

Regional District Okanagan Similkameen (\$16,350)

Project Title: Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping (SHIM) of Skaha Lake Area

Contact Person: Jillian Tamblyn, Environmental Coordinator (250) 490-4213

Project Start date: June 2007



With the implementation of the Riparian Areas Regulation as watercourse development permit areas, it has become clear that more accurate mapping of watercourses is needed as the present provincial mapping is not appropriate for the scale needed to make land use decisions at the property level. Information collected through SHIM may be applied to other planning, engineering and public works activities as it becomes available to staff and is integrated into our systems.

Using the standardized method of Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping (SHIM) important watercourses are being accurately mapped by GPS with associated information on habitat and human modifications. Identifying important riparian habitats will help ensure that sustainable land use will occur in the Okanagan and Similkameen. The Provincial Riparian Areas Regulation and the newly implemented RDOS Watercourse Development Permit requirements will be applied to these mapped and inventoried areas. At present, the RDOS only has access to provincial stream mapping which does not always accurately identify where streams are located in the Okanagan. This uncertainty has put a great deal of pressure on landowners, developers and regional, provincial and federal staff. The RDOS is updating watercourse information starting with the highest need areas.

Land owners, developers and buyers will have the best information available to make decisions regarding development of their property, and RDOS staff will be able to give clear direction and advice. The information collected will streamline our responses to development and zoning applications and reduce the uncertainty for landowners with regards to developing near water courses. It will also ensure that the RDOS is not compromising the environment during mosquito control operations.

Field work was initiated by training with Regional District of Central Okanagan staff in May 2007. From June to September an in house contract staff position from the GIS department was used to complete the work. Work has focused on the East side of Skaha Lake. As Skaha Lake has only one major tributary (Okanagan River), any small tributaries are important. To date, 7 streams have been mapped and 16 stream segments have been removed from the mapping as they do not exist. In total 15.3 km of stream center line has been surveyed – which includes bank depth, width and slope, water temperature, water depth, wetted width, as well as vegetation and substrate information. Other surveyed features to date include: 64 Information points, 135 photo locations, 28 Stream obstructions, 94 modifications, 7 discharge locations, 70 culvert locations, 4 wetlands and top of bank information.

One press release has been written and distributed. Information regarding the project was displayed at Rivers Day in Penticton in September.

Due to increased work load and decreased staffing in the GIS department, it was determined that the remainder of the project would be completed by contract. Ecoscape Environmental will be completing work in targeted areas identified with one or more of these features: high fisheries values, missing watercourses and inaccurate stream locations. Vaseux Creek, select oxbow areas North and South of Oliver and East Gate near Manning Park will all be surveyed. This work is scheduled to be finished by December 2007.



Aerial photo showing development on east side of Skaha Lake with completed SHIM for a tributary stream. All modifications, obstructions and riparian habitat values are noted in data points along the stream length.



**REGIONAL DISTRICT OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN
PRESS RELEASE
May 9, 2007**

RDOS Initiates Stream Mapping

The Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is starting stream mapping on the east side of Skaha Lake. The RDOS received two generous contributions to initiate this program. The Real Estate Foundation of BC has provided \$30,000 as part of their mission to support sustainable real estate and land use practices, and the Okanagan Basin Water Board donated \$16,350 through their grants for Water Conservation and Quality Improvement. Once the east side of Skaha Lake is complete, staff will be working in other parts of the Okanagan with important fish streams or interest for development.

“Watercourse mapping will provide property owners and the RDOS with accurate information to make informed decisions about land use.” said RDOS Chair, Dan Ashton. “With the successful implementation of Watercourse Development Permit areas, this will allow us to refine provincial stream mapping to meet local needs.”

The mapping will be completed by walking along streams and following a standard information collection process that has been used by other local and regional governments in many parts of BC. In addition to mapping stream locations, basic stream characteristic and land use information will also be collected. The updated stream locations will be available to the public through the RDOS online mapping service.

Staff will be carrying identification and will contact property owners if they will be walking close to their property. Local residents are encouraged to approach staff in their neighbourhoods or to call the RDOS Environmental Coordinator at 490-4213 or toll-free at 1-877-610-3737 if they have any questions.

-30-

Media Contacts:

Patty Derkach, RDOS (250) 492-0237

D. Ashton
RDOS Board Chair

DISTRIBUTION:

All Press
All Directors
CivicInfo
RDOS Intranet
RDOS Internet
J. Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer
P. Derkach, Human Resources Manager