and new areas needing protection.

All of these achievements have been realized through the hard work of our amazing mapping team: Don Chamberlain - GIS Coordinator, Caila Holbrook - Business Manager and Mark Scheorder - GIS Technician. Mark was with us as part of a six month Job Creation Partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and funded in whole or part through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

Check our website at maps.projectwatershed.bc.ca and/or facebook page for launch dates, new maps, map contests and more. Click here to view Comox Valley maps created by The Mapping Centre.

Visit our website www.projectwatershed.ca
Sensitive Habitat Stewardship

Fifteen years since its inception Project Watershed’s Sensitive Habitat Stewardship (SHS) Program is alive, well and continuing to evolve. Designed to gather and disseminate accurate information regarding locations and conditions of sensitive habitats, and to increase public awareness and understanding of local watersheds, the program has spawned many protection and restoration efforts in the Comox Valley.

The SHS Program has been the umbrella under which several important projects in local watersheds have been implemented. The SHS Program embodies Project Watershed’s mission statement of “promoting community stewardship of Comox Valley watersheds through education, information and action”. Read more about watershed projects developed within the SHS Program.

Project Watershed’s 2011 Sensitive Habitat Stewardship Program

The Puntledge River Watershed from Comox Lake and including the Courtenay Estuary is currently Project Watershed’s Sensitive Habitat Stewardship Program main area of focus. Read on to learn more about our River and Estuary Projects.
**Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP)**  
Project Watershed’s  
Project Overview and Chronology

FWCP, which is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of BC, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, was established to address the historical effects of hydroelectric development on fish and wildlife. Project Watershed’s FWCP funded Puntledge Watershed research, restoration, assessment and protection studies are the outcome of suggestions & recommendations from local stewardship organizations such as the Puntledge River Restoration Committee, industry and government.

This year, the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) funded seven Project Watershed projects. Led by local biologists working with Project Watershed Society, the Puntledge River Projects are aimed at re-building summer chinook salmon stocks in the Puntledge River Watershed.

Project Watershed has been leading FWCP funded projects for the past five years. These projects have been focused on the Puntledge River Watershed. This year, in addition to five Puntledge River Projects, FWCP funded two Estuary focused projects.

**To access final FWCP project reports:** [www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com)

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### 2010 FWCP Projects led by Project Watershed

- Chinook and Coho Smolt Migration Study
- Chinook Spawning Study
- Summer Chinook Imprinting Assessment
- Lower Puntledge Hatchery Chiller Design
- Big Qualicum Hatchery Holding of Puntledge River Summer Chinook
- Courtenay River Estuary Salt Marsh Study
- Restoration/Protection Options for Juvenile Salmonids
- Population Diversity in Puntledge River Coho

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Visit Our Website: [www.projectwatershed.ca](http://www.projectwatershed.ca)
### Project Watershed FWCP Puntledge River Project Chronology

**2009**
- Puntledge River Summer Chinook DNA Analysis
- Puntledge River Radio Telemetry Study on Summer Chinook Migration in the Upper Watershed
- Powerline Side Channel Improvement

**2008**
- Puntledge Summer Chinook DNA Analysis
- Puntledge River Jack Hames Side Channel Intake Replacement
- Puntledge River Radio Telemetry Study on Summer Chinook Migration in the Upper Watershed

**2007**
- Puntledge River Summer Chinook DNA Analyses
- Puntledge River Impoundment and Diversion Dam Fishway Assessment
- Puntledge River Stotan Falls - Improvement for Adult Summer Chinook Migrations
- Puntledge River Radio Telemetry Study on Summer Chinook Migration in the Upper Watershed

**2006**
- Puntledge River Headpond Gravel Placement Post - Construction Monitoring
- Puntledge River Side-Channel Development Vancouver Island Highway to Comox Logging Road
- Puntledge River Summer Chinook DNA Analyses 2006
- Puntledge River Impoundment and Diversion Dam Fishway Assessment 2006

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Visit Our Website: www.projectwatershed.ca
The sustainability of Puntledge River chinook and coho salmon populations is dependent on the ability of these fish to access and use habitat above the BC Hydro diversion dam, where ample spawning gravels and other favourable conditions exist. Recent FWCP funded studies have clearly demonstrated that the best strategies for summer chinook adults involve migrating into Comox Lake before August, holding in the lake during the summer and then spawning in the upper watershed or the headpond reach (between the diversion and reservoir dams). Similarly for coho adults, there is ample high quality spawning and rearing habitat for this species in the upper watershed.

