

Walley Creek and You

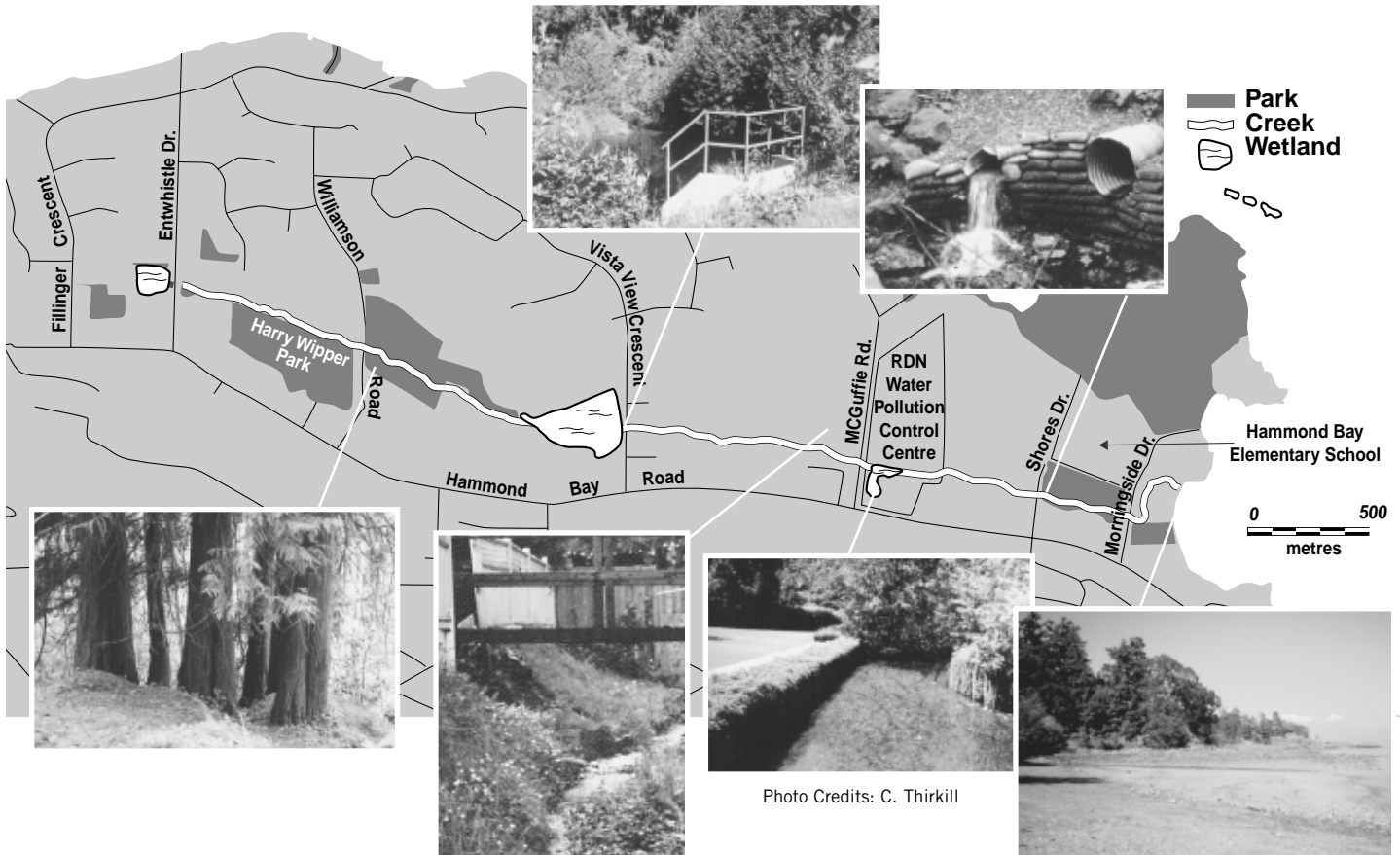


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Where is Walley Creek?

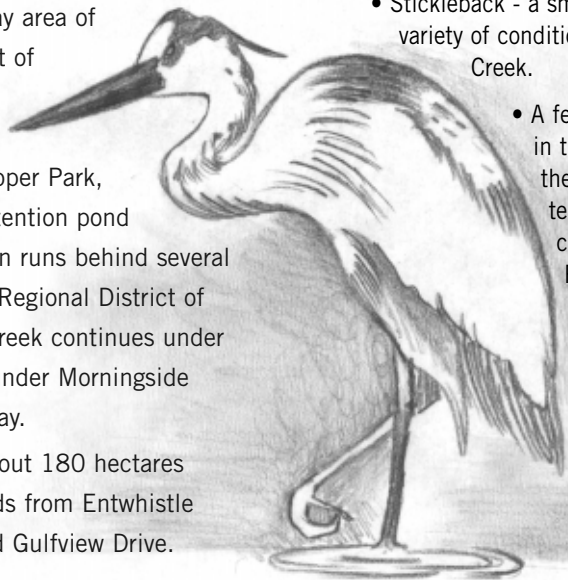
Walley Creek is found in the Hammond Bay area of north Nanaimo. Beginning in a marsh west of Entwistle Drive, it flows east parallel to Hammond Bay Road for about 2 km.

