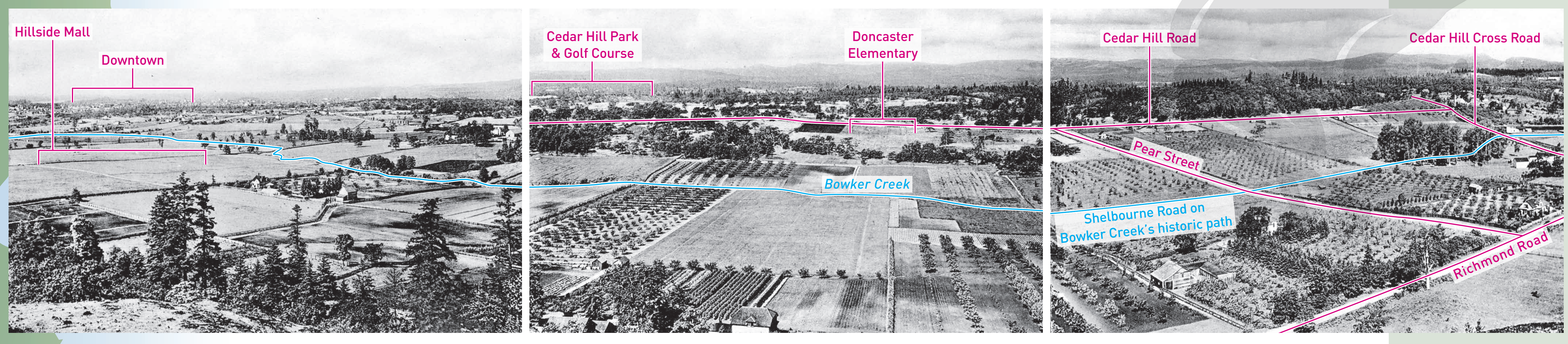
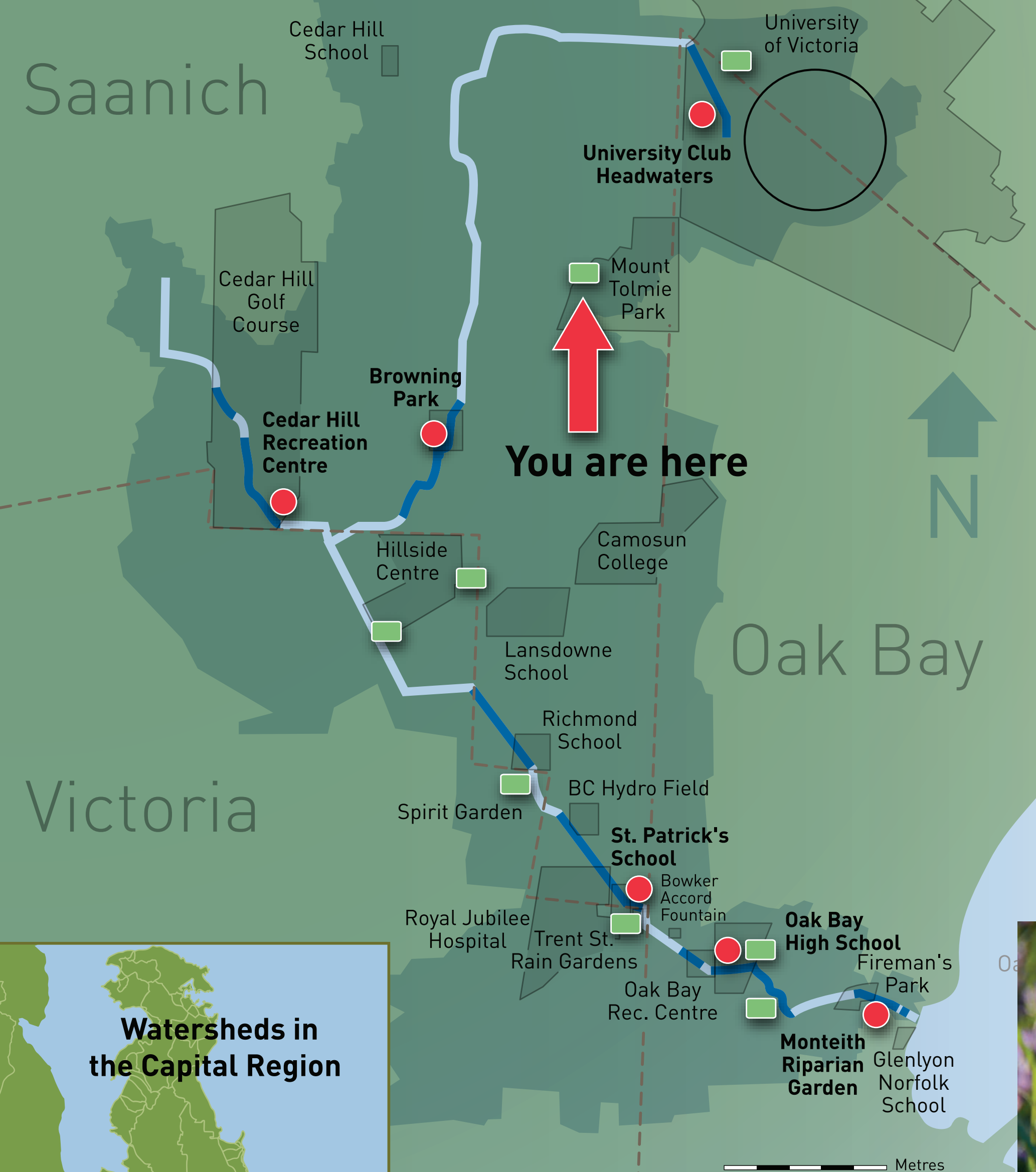
