



## *Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy*

# Chilliwack River Watershed Forum: A Summary

December 1, 2005 - 7:00 p.m.  
Chilliwack Fish & Game Protective Association  
Chilliwack River Valley, BC

**February 1, 2006**

## **IMPORTANT NOTE**

**The following is a summary of the activities and discussion that took place at the Chilliwack River Watershed Forum held at the Chilliwack Fish and Game Protective Association on December 1, 2005. These notes provide a detailed summary only, rather than a verbatim report of the discussion. The comments received from the audience do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Fraser Valley Regional Watersheds Coalition or any other organization involved with the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy.**

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# 1. Introduction and Role of the Fraser Valley Regional Watersheds Coalition

Brad Whittaker, chair of the Fraser Valley Regional Watersheds Coalition and facilitator of the event, opened the Watershed Forum at 7:10 PM by thanking those in attendance for coming and the Fish & Game Protective Association for inviting us into their facility. He mentioned that the Forum is being hosted by the Fraser Valley Regional Watershed Coalition.

The Coalition, established in 1997, is a non-political ‘group of groups’; members include local stewardship groups from Abbotsford to the Fraser Canyon, First Nations, governments, industry and others. Its mandate is to support activities and understandings that promote healthy watersheds and communities. Between 1998 and 2002, the Coalition managed Fisheries Renewal funds and directed \$1.8 million into stewardship projects, including many local projects. The Coalition has a history of engagement with the Chilliwack River Valley (CRV). It directed \$100,000 of funding for remediation of the Slesse Slide, \$30,000 for the Tolmie Slide, and funds for a variety of other works.

The Coalition is continuing this involvement in the CRV by coordinating the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy (CRWS) with First Nations, Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO), Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), Fraser Basin Council, Ministry of Environment, local representatives and others. The project team itself has no authority over laws. We are not looking for regulatory solutions. The project is about working together to benefit the watershed.

## 2. Interactive Welcome

After this introduction, Brad posed a series of questions to the audience of approximately 45 people. Questions and responses were:

How many people live in the valley? 16  
How many people fish in the valley? 12  
How many people canoed/ kayaked? 10  
How many people camp in the valley? Everyone  
How many people work in the valley? 10

Brad summarized the responses by saying that clearly the CRV has much to offer people living, working and playing here. He went on to mention that we are here tonight looking for information about what is good about the Valley? What is your vision for it? What are some of the issues here? We are not here to present answers or solutions, but we will analyze what you tell us tonight and come back to you to discuss it further.

Question from the audience: Is this strategy recreation-based or is it about getting the Valley to work for everyone?

Brad clarified that the process is much broader than just recreation.

### 3. Presentation: Introducing the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy

At 7:20 PM Krista England provided a presentation outlining:

- What is the CRWS? What is its purpose?
- How did it get started?
- Why the Chilliwack River Watershed?
- What will be produced?

The presentation slides are contained in Appendix A and summarized below.

#### The purpose of the CRWS

Krista emphasized that the purpose of the CRWS is to make connections between the various groups that make decisions that affect this watershed, including landowners, government agencies, First Nations, community groups and others. She said that we want to make the best use of existing information by organizing and sharing it. Another key goal of the project is to develop a common understanding of priorities and strategies to address those priorities. The project will also build relationships and trust among groups in the watershed. This is not a land use or allocation plan and it won't directly result in new regulation. It is a voluntary effort.

Krista explained that a watershed is defined by an area with a common drainage. A drop of rain falling anywhere within the watershed will flow to the Chilliwack River. She mentioned that about 1500 people live in the CRV and that about one-third of watershed is within the USA. The focus of the CRWS will initially be the portion of the watershed surrounding the Chilliwack River Valley. Cultus Lake and Vedder Canal are also within the watershed, but are outside our study area because we wanted to define a manageable project that isn't too big. We hope to be able to extend out to these areas later.