The success of any natural or enhanced upper watershed salmon production strategy is dependent on safe passage of juveniles to the estuary during downstream migration past the diversion dam.

More than a decade ago, an ongoing problem of mortalities to migrating juvenile salmon was addressed. Fish that were diverted into the hydro pipeline (penstock) intake were passing through the generating station turbines and were perishing at an alarming rate (estimated at ~60%). In 1993 BC Hydro installed fish screens in the penstock at the Puntledge diversion dam. The screens, commonly referred to as Eicher screens, (after their inventor) direct fish that have entered the penstock into a smaller bypass pipe at the top end of the screen, diverting them back into the river so they can continue their migration.

In the spring and summer of 2010, an assessment of chinook and coho smolt migration was implemented to evaluate the efficiency of the Eicher screens in diverting juvenile salmon back into the river.

The study also looks at the timing of coho and chinook smolt migration, and will provide estimates of the numbers of fish migrating from the upper watershed. Results from the study will allow fisheries managers to evaluate the overall success of enhancing upper watershed production of these salmon stocks.
Puntledge Chinook Spawning Behaviour Study

The Puntledge River chinook salmon population includes both an endangered early summer-run stock and a much larger fall-run stock. Since the Puntledge Hatchery began its enhancement work, attempts to maintain the genetic integrity of the summer-run stock were initiated. **By collecting chinook that arrive before August 15\(^{th}\)** each year, and holding these fish for use as a separate broodstock, the genetics of the Puntledge summer-run chinook stock have been preserved.

From 2006 to 2009, chinook salmon arriving at Puntledge Hatchery between June and September were genetically analyzed to determine the migration timing and proportion of summer-run and fall-run chinook during this period. **This research determined that a significant number of both summer and fall chinook are arriving throughout the entire month of August.** This lead to concerns that hybridized fish (a cross between a summer and fall chinook) might be produced both in the hatchery and on the natural spawning grounds.

**Other results from the DNA studies indicate that despite the natural and artificial spawning interactions between summer and fall chinook, the number of hybridized fish in the watershed remains quite low.** One theory for the low incidence of hybrid chinook observed in sampled fish during the 2006-2009 DNA study period is that there may be a propensity for both summer and fall chinook to only mate with other fish in the same race.

**Beginning in 2009, a multi-year study to observe spawning interactions between fall and summer Chinook was initiated. Ten pairs of summer and fall chinook, enclosed together in an artificial spawning channel, will be observed and their pairing and spawning behaviour will be noted.** The progeny of these enclosed fish will be genetically analyzed to determine the levels of hybridization.

The results of this study will provide clearer direction on how DFO can develop a scientifically based procedure for maintaining the summer chinook stock. If the study confirms that there is a high rate of summer and fall chinook adults mating within their own race, DFO may allow access to the upper watershed for both races, where there is significantly more and better spawning habitat for chinook salmon. On the other hand, if the two chinook stocks spawn randomly with each other, DFO will need to develop a strategy to reduce or eliminate the overlap in the summer and fall chinook run timings.

Visit Our Website: www.projectwatershed.ca
The Big Chill

Summer-run chinook salmon adults held at DFO’s Puntledge Hatchery during the summer are at risk of dying before they spawn due to high water temperatures. The hatchery’s water supply is obtained from the Puntledge River, which usually exceeds 20 °C in the summer, and sometimes reaches 24 °C. Such warm water induces stress and disease problems in adult salmon, leading to high mortality rates, poorer quality of eggs in the females that do survive, and lower survival rates for offspring.