En route, the creek flows beside Harry Wipper Park, under Williamson Road, and through a detention pond before crossing Vista View Crescent. It then runs behind several houses and into a man-made pond at the Regional District of Nanaimo's Pollution Control Centre. The creek continues under Shores Drive, through city park land and under Morningside Drive before discharging into Hammond Bay.

In total, Walley Creek drains an area of about 180 hectares (440 acres) which includes neighbourhoods from Entwistle Drive, Lost Lake and Malaspina Roads and Gulfview Drive.

Fish, Birds & Wildlife


- Stickleback - a small freshwater fish that can survive in a variety of conditions - are found in most parts of Walley Creek.
- A few Cutthroat trout and Coho salmon live in the lower part of the creek. However, these species are more sensitive to temperature, oxygen and other habitat conditions. None can be found above the RDN Centre.
- A Bald eagle's nest is located off Morningside Drive. Black-tailed deer, Ringed-neck pheasant, quail, a variety of songbirds as well as many types of amphibians, reptiles and insects are seen regularly along the banks of the creek.



What's Been Happening to Walley Creek?

Urban development, along with natural forces, is having many impacts on Walley Creek.

Erosion: Clearing and earth-moving as subdivisions are developed have caused excessive amounts of sediment to enter the creek via drainage ditches and surface runoff. Sediment fills in pools and smothers the creek bottom, damaging habitat for fish and other water life.

 *What to Do: Call for stronger regulation of erosion from development.*

Loss of streamside vegetation:

The removal of trees, shrubs and bushes along the creek reduces the available shade (which helps keep the creek cool), cover, and food sources for fish. It also destabilizes banks, causing more erosion.



What to Do: Restore or maintain a border of native vegetation along the creek's banks.

Unnatural barriers: These include culverts that lie above the creek bed, dams and weirs used to create artificial ponds, and other structures that block fish movement or disturb the banks.



What to Do: Modify or remove unnatural structures which threaten water flow, fish migration or bank stability.

Garbage: Garbage such as plastic containers, tires, newspapers, batteries, metal scraps, etc. can reduce water quality, damage habitat and reduce the creek's aesthetic value. (However, logs and branches that fall naturally into the creek provide important cover and habitat, and are not garbage.)



What to Do: Remove human garbage from the creek area.

Changes in drainage patterns: Replacing natural vegetation with pavement, houses and other "impermeable" surfaces prevents water from soaking into the ground. Instead, water runs off these surfaces very quickly into storm drains, ditches and the creek, without the filtering and buffering effect that soil and vegetation provide. This impacts both the water quality and quantity in the creek.



What to Do: Pave as little as possible; use gravel, loose bricks or flagstones instead.

Try to use rainwater from roof drainage in yards and gardens.

Voluntary Stewardship:

What Is It? Why Is It Needed on Walley Creek?

Voluntary stewardship simply means that residents make a conscious, voluntary choice to conserve and enhance the natural features and values of their properties.

Stewardship may focus on a special aspect of the landscape, such as an endangered plant or habitat (e.g. Garry oak meadow) or a watercourse.

Walley Creek was once a rich aquatic system which supported many fish, plants and animals. But like hundreds of other small creeks on this coast, Walley Creek's natural values are threatened by encroaching development - indicated by its dwindling Coho population. The well-being of the Hammond Bay neighbourhood - indeed, all Nanaimo - depends on protecting and restoring the natural values of ecosystems like Walley Creek.



A Future Walley Creek...?

It's a spring morning in the year 2020, and students from Hammond Bay Elementary School are on a field trip along the Walley Creek greenway. The children pause on the footbridge behind Harry Wipper Park to watch Coho and Cutthroat smolts swimming in the clear pools below. Alder and Cedar trees, planted 23 years ago, provide shade for fish and people alike. The students listen to raucous Redwing Blackbirds and observe a Great Blue Heron, poised to strike, at the detention pond. Below the RDN centre, they stop to take water samples from the creek as it gurgles over boulders and clean gravel, before heading back to their classroom along the greenway trail.

Whatever it may look like, achieving a future Walley Creek greenway means working together. It means restoring streamside vegetation, removing unnatural barriers, and controlling the quality and quantity of water that drains into the creek from surrounding lands. It means residents working with the City and community groups to maintain all of the greenway in a healthy state. With planning and cooperation, we can do it!

If you have an idea to share or would like more information, contact one of the following:

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