#### Origin of the CRWS

Krista explained that the origin of the project is the Watershed-based Fish Sustainability Planning concept initiated by Fisheries & Oceans Canada and the British Columbia Ministry of Environment. The Chilliwack River Watershed was selected as a pilot project because it has a productive fishery, species at risk, an intact watershed, and issues that are not insurmountable. Also, there are strong human values and cultural resources – this is a place where people play, work and live, and have for thousands of years. There is also a high potential for multiple interests to work together towards watershed sustainability.

#### Outcomes of the CRWS

Outcomes of the project will be:

- shared understanding of the watershed;
- background materials, including a 'state of the watershed' report, mapping and a bibliography of all documents related to the watershed - all of these will be available to the public;
- projects, such as Thompson Park, Lovely Pond, Tolmie Slide, Hope Slough;
- understanding of issues, inter-relationships between things; and
- agreements about how the issues can be addressed and recommendations to decision-makers.

Krista then welcomed questions regarding her presentation.

1. Who has the final say in funding?

Brad Whittaker: We will continue to seek funding from various sources; we apply for grants from funding groups. The objective is to assist informed and effective decision-making.

2. Is there a standard of participation for organizations involved in the committee? Groups like yours come by sometimes with good intentions, but possibly subvert interests of existing groups. For example, we complained about access to a fishing site near Liumption Road that was dug up and planted with trees to limit access. This screwed up a project of ours to provide access to the river for handicapped people. Is there an expected standard of behavior? A statement of principles? How are you ensuring that the process is inclusive? Trust is an important thing.

Brad Whittaker: The Coalition has a history of inclusion and making decisions by consensus. Everyone is welcome to be involved. We have a Terms of Reference for our strategy. Some have expressed a concern with the slow pace of the project; this has been to allow time to build trust.

Dave Lamson: I have been involved in this project for about a year. Participation in the committee is by invitation. We talked about making it more open but decided to wait until now to bring it to the community. The work so far has just been information gathering. We haven't made any recommendations yet, just mapping and data collection.

3. How much of the watershed on the U.S. side is inhabited? Can they stop water from coming down this side?

Krista Englund: the US portion of the watershed is mostly National Forest and park land with very little permanent habitation as I understand.

4. What is the value of industrial use versus the value of recreational use?

Comment from the audience: Over the last 25 years that have been about 5 processes to assess activities and values in the watershed, mostly by the Ministry of Forests. There was a tourism assessment in 1995 that looked at dollar values for recreation by the tourism ministry.

Krista's presentation finished at 7:35. Slides from Krista's presentation are attached as Appendix 1.

#### **4. Facilitated Discussion: The Future of the Chilliwack River Valley**

Brad Whittaker initiated the facilitated discussion by reminding everyone that the purpose of the forum is to gather information and data. Input will be taken very seriously. It will be analyzed and researched. Then we will get back to you to discuss it further. We are concerned with the whole watershed rather than site specific issues.

Brad led the discussion by asking some questions:

A. What do you like about the CRV?

Responses from the audience:

- 1) more rural, more open space, opportunities to interact with flora and fauna
- 2) the mountains, they are high and close
- 3) access into the woods
- 4) fishing is fantastic
- 5) the white water
- 6) lifestyle, seclusion, recreation – wouldn't want that to change
- 7) no big industries that are polluting
- 8) good air quality and clean environment
- 9) good place to raise children, no 7-11 for example
- 10) no light pollution, you can see the stars
- 11) opportunities to hunt
- 12) sounds of the river

B. What are you concerned about in this watershed?

Responses from the audience:

