

Creek focus of strategy

By [Brent Mutis - Vernon Morning Star](#)

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Immediate action is being taken to improve the integrity of one of the valley's most polluted creeks.

A majority of Coldstream council felt it was important to take action on Coldstream Creek as the deadline to apply to the Okanagan Basin Water Board for \$17,000 of the plan is Feb. 19. Another \$10,000 would be sought from the Environmental Farm Plan.

"It's a good start," said Coun. Bill Firman.

The health of the creek has been in question since Ministry of Environment findings identified it as one of the dirtiest in the Okanagan last year.

Coun. Doug Dirk opposed the recommendation, noting the report sent to councillors was only received three days before the most recent council meeting.

"I think some stuff can be moved on right away (but)... this happens too often with deadlines," said Dirk.

"Staff knows what's happening but we (council) don't."

Firman accepted Dirk's concerns but felt it was more important to start the wheels in motion on cleanup of the creek.

"I appreciate what you said about the timing, but I'll be supporting this," he said.

Speaking to council, Kyle Hawes of Ecoscape Environmental Consultants presented findings from a 2009 field inventory of the creek.

Urban, rural and agricultural impacts like retaining walls, decreased riparian (creekside) vegetation and increased livestock access promote the creek's banks to break down introducing pollutants.

"We totalled 2.8 kilometres where livestock can access the creek," said Hawes, who is an environmental biologist.

One of the obstacles to repairing the damage done is that regulations can only be put in place for developments yet to come.

There is no way to regulate discharge on existing properties.

"It's a challenge," said Hawes.

“There’s an urban stream problem wherever you go. That’s why it’s important (to install regulations) at the redevelopment stage.”

Further, property owners may not be able to fix what has been set up already and some don’t want others doing the work on their land.

“The challenge is the people that own the property, they may not have the means to clean it up,” said Hawes.

Hawes’ recommendations included expanding the riparian area, keeping livestock at least 10 metres away with fencing and regrading any banks that have become too steep.

Council, as part of the recommendation, also approved an initiative to request Greater Vernon parks and recreation to stop mowing lawn for five- to 10-metres along both sides of the Creekside Park dog park.