

September, 2020

NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF WOODHAVEN

nature conservancy society



GREETINGS!

Hello, members and Woodhaven Nature Conservancy enthusiasts!

We hope all of you and your families are staying safe and sane. This bizarre year is flying by in a disorienting blur, and we are long overdue for an update to our membership. Like many other organizations, our activities mostly ground to a halt due to Covid-19.

However, behind the scenes, we have been busy researching and communicating with RDCO, and we have some information and updates to share.

Please read on!



EVENT: FOREST YOGA & INTERPRETIVE WALK

When: September 26, 9:00am

Where: Woodhaven Nature Conservancy

What: Yoga class followed by interpretive walk

Who: Anyone!

Cost: \$20

Details on page 3



WATER IS LIFE

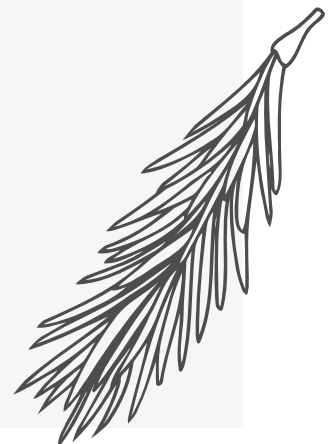
At our first public meeting (back in February) the issue of water was raised. The lack of water in Woodhaven has been front of mind for many of us, and is one of the primary reasons why Leah, Susan, Nancy, and Lori started this group. It is clear that the ecosystems of Woodhaven are struggling. In the past few months we have learned a lot about the history of North Fork Creek, Bonaparte Creek, and flooding in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

BACKGROUND INFO

The helpful staff at RDCO prepared a simplified summary of events that have affected the flow of water through Woodhaven, which we will attempt to further summarize here.

As a starting point, it is helpful to recognize that Woodhaven lies on what was historically a floodplain of Bellevue Creek. The first alteration to water flows in Woodhaven would have to be related to the historic diking and channelization of Bellevue Creek. Then, during the development of surrounding neighbourhoods, a control structure was built to regulate the amount of water entering the north arm of Bellevue Creek, which is North Fork Creek. This control structure (let's call it a "gate") was a condition of development, otherwise seasonal flooding would be an issue in the new developments. Unfortunately, that is how things were done back then.

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September, 2020

FOREST YOGA & INTERPRETIVE WALK

We are very excited to present our first event! In partnership with RDCO, we are pleased to invite our members and the public to attend an outdoor, physically distanced yoga class right in the enchanted Woodhaven forest. This class will be led by veteran yoga instructor Laura Martini of Martini Yoga. All ages and skill levels are welcome. You can read more about Laura [here](#).

Immediately following yoga will be a guided walk through the park with RDCO Park Interpreter James Chester, who will share some information about the history and ecology of the park.

We are required to charge for this offering in order to cover our costs. The cost will be \$20 per person. Space will be very limited, so please reserve your spot ASAP! To register, please email: friendsofwoodhaven@gmail.com.

When: September 26, 9:00am

Where: Woodhaven Nature Conservancy

What: 1 hour yoga class followed by interpretive walk (about 1 hour)

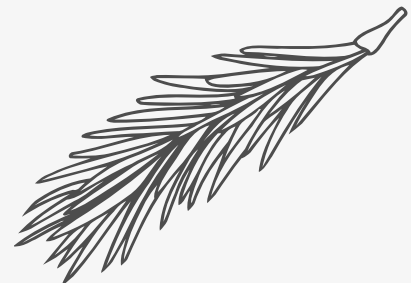
Who: Anyone!

Cost: \$20



ONLINE FRIENDS

Have you checked out our social media pages? We are on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). If you use Instagram, we would love for you to share any photos you take of critters in or around Woodhaven, and use the hashtags [#crittersofwoodhaven](#) or [#plantsofwoodhaven](#). This will help us to document the tremendous biodiversity of Woodhaven. You can also email photos to friendsofwoodhaven@gmail.com.



...BACKGROUND INFO CONTINUED

Initially, the gate did not permit sufficient water to enter Woodhaven, which resulted in tremendous stress to the ecosystems and the death of a number of Western Red Cedars. The gate was subsequently moved, which allowed water to once again flow through North Fork Creek, as well as Bonaparte Creek (please refer to RDCO maps of Woodhaven to see where Bonaparte Creek is located).

However, with the renewed flow of water came multiple flooding issues to surrounding neighbourhoods. The North Fork Creek gate was made non-operational and water flow to Woodhaven was again cut off.

Jim and Joan Burbridge, who were caretakers of Woodhaven at the time, advocated strongly for the park between 1981 and 1986, urging the Province and RDCO to find a solution. Finally, in 1987, a curtain drain with perforated pipe was installed along the Northern boundary of Woodhaven to intercept excess surface water and regulate the groundwater table in that vicinity. If you have ever noticed grated manhole covers between the path and the fence in the northwestern corner of the park, you now know what they are for!

A number of years ago the Province determined that North Fork Creek no longer meets the technical definition of a creek (or "Stream" as defined in the British Columbia Water Sustainability Act). Today, RDCO holds a water licence from the Province which allows it to divert water from Bellevue Creek through the North Fork Creek channel for conservation purposes for the benefit of Woodhaven. RDCO actively monitors the flow of water and restricts that flow as needed to mitigate flooding risk in the surrounding neighbourhoods. As we understand it, RDCO may permit water to flow through Woodhaven, but not beyond its southern border. This is why you will see the water drying up, with surprising accuracy, right at the Raymer Road culvert on the west side of the Park.

The solution in place isn't perfect, but it is better than nothing. We would like to recognize the tireless efforts of the Burbridges in saving Woodhaven not once, but twice: first from development, and then from severe drought. We would also like to acknowledge RDCO for stepping up and doing its best to find a solution which balances the interests of neighbours with the needs of Woodhaven itself.



WHAT'S NEXT

This is where things get really exciting. As you probably know, RDCO has acquired two additional properties at 969 and 979 Raymer Road, thus Woodhaven will soon be expanding. Herein lies the opportunity of a lifetime to restore a portion of critically endangered black cottonwood riparian ecosystem, and enhance the wellbeing of the original Woodhaven parcel.

The Board of FOW has had some promising (albeit very preliminary) discussions with RDCO about the potential involvement of our group in the development of a holistic restoration plan. RDCO will of course be canvassing all stakeholders and the public for input in the creation of this plan, but we are very excited about the possibility of being involved. We feel very positive about collaborating with RDCO and perhaps other organizations. We envision a wildlife corridor with invaluable riparian habitat connecting ecosystems all the way from the uplands of Bellevue Creek down to the shores of Okanagan Lake, via Woodhaven and the Bellevue Creek Linear Park (you can read more about that [here](#)).



FURTHER READING

For further reading, here is the [Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park Management Plan](#).

Also, [here](#) is a very informative report produced by the BC Government on the importance of riparian cottonwood ecosystems.

That's all we have for now! If you have any questions or comments, we would love to hear from you! Thank you for your support.

All the best,

Your FOW Board of Directors:

Leah, Susan, Nancy and Lori (ex officio)