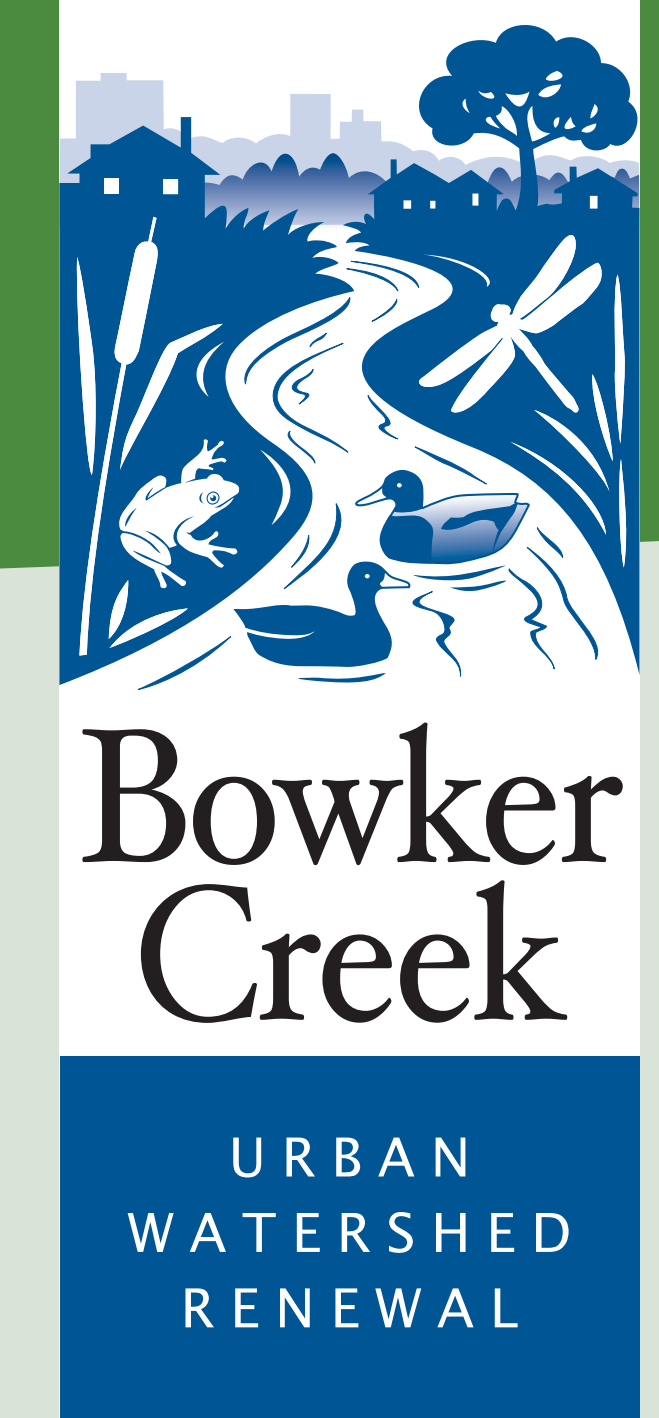