- 1) Slope stabilization due to logging practices affects homes and river banks and can destroy fish habitat. We need to prevent slides and the destruction of habitat.
- 2) A loss of the right to fish and afraid of having no fish in the river. We have a common law right to fish under the Magna Carta and I'm concerned it might be infringed upon. First Nations, limited access, poor management decisions, knee-jerk reactions by governments threaten fishing.
- 3) Government reaction to endangered species. They don't consider the effect of management decisions on other species and activities. The Cultus Lake Sockeye are an example. An over-reaction to save one species overlooks all other activities.
- 4) A reduction in the ability to access different parts of the Valley. Campsites are closed and access to the river is blocked. There are more people coming to the Valley and fewer camping sites. Rather than managing things, the Ministry's solution to fix problems is to block off places and reducing the number of places to utilize. For example, the Chilliwack Lake camp site is closed due to lack of enforcement and garbage issue. There is a higher concentration of people at remaining sites. There should be access to all areas around the Lake and opportunities to do backcountry camping.
- 5) A lack of washroom facilities for recreational users and visitors. The Valley is promoted for tourism and recreation, but no additional resources and services have been provided.
- 6) A lack of forestry recreational sites. They seem to be all closed or pawned off to FVRD, but funding to improve sites or maintain them has not followed. There is no enforcement. There

are no washrooms or garbage containers. Residents have to do the clean up from outsiders abusing the valley. When people legitimately want to camp there are no places to go.

- 7) Squatters along the Vedder River up to Tamihi Bridge. This causes concerns related to drug activities, garbage building up, pollution, and squatter's tent cities blocking access to the river. There is no enforcement.
- 8) Tourism and recreation are welcome, but they need to be managed.
- 9) Increased recreational use, fishing, camping, limited access and the way BC Parks manages their land. We are concerned about the diminishing deer and mountain goat wintering range. We are concerned about the squatter issue. Everyone knows that there are no resources for the management of crown land or park land to deal with the issues. The enforcement agencies lack tools to deal with the issues. The cutting down of trees and the amount of damage recreational users do the sites are also concerns. The result is that recreational users that would respect the area are punished by reduced access and having to deal with the mess. There are concerns about the lack of legislation on crown land for conservation officers. Officers have their hands tied and cannot deal with the issues well past the time they could catch the individual in the act. They are only able to respond to the result of the damage but are not available to prevent it from happening. This is a pristine valley and should be better protected to maintain that stature. Some users do not come here to utilize the recreation opportunities much anymore because they don't enjoy the destructive activities and pollution.
- 10) In one case, when an RCMP was notified about dumping, nothing could be done. Trees were observed being cut down and a member of the public put himself at risk to try and deal with it and the thieves became aggressive.
- 11) Forest practices legislation enforced by the Conservation Officers have a clause that states the officer must catch people in the act, which is of limited value as the officers cannot be there in the woods all the time.
- 12) Not all local visitors disrespect the area. Most are willing clean up after themselves but have to deal with the city people (outsiders of the valley) who create many of the hazards in the forest. This in turn reflects on all the users of the valley and gives a bad reputation to the recreational users. For example, live ammo has been found in the forest and that reflects on how others view hunters even though many hunters are respectful and responsible for their activity. As well as, broken bottles are everywhere.
- 13) From the perspective of a person who has lived in the valley for 15 years and works in the valley, it is not just outside people but also the locals who dump their garbage in the forests instead of going to the Bailey dump. There is indiscriminate use throughout all levels of the valley, not just the populated areas. Garbage is being dumped even at the more remote areas of the valley. Better enforcement and an environmental watch in the valley to record licenses and activities would help.
- 14) There appears to be a loss of deer winter range and goat winter range.