As a solution to this ongoing problem, the hatchery has initiated a plan to transport all their summer chinook broodstock to other DFO hatcheries that have cooler water supplies. Over the past decade, a small portion of Puntledge summer chinook adults have been transported to Rosewall Hatchery and held in 8 °C groundwater-supplied holding tanks where they experience a very high (>95%) survival rate to spawning. Another cool water site exists at Big Qualicum Hatchery (Big Q) located approximately 50 km south of Courtenay. This hatchery operates on a deep water gravity-fed water supply from Horne Lake which provides water temperatures around 15.5 °C throughout the summer months. With FWCP funds acquired by Project Watershed in 2010, an additional two holding tanks will be installed at Big Q, allowing a larger portion of Puntledge summer chinook returns to be moved there.

Puntledge River temperatures in late June to early July can exceed 18 °C – a temperature that makes it too stressful and risky to handle and transport fish out of the hatchery. To take full advantage of the other cool water holding facilities, a new chilled-water holding tank will be installed at Puntledge River hatchery in 2011. The tank will allow small batches of returning adult summer chinook to be acclimated to cooler temperatures and then transported south throughout the migration period.

Increasing the survival of all hatchery broodstock, by holding them in cooler water, will increase overall summer chinook productivity helping to rebuild the population to their historical abundance.
Project Watershed is leading a study of the Courtenay River Estuary that is investigating how juvenile chinook and coho salmon use the estuary during the spring and summer months. The study was designed and implemented by biologist Lora Tryon. The data is still to be crunched, but so far the study has identified several areas as important for salmon rearing, including the Dyke Slough, the Royston eelgrass beds, the Airpark lagoon, Simms slough, and the Tsolum Relic channel.

Data for this study was collected during the spring and summer of 2010. Volunteers captured fish at various locations in the estuary, recorded water quality information and collected benthic (bottom dwelling) samples, to be analyzed for the presence of fish food organisms in the water column. In addition to this data collection, key salmonid rearing habitats were mapped to show what types of vegetation were present and what the landforms were like.

The collected data will be analysed and the resultant information will be used to identify important characteristics of healthy salmonid rearing environments and identify opportunities to increase estuarine health through restoration and protection projects. With this in mind the next phase for the study will be project feasibility discussions involving key stakeholders who will have an opportunity to provide input on, or participate in restoration and or protection project implementation.

The Restoration and Protection Options for Juvenile Salmon in the Courtenay River Estuary study was made possible through funding by the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. Thank you to the many people who have been involved in a volunteer capacity: This includes members of the Tsolum River Restoration Society, the Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards, the Brooklyn Creek Stewards, the Courtenay Fish and Game Protective Association, volunteers from Excel Community College and private landowners. Staff and equipment was also provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

Visit our website www.projectwatershed.ca
Population Diversity in Puntledge River Coho Salmon Studied

Project Watershed has announced that a Puntledge River Coho Diversity Study is currently underway. Funded by the BC Hydro and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council, the study is lead by Lora Tryon, local biologist and Master’s student of Royal Roads University’s Environmental Management program. The purpose of the study is to identify the role of life history diversity in the survival of Puntledge coho salmon. This involves the use of otoliths, or “ear bones,” from adult salmon that were spawned and reared naturally (not in a hatchery), and survived to be mature adults. The otoliths were collected in 2009 from the dead carcasses of mature Coho salmon donated by the Puntledge River Hatchery.

Otoliths are very special in that they can help to tell a life story of each Coho salmon. Otoliths start to grow as soon as the fish begins development in the egg. As the salmon grows, elements such as Strontium, Calcium and Zinc that were present in the food and habitats that the fish lived in become trapped within the otolith structure. Through special technology called Laser Ablation-Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry, the elements in the otolith can be analyzed and matched to the age of the fish at the time they were deposited. As habitat conditions change throughout the life of a Coho, an “elemental signature” is permanently recorded into its otoliths. “Patterns in the elemental signatures of the Coho salmon otoliths can be used to infer the diversity of life history strategies within the population,” said Tryon.

Why study the diversity of naturally spawned Puntledge coho salmon? “It is important because Coho salmon in the Puntledge River are faced with many pressures from development and human intervention that can potentially cause decreased diversity in habitats and life history strategies. This study will help identify the role of diversity in salmon survival and in doing so; identify opportunities to support sustainable local salmon populations.”