Bowker Creek flows through an urban watershed from its headwaters at the University of Victoria, along Shelbourne Street in Saanich, past Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, to the ocean at Oak Bay.

Shelbourne Valley – Changes in the Watershed



Shelbourne Valley in the Bowker Creek watershed as it appeared in 1901. Look for the edge of the Bowker Creek watershed and some of the landmarks in the photo as they are today. (Images A-01056, A-01057, A-01058 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives)

What is the BCI?

The Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI) is a partnership among the Capital Regional District, the District of Saanich, the City of Victoria, the District of Oak Bay, institutions, businesses and community groups. To restore Bowker Creek, the BCI is working to reduce pollution and flooding, connect greenways and restore natural areas in the watershed.

The watershed management goals of the BCI are:

- 1 Take responsibility for actions that affect the watershed
- 2 Manage creek flows effectively
- 3 Improve and expand public areas, natural areas, and biodiversity in the watershed; and
- 4 Achieve and maintain acceptable water quality in the watershed

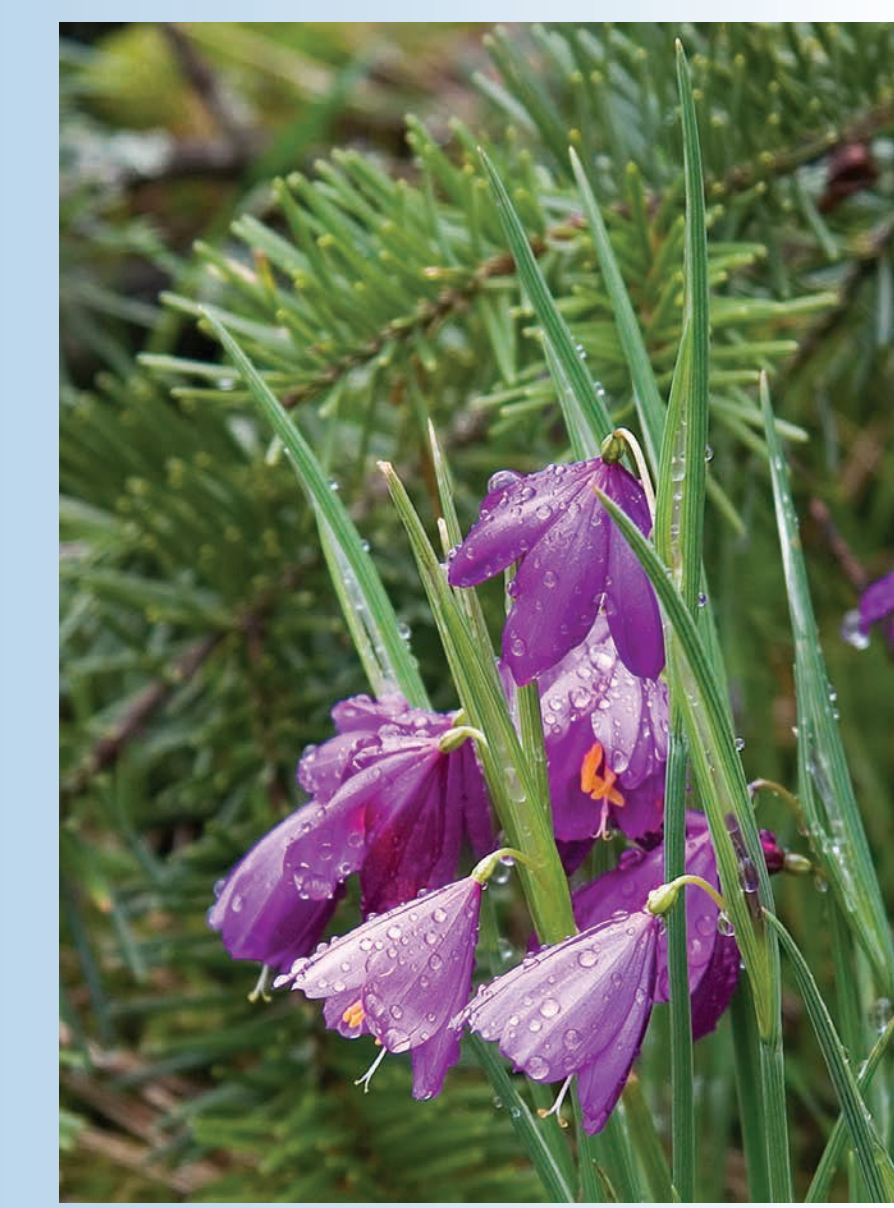
Mount Tolmie (Pkols) is the highest peak in the Bowker Creek watershed. The Bowker Creek watershed is part of the traditional territory of the Lkwungen people, represented today by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Much of the upland area of the watershed sustained Garry oak ecosystems, an important part of the cultural heritage of the Lkwungen people. These landscapes were managed using fire and cultivation to promote growth of culturally important plants such as camas, a staple food also used for trade.