- 15) Garbage is being dumped in the surrounding areas of the valley. Any wrong doings should be reported. There should be more enforcement.
- 16) Grow op waste and grow ops in the valley. Meth lab waste is being dumped in the valley.
- 17) Traffic in the Valley has greatly increased as a result of lack of access to recreational areas. This has an impact on the safety in the valley. A community clean up of the River in 1995 resulted in tons of garbage removed from this Valley; much of it was building waste.
- 18) Flood, erosion and debris hazards to residential property. There is no diking plan and no funding support from the governments. High risk areas for example are Wilson Rd dike and above Allison Pools where the road is right close to the river.
- 19) Burned out cars and stolen cars dumped in the creeks. Truck loads of garbage and waste are also being dumped in the back country of the valley.
- 20) A member of the Chilliwack Clean Up Coalition has seen evidence of people dumping car parts, grow op wastes, and building material wastes along the river. The Coalition organizes a clean up four times a year with volunteers from other organizations such as fish and game clubs, boy scouts, 4H, Fraser Valley Salmon Society.
- 21) Dumping of yard waste and trimmings on crown land and private property which is the result of the locals. This all impacts the waterways and habitat.
- 22) The potential for a natural disaster in the valley. The Game club is the emergency shelter but it is not sufficient for the valley population anymore. Emergency measures need to be reassessed. Emergency planning needs to be looked at. If the road washed out we would have to provide emergency services.
- 23) The development in Valley in comparison to Promontory. On Promontory there is such close building to the slopes. Even though they have had slides they continue to allow buildings to go up there. The development on the hill might impact water quality and water supplies, like well water. Management of run-off is not sufficient for the demand and the quality of the runoff and quantity is a concern.
- 24) Motor vehicles in the alpine areas. For example Mt. McGuire and Cheam, in the alpine levels that are sensitive. The areas should be restricted, but motorists inevitably find ways to get past blocked off areas.
- 25) Unlawful fishing techniques and unregulated catch amounts.
- 26) Increased forest fire risk caused by increased recreational use of all areas of the Valley.
- 27) What is the possibility of independent power plants being implemented in the valley and what will their impact be on the resources, with the infrastructure and transmission lines required to get the power to the grid? There will be increasing demand for more energy usage in the future.

- 28) How do the City of Chilliwack and FVRD work together? Drainage seems to be the last thing to be addressed. What are the boundary lines and who regulates and permits activities?
- 29) Logging practices above residential areas, especially issues of slope stability and water quality, and logging practices that undercut the flora and create vulnerable areas.
- 30) Logging through hiking trails, for instance the Trans Canada Trail. It was created but is not maintained or regulated. There are concerns as well about the treatment of the trails, impact of motorized vehicles on them.
- 31) Recreational users drinking and driving, especially over the long weekend. There is also a concern about the amount of camping and where people camp and the safety issues on the road with intoxicated drivers.
- 32) A lack of harmonization of standards between Chilliwack and FVRD regarding run-off and water issues. Who do the people turn to for resolution of the issues; people don't know who to go to. Issues have filtered down to the FVRD level but they have little authority and support to deal with them. Conflicts between different agencies and a lack of communication are also concerns.
- 33) The development happening along side the river, especially around Peach Road. It is too close to the river and there is no buffer. As well, access to the river for recreational purposes through what used to be City of Chilliwack property is now private land. Run off and storm sewer from developments along the river are also concerns.
- 34) Government is scared to put garbage bins and facilities in because they are concerned about liability. Government uses liability as an excuse not to do anything.
- 35) Heavy traffic on Chilliwack Lake Road is a problem for those walking or riding their bikes. There are no sidewalks and the road is narrow. Drivers speed and pedestrian safety is at risk.

When no more comments were brought forward, Brad Whittaker thanked everyone for their very useful comments. He said that we've learned a lot tonight. We will organize and categorize the comments, do some analysis and report back to the community. Surveys were distributed to everyone to fill out.

The facilitated discussion ended at about 8:40 PM.

A summary of the concerns recorded at the forum is contained in Appendix B.

## **5. Next Steps**

After thanking the Chilliwack Fish & Game Protective Association for hosting the event, and everyone for attending despite the weather, Krista Englund summarized the next steps of the project as:

- analyzing the issues identified tonight to better understand them;
- summarized information and distributing it, including posting it to our web site; and,
- holding another Watershed Forum in the future.

Krista invited everyone to leave their name and contact information to receive project updates and news about the project. Also, she invited people to call her for more information or to discuss their participation in the project.