In addition to support provided by Natural Sciences and Engineering Council and BC Hydro, advisors Mark Johannes and Brian Riddell continue to provide important feedback on the study, and Bev Bravender from DFO has supplied the equipment necessary for the study. Many volunteers helped out with carcass collection and otolith extraction, including local stewardship groups and students from Vancouver Island University. Staff from the Puntledge River Hatchery provided invaluable assistance through carcass donation and help with the otolith extraction. The staff at the Pacific Biological Station’s Aging Lab has been, and continue to be, extremely helpful with analysis. The study results and final report will be available by April of 2011. For more information, please email Lora at lake_trail@shaw.ca.
Courtenay River Estuary Projects

Support the protection and restoration of the Courtenay River Estuary!

There are many ways to get involved and make a positive impact on the health of our Estuary. Protecting and restoring our estuary also helps deal with global issues such as climate change, habitat destruction and fish stock depletion.

What can YOU do? Well, Project Watershed is always looking for volunteers and sponsors for our work. We have an array of volunteer opportunities posted on our website along with a sign up form. One such volunteer opportunity coming up in 2011 is to help with eelgrass assessment and restoration. If you would like to sign up for this or would like more information on any of the opportunities visit www.projectwatershed.ca/get-involved/volunteer.

Besides volunteers sponsors are always appreciated. If you are looking to donate money you can do it in either Canadian dollars or in community way dollars; upon request donations in either currency over $20 will be issued a charitable tax receipt. Buying community way dollars is another way to support Project Watershed and it allows you to use your money twice; once to support Project Watershed and once to make purchases at local businesses. If you are looking to sponsor estuary work you can do so through the purchase of a limited edition print from the 2010 or 2011 Keeping It Living campaign.

Project Watershed thanks all the individuals, groups and organisations that stepped forward in 2010 to support us and our work in the Courtenay River Estuary. The two major financial supporters for our Estuary work were the Vancouver Foundation with a grant of $40,000 over two years and the Real Estate Foundation of BC with a grant of $15,000. We also received funds from the Pacific Salmon Foundation, the Comox Valley Regional District the Courtenay and District Fish and Game Association, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans not to mention the numerous businesses and individuals that bought sponsorship packages, Stick in the Mud Club memberships or donated some of their products and services. Thank you Comox Valley, we look forward to your support in 2011!
Estuary Gala a Success!

On Saturday evening, May 29th, at the Courtenay & District Fish & Game Hall a sold out crowd was delighted by food, drink, sights, sounds and stimulating ideas, all to honour the Courtenay River Estuary. The Estuary Gala Gathering was a complete success and raised $8,000 to go towards estuary protection and restoration. Seventeen pieces of art out of the forty on display were sold, with half of the proceeds going to sponsor Project Watershed’s estuary activities. A delightful finger buffet highlighting local food was prepared by the Custom Gourmet Chef, Dawn McCrae.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Scott Wallace from the David Suzuki Foundation, told the audience, which included local politicians Kate Greening and Jon Ambler, that “several studies broadly estimate the annual economic benefits of estuaries at tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars per hectare” He want on to say that “…you would never believe that compared to Cathedral Grove the estuary is producing nearly twice the plant matter per unit area”.

After a spirited intermission the audience was mesmerised by award-winning dramatist, Peter Donaldson and the Estuary Ensemble. This group told the story of the Courtenay River Estuary, describing in sounds, music and spoken word, how the estuary functions, renews and changed over time. The group took the audience on a tour of the Estuary through time and ended by peered into the future, projecting a return of abundance to the Courtenay River Estuary. To finish the evening off the audience was delighted with dancing to Latin music from the local group, Luzna Orchestra.

The event not only raised the awareness about estuary issues and funds for restoration, protection and research projects but also showed that there is broad based support from sectors throughout our community for protecting and restoring the Courtenay River Estuary. Nothing could make Project Watershed and it's subcommittee the Estuary Working Group happier.