Camas

Over time, land use changes have had a negative effect on the ecology of Bowker Creek and its watershed. Much of the watershed was converted to agricultural use following European settlement. Vegetation clearing, channelization and fragmentation of the creek corridor have meant a loss of habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. Over half of the original creek channel has been piped and is now underground, causing local flooding, erosion of the creek banks and degradation of water quality.

Opportunities to improve the creek and upland habitat will occur as the watershed is re-developed following the Bowker Creek Blueprint. Future development and land use planning, as well as things we do at our homes and businesses, will help to restore the ecological health of the watershed.



Garry oak ecosystems are one of the most endangered plant communities in Canada. Garry oak meadows once flourished throughout the watershed.

For more information

- Bowker Creek Initiative: info@bowkercreekinitiative.ca
- Saanich Parks: saanich.ca/parks or parks@saanich.ca

What Can You Do?

- Keep your property well vegetated with native plants and trees to attract wildlife, absorb rainwater, slow runoff and reduce erosion
- Remove invasive species (e.g., Scotch broom, English ivy, Daphne, Himalayan blackberry)
- Use watershed-friendly garden and household products and use them sparingly
- Compost garden waste away from riparian areas
- Replace impervious pavement with grass, paving stones or gravel to allow rainwater to infiltrate
- Install rain gardens or bioswales to decrease and filter roof and driveway runoff
- Reduce runoff from your property: wash your car on lawn or gravel; sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of hosing them off
- Collect rainwater in cisterns or holding tanks to use for irrigation
- Join a local stewardship group
- If you live along the creek, consult an expert to help you create habitat for wildlife

Bowker Creek Watershed

- 1,028 hectares in area
- Home to approximately 30,000 people
- 56% of the watershed is impervious
- Bowker Creek is 9.4 kilometres long, with a 1.4 kilometres tributary at Cedar Hill Park
- 60% of the original creek is piped underground

A watershed is the land that drains surface and groundwater to a common waterway such as a creek, lake or ocean. In an urban watershed, impervious surfaces such as buildings, roads and parking lots block water from soaking into the soil. When it rains, the water collects pollutants as it quickly flows into underground stormdrains leading to creeks or shorelines. This can cause flooding, streambank erosion, water pollution and habitat loss.



Top: Satinflowes
Bottom: Chocolate lilies

The Bowker Creek Blueprint



Improving the watershed will take time. The Blueprint is the 100-year action plan that guides this work.

Find out more about Bowker Creek at: bowkercreekinitiative.ca