

REGIONAL DISTRICT OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN (\$6,000)

Project Title: Park Rill Stewardship and Restoration Project

Project Contact: Jillian Tamblyn



The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) was incorporated on March 4, 1966. In British Columbia, Regional Districts serve three important purposes. Regional Districts are regional bodies responsible for providing important regional services and undertaking key activities for the greater regional area; they provide the political and administrative frameworks necessary for member municipalities and electoral areas; and are the local government for unincorporated electoral areas.

Planning Services works in the public interest to prepare plans and policies to guide development, balancing the needs of the community with economic, social and environmental considerations to protect the unique character of the area and quality of life for existing and

future generations of the Okanagan Similkameen region. The RDOS' service area is approximately 10,400 square kilometers and serves just under 80,000 people.

The Land Conservancy of BC, usually known as TLC, is a non-profit, charitable land trust working throughout British Columbia. TLC works with landowners to protect important habitat for plants, animals and natural communities as well as properties with historical, cultural, scientific, scenic or compatible recreational value. It does so by gaining protective control of the property through acquisition of title, conservation covenants, long-term lease arrangements, and stewardship agreements. TLC relies on a strong membership and volunteer base to help maintain its operations.

The South Okanagan-Similkameen (SOS) Stewardship Program started in 1994, and TLC assumed administrative and operational responsibility for the program in 2000. The program delivers a wide variety of landowner contact programs, community stewardship and other initiatives.

There were three components to this project based on stewardship of Park Rill Creek:

- to install a water leveler into a beaver dam,
- to conduct streamside landowner education and outreach,
- to work towards the removal of derelict vehicles and other debris in and around the creek.

The removal of vehicles at this time is following an enforcement route through the RDOS zoning bylaw regarding storage of vehicles. Removal of vehicles is expected to occur in October, 2008.

The parts for the Clemson Leveler have been purchased and arrangements have been made for its construction. A permit to modify a beaver dam has been received under the BC Wildlife Act, and a positive response has been received to a BC Water Act notification proposal. One site visit to review project logistics has taken place, along with considerable discussion about access to the beaver dam, placing the leveler, appropriate release of water, and ongoing beaver management. Four landowners are actively involved in the leveler project.

Education and outreach has started. The Land Conservancy contacted sixty property owners along Park Rill Creek (also known as the west channel of the Okanagan River) through a mail out which included the following brochures or factsheets:

- Environmental and Watercourse Development Permits, published by the RDOS
- The Value of Riparian Habitat and How to Care For, published by the SOS Stewardship Program
- Purple Loosestrife, published by the RDOS
- Healthy Farms, Healthy Streams, published by Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Healthy Streams – yours to protect and enjoy, published by Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The mail out also included an invitation to a Rivers Day / Great Canadian Clean Up event for September 27, 2008, staged at the home of some Friends of Park Rill. There was a limited turn out (8 people), however 20 kg of garbage were collected, as well as a bag of recyclable containers. Due to high water on Park Rill and the lack of access through private properties, the clean up was done by canoe. The walking path along the west side of Okanagan River was also cleaned up on foot. It was interesting to note that there was very little litter in the area. The problems were primarily issues with large numbers of derelict vehicles on properties.

One landowner visit was completed to discuss concerns about a recent rise in water levels and how the installation of the beaver dam leveler will help to mitigate those problems. Assembly of the beaver pond leveler is planned for October 5th. The parts have been delivered to members of Friends of Park Rill, who will be assembling the leveler. The installation of the beaver pond leveler is planned for October 2008.

Ongoing education will take place through phone calls and follow up site visits, which will occur over the winter. The removal of wood chip piles is being investigated, and requires the cooperation of the landowners. It will take place after the beaver pond leveler is installed.