Project Watershed will be holding another Keeping It Living Campaign in 2011. The campaign starts in December 2010 and will run til April 2nd, 2011. The grand finale will be an all day event featuring a salmon BBQ, mixed media displays and more held at the K’omoks Band Hall on the 2nd. Save the date as everyone is welcome to attend and there will be something of interest for all ages.
Courtenay River Estuary Projects

The 2010 *Keeping It Living* Campaign and *Estuary Gala Gathering* was a great success due to the tremendous support from the Comox Valley, especially those listed below:

**General Gala Necessities:** Courtenay and District Fish & Game Protective Association, Cona Hostel, Zen Zero, TheatreWorks, Mount Washington Hostel & Avalanche Bar & Grill, All In One Party Rentals and Chrysalis Farms.


**Silent Auction, Art Competition & Ticket Sales:** Zocalo Cafe & Gallery, Music Maxx, Cardero Coffee & Tea Company, Blue Heron Books, Seeds Natural Market, Otter’s Kitchen Cove, Tarbell’s Cafe, Brambles Market, Freakin Coffeeshop and Continual Palingenesis – Social Media Solutions.

**Other:** Henriette Beaudoin, Comox Valley Economic Development Society, Whytes Framing

Visit our website www.projectwatershed.ca
Beach Babies Found!

It is true on beaches beneath our feet, tiny eggs may lay within their gravely nurseries. These beach babies are the spawn of a group of fishes known as forage fish. Forage fish are small fish like herring, smelt, and sand lance that fuel the marine food web as almost all species, from salmon and seagulls to killer whales, rely on them as a food source.

The forage fish we focus on are smelt and sand lance, both of which spawn directly on the beach between low and high tide. Don't worry you don't disturb them as you walk the beach, they are well protected in their hard egg sacs. However, other activities such as rip rapping, shoreline hardening and removal of shore-side vegetation will either destroy nursery habitat or diminish it.

In order to identify forage fish nursery beaches and get them protected Project Watershed with the help from Ramona De Graaf of Bamfield Marine Station has initiated a Forage Fish Citizen Science Project. The project kicked off on May 22nd, 2009. Interested citizens formed groups of 2 to 4 people. Each group picked a 1 km section of beach to sample every few weeks over a year or two.

We are pleased to report that two forage fish beaches have been found! Three positive samples were taken from Union Point, which is the point on the Union Bay coal hills furthest to the Northeast, and one from Goose Spit. Sand lance eggs were found at both sites. Since only one sample was taken from Goose Spit we are looking for a group to take on sampling at this beach to collect more information and confirm the results. So it's not too late if you're interested in joining. Families, groups, and individuals are all welcome to sign up for a stretch of beach. We can buddy you or your group up with an existing team and then once you have the methods down you can pick your own beach and help us cover more shoreline. If you would like to get involved visit www.projectwatershed.ca/get-involved/volunteer.
Estuary Archaeology aka “Stick’s in the Mud”

Over the past few years, Project Watershed has been a proud supporter of the Comox Harbour Fish Trap Mapping Project, Nancy Greene and David McGee’s archaeological study of the remnants of ancient fish traps that are buried in the Courtenay River Estuary. The corral-like structures that once stood in the estuary were built with long wooden stakes, and Nancy and David estimate that over 150,000 of them were pounded into the sediment to catch fish.

To help find out more about the traps, Project Watershed and other organizations and community members financially sponsored radiocarbon dating of an additional 46 stakes and, in the process, became members of the locally famous “Stick in the Mud” Club. The name was coined by Town of Comox Mayor Paul Ives and Area B Director Jim Gillis, and the enthusiasm shown by members is a testament to how the community can come together to support our estuary.

Radiocarbon dating was needed to assess the ages of the stakes and to shed some light on how the traps caught fish. The stakes that were dated came from areas of the estuary where there is evidence of fish traps, like the area pictured here. The results show that traps were built for a period of at least 1,000 years before colonists arrived in the Comox Valley in the mid-1800’s. Nancy and David are currently wrapping up their research, and they will be making a presentation at the Keeping It Living Estuary Forum on April 2nd, 2011.

