

3. Formalize the False Creek to the Fraser River Blueways

Submitted by: Councillor Wiebe

WHEREAS

1. A blueway is a network of bodies of water, either on the surface (like rivers, creeks and lakes) or subsurface (aquifers). All blueways exist within a watershed – an area of land that catches rain/snow and where water flows downward into a specific river, stream, lake or aquifer. Blueways either exist in the present or formerly existed in the past. Present day blueways can be managed from the perspective of ecological preservation and stormwater management while former blueways are treated by restoring or daylighting them. Existing blueways and restored/daylighted blueways revive and protect ecosystems within our urban communities to help cities deal with the impacts of climate change. They improve water quality, absorb carbon and heavy rainfall, buffer floods, protect and expand urban forests, and increase biodiversity and wildlife habitats. By incorporating trails and bike paths, blueways can improve health and wellbeing, connect us to each other, and provide active ways of moving around the region. Currently, various creek networks exist within two watersheds: the China Creek Watershed and the Brunette Watershed;
2. Much of the creek network runs alongside the existing Central Valley Greenway and BC Parkway and is within close proximity to public transit at all points. Connecting and formalizing this blueway would increase access to water for local residents across three of BC's largest communities. By advancing the use of blueways in urban areas, the City of Vancouver can limit its biodiversity loss while educating the public on the value and benefits of reconnecting habitats and rehabilitating natural areas in order to allow species not only to survive, but thrive;
3. Significant work has already been done to create the Central Valley Greenway and BC Parkway through a collaborative effort by Translink, MetroVan, and the cities of Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster. Many environmental stewardship groups have also kept the restoration of Still Creek and the Brunette River as a high profile issue. This blueways transformation process will enhance, restore and connect ecologically important systems along these paths;
4. In July 1988, Council endorsed Still Creek to be maintained as an open watercourse, and committed to pursuing day-lighting, alongside a continuous pedestrian/bicycle pathway linking Burnaby Lake to the B.C. Parkway at 29th Avenue Station. In July 2000, Council established the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund. In July 2002, Council adopted the Grandview Boundary Industrial Area Rezoning and Development Policies and Guidelines which contain specific guidelines and a 10 and 50 year action plan to protect and enhance Still Creek. In December 2006, Council endorsed the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP) for the Still Creek Watershed which identifies private and public actions to

improve stormwater management, recreational opportunities, and creek health. In April 2008, Council authorized that the annual income from the lease of 2500 Skeena Street be held in the Still Creek Greenway Enhancement Fund for ongoing initiatives. Still Creek illustrates successful collaboration on ecosystem restoration between the cities of Vancouver and Burnaby in Metro Vancouver. Partnership, creative governance, community engagement, and innovative funding approaches were all essential components that helped the two cities come together to invest in ecosystem health and restore Still Creek, one of only two daylight streams in the City of Vancouver. After decades of pollution and neglect, this collaboration led to many benefits, including the return of spawning salmon, yet there still remains a lot of work to do;

5. Over the past 30 years, Burnaby and New Westminster have demonstrated strong leadership in creek restoration, natural asset protection, and ecosystem rehabilitation along this blueway. This intermunicipal work in the rehabilitation of the creek helped chum salmon return to the Vancouver section of Still Creek in 2012 for the first time in nearly 80 years. With the renewal of the Burnaby Lake lease there is an opportunity for Metro Vancouver to create a Regional Blueway that supports this effort;
6. The majority of work that remains lies in daylighting China Creek in Vancouver, expanding natural ecosystems and habitats along the entire blueway, and connecting it to other Green spaces along the way. The first step is developing a blueway transition plan to ensure the retention and protection of Vancouver's existing natural assets and real property along the route. The plan will aim to daylight creeks, expand biodiversity, create amenities and public spaces, and develop sub trails connecting it to other natural assets such as Trout Lake and Renfrew Ravine. There are many opportunities for different stakeholders, cities, regions, and nonprofits to join in a collaborative effort to realize a complete Blueway from False Creek to the Fraser River
7. China Creek is currently buried in the False Creek flats. False Creek Flats may see significant redevelopment in the coming years under the False Creek Flats Area Plan (approved by Council on May 17, 2017), which can be built around or upon the daylighting of China Creek;
8. In 2019, Vancouver City Council passed a Watershed Revival Plan, directing staff to report back with a scope of work to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan that includes prioritized strategies, including new land acquisition, protecting existing waterway and habitat connections, daylighting streams, and intergovernmental coordination with local First Nations and neighbouring municipalities;
9. The Vancouver Park Board's Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan set 10 goals to shape the next 25 years of Vancouver