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The meeting ended at approximately 9:00 PM

## **Appendix A. Presentation Delivered at Watershed Forum**

## Appendix B. Watershed Issues/Concerns in the Chilliwack River Valley

Category	Description	Example
Governance	Lack of harmonization of standards	e.g. City of Chilliwack and FVRD on runoff and water issues
Governance	Liability gets in the way of good governance and many liability issues may also be used as an excuse	e.g. garbage bins are a liability as stated by a government agency
Governance	Lack of communication and/or cooperation between jurisdictions	
Governance	Lack of communication of impact activities	
Governance	Jurisdictional differences in development regulations	e.g. City of Chilliwack/Fraser Valley Regional District
Governance	Lack of enforcement of litter laws	
Governance	Lack of enforcement of laws related to recreation	e.g. fishing
Resources/Tools	Lack of resources within the Provincial Emergency Program	
Resources/Tools	Lack of resources to monitor/restrict squatting activity	
Resources/Tools	Enforcement agencies lack tools to deal with some problems	e.g. garbage/dumping
Resources/Tools	Lack of appropriate legislation to deal with issues	e.g. conservation officers have to catch people "in the act"
Land use	Runoff and storm sewer caused by buildings too close to the river or banks	e.g. Peach Ave.
Land use	Run off/drainage problems caused by too much development	
Land use	Increased risk of slides caused by development	
Land use	Impact of development on water quality/quantity	
Land use	Drainage/runoff issues from the road	e.g. Peach Road
Land use	Impacts of logging on slope stability (impacts to fish habitat and property)	
Land use	Impacts of forestry activities on water quality	
Land use	Impact of forest harvesting on trails	
Land use	Encroachment of road on the river	e.g. Peach Road
Land use	Loss of deer and mountain goat winter range	
Land use	Impacts of independent power plants and related infrastructure	e.g. getting power to the grid could be hard on the landscape
Natural Disaster	Impact of naturally occurring clayslides	
Natural Disaster	Lack of comprehensive dyking plan/infrastructure (holes in the system)	
Natural Disaster	Protection of residential property from floods, erosion and debris flows	e.g. Wilson Road
Natural Disaster	Flooding/erosion of road	e.g. near Allison Pool
Natural Disaster	Lack of a plan and services in case of emergency	e.g. shelter
Natural Disaster	Increased risk of forest fires	e.g. from recreational activity
Illegal Activity	Pollution caused/garbage left by squatters	
Illegal Activity	Yard waste and trimmings dumped onto crown & private land (impact on habitat and waterways)	

Illegal Activity	Garbage dumping in populated areas, remote forested areas, and in/along the river	
Illegal Activity	Dumping of: -grow op and meth lab waste -building waste -car bodies and stolen cars -fridges, bbqs, etc.	
Illegal Activity	Garbage disposed of by locals from outside the vicinity	
Illegal Activity	Danger caused by high traffic speed along Chilliwack Lk. Rd.	
Illegal Activity	Drinking and driving	
Illegal Activity	Drug activity caused by squatters	
Recreation/Use	Reduced opportunity for recreation/access blocked	e.g. public sites becoming private sites
Recreation/Use	River access blocked by squatters	
Recreation/Use	Overcrowding/higher concentration of users at remaining site	
Recreation/Use	Lack of Forest Recreation sites	
Recreation/Use	Indiscriminate use and abuse of watershed	e.g. Bench road
Recreation/Use	Hazards left by users of the valley	e.g. live ammunition, broken glass
Recreation/Use	Lack of washroom facilities	
Recreation/Use	Lack of visitor support services despite promotion to bring people here	
Recreation/Use	Increased recreational use	
Recreation/Use	Impacts to sensitive habitats	e.g. ATV and Off-road vehicles on Mount McGuire and Cheam Peak
Recreation/Use	Cutting down of trees and damage caused by users	
Recreation/Use	Impact of motorized vehicles on trails	
Recreation/Use	Increased traffic	
Recreation/Use	Creation of hiking trails that are not maintained	e.g. Trans Canada Trail
Recreation/Use	Unlawful fishing techniques on the river	
Other	Lack of respect from 'outsiders' for resources	
Other	Loss of right to fish because of poor mgt practices, aboriginal fishing, lack of fish & overreaction to species at risk threat	