The size and scope of the archaeological evidence found in the Courtenay River Estuary is quite astounding, especially being that it exists in the middle of an urban centre. Based on this, Project Watershed Director Paul Horgen is taking the lead in coordinating a submission to the National Historic Site and Monument Board of Canada to seek National Historic Site status for our Estuary.

For more information on this initiative or to get involved, contact us or call (250) 703-2871. Also, check out In Focus magazine’s in depth article “Sticks in the Mud” written by Ian Lidster.
Project Watershed’s New Volunteer & Membership Program

Project Watershed was able to launch a new Volunteer & Membership Program thanks to a Job Creation Partnership (JCP) contribution received from the Ministry of Social Development and funded in whole or part through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

Valeri Diamond, was hired to fill the position of volunteer coordinator. During her six month contract she focused on developing a program to manage, recruit and recognize volunteers. As part of the Volunteer & Membership program a volunteer handbook was created that outlines the initiatives, programs, activities, basic personnel policies, practices and procedures of the organization.

Valeri will be staying on as the Fundraising and Outreach coordinator to help Project Watershed manage volunteers, members, educational events and fundraising.

Over the last year Project Watershed has had a display booth out in the community at events such as Earth Day, Music Fest, Market Day, The Big Time Out and the Comox Valley Exhibition. The display helped in raising awareness about Comox Valley conservation issues and the projects we are running to address these issues, and in fundraising and recruiting new volunteers.

One highlight was raising $1000 Canadian dollars at the Big Time Out through selling Community Way Dollars (cw$). We have in fact, been able to use all of our community way dollars this year and will be looking to local businesses for more community way donations in 2011. If you have a business and are interested in donating please contact Project Watershed through the information provided below. Remember, you get a charitable tax receipt for cw$ donations.

We would like to thank Kathy Birkett, Naomi Boyer, Kathy Campbell, Don Chamberlain, Kathryn Clouston, Andrew Cruickshank, Luisa Ditmars, Betty Donaldson, Harmony Freer, Lynda Fyfe, Esther Guimond, Roz Hauser, Peggy Holbrook, Caila Holbrook, Paul & Ilona Horgen, David Horgen, Stewart McIntosh, Christina Melymick, Alex Merrington, Anne Minard, Dave Radford, Wendy Kotilla, Lora Tyron, Pieter Vorster, all those who helped in the Estuary and excel career college students for volunteering with us and sharing their knowledge and passion to help Project Watershed further its mission: “Promoting community stewardship of Comox Valley watersheds through education, information and action”. Val also appreciated their support in her new role. We would also like to thank Holly Foraie from Excel Career College for providing us with international volunteers.

If you would like to volunteer with Project Watershed, please contact us at (250)703-2871 or visit www.projectwatershed.ca/get-involved/volunteer for further information.
Streamkeeper & Wetlandkeeper Courses

Last fall twelve people attended our BC Wildlife Federation Wetlandkeeper Course. During this weekend workshop individuals interested in learning more about wetlands and wetland protection had an opportunity to practice some hands-on wetland conservation skills.

The Wetlandkeeper course was taught by Michele Jones and Julie Micksch. Michele is a registered professional biologist and has had extensive educational experience working with groups from 10 to 80 years of age. Julie is an experienced wildlife biologist and has taught outdoor programs for over 10 years.

“There are not many regulations that protect wetlands, so community education is needed to teach people about the importance of protecting them,” says biologist and Wetlandkeeper instructor, Michele Jones. “That includes recognizing the different types of wetlands, mapping where they are and documenting information about them.” Jones notes that the Comox Valley is home to all of the types of wetlands and that conservation of them is needed.

Historically people have viewed wetlands as mucky, mosquito-infested wastelands, areas of no value. We now know that wetlands are vital to the ecological balance of the planet and that they serve many functions. Swamps, marshes, bogs, and fens act as crucial water filtration systems and habitat for wildlife and along shorelines we have tidal marshes that provide essential cover and food for salmon. Wetlands are often the sources of water that feed our streams during the summer dry months.

If you are interested in attending a spring Wetlandkeeper course then contact Project Watershed. The 2 ½ day Wetlandkeeper course covers all types of wetlands, including estuaries. Participants will visit local wetlands, learn how to identify and map wetlands, and conduct plant and bird inventories. Cost is $90.00 + $35.00 for the course handbook. Become a member for $10.00 and pay only $70.00 for the course. Participants can download and print the Wetlandkeeper’s Handbook themselves as an alternative to purchasing. For more information or course registration contact us or view our website. www.projectwatershed.ca
Educational Activities & Opportunities

Elder College Courses

Project Watershed participates in facilitating the presentation of Elder College courses at North Island College. To learn more about Elder College Courses visit the North Island College website: [www.nic.bc.ca/eldercollege](http://www.nic.bc.ca/eldercollege). To learn which courses that Project Watershed will be facilitating; [click here to view updates and details](#).

On November 13th, 2010 Project Watershed facilitated the presentation of a four hour Elder College course entitled “Estuary at Risk”. The course was coordinated by Paul Horgen Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto and vice-chair of Project Watershed and Jim Gillis, Director Area (B)/Lazo North with special presentations by Nancy Greene, a local archeologist and Tom Knight planner for the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD). Topics covered included the biology of estuaries in general and the specific characteristics of the Courtenay River Estuary. A history of European settlement was also presented followed by Nancy Greene’s discussion of the Courtenay Estuaries’ ancient fish traps that date back nearly 1500 years. Jim Gillis and Tom Knight discussed the Courtenay River Estuary Management Plan (CREMP), which is scheduled to be completed by March 2011, and its implications for the future of the Estuary.

Puntledge River Geocache

The 2010 - 2011 geocache project, “Geocache Your Watershed”, is a continuation of a geocache program implemented in 2009, to highlight Project Watershed’s Puntledge Watershed Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) projects. The basic idea of geocaching is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Join the search for our FWCP geocaches: Explore the Puntledge River Watershed, and learn about the research, restoration and assessment projects designed to return the Puntledge River Summer Chinook to historic levels. Starting in February 2011 geocache coordinates will be entered on the official geocache website: [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).

Conservation Centre Library

Visit our website to view a list of [resources in our library](#). While our collection is not comprehensive we do have reports and studies particular to the Comox Valley. Please [contact us](#) for more information about how to access these resources.
Project Watershed Thanks Community Way Businesses

Project Watershed would like to extend a big thanks to Fluid Bar & Grill, Mike Toulmin Construction, and Good Karma Delivery for their donation of community way dollars (cw$). These dollars will help us promote stewardship of Comox Valley Watersheds through education, information and action.

Project Watershed is a registered charity and depends on governments, foundations and local businesses. Community way gives charities like Project Watershed a new avenue for fund generation that everyone in the community can be a part of.

If you own a business please consider joining Project Watershed. It is an excellent way to promote your business. Since Project Watershed is a registered charitable tax receipt. Another way to support your community from Project Watershed is similar to donating but better as you get twice; first by supporting Project Watershed will go towards restoration of the beautiful and highly cherished natural environment of the Comox Valley.

To join community way or for information, about organizations such as Fluid and Bar & Grill, Mike Toulmin Enterprises and Good Karma Delivery that are part of community way, please visit www.communityway.ca

Comox Valley Project Watershed News 2011
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Promoting community stewardship of Comox Valley watersheds through education, information and action.
Comox Valley Conservation Strategy’s
2011 Conservation Calendar

Featuring photographs of Comox Valley’s natural areas by local photographers, purchase of the CVCS Conservation Calendar supports the following organizations in their work towards protection and restoration of sensitive ecosystems in the Comox Valley:

- Brooklyn Creek Watershed Society
- Comox Valley Environmental Council
- Comox Valley Land Trust
- Comox Valley Project Watershed
- Comox Valley Water Watch
- Millard-Piercy Watershed Stewards
- Morrison Creek Streamkeepers
- Tsolum River Restoration Society
- Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society
- Oyster River Watershed Management Committee
- Portuguese Creek Watershed Stewards
- Black Creek Streamkeepers

To order your calendars, contact the CVCS or visit the Conservation Centre in Tintown!

2356A Rosewall Crescent
Tel: 709-2871 or Kerry in Comox: 339-1029

Visit Our Website: www.projectwatershed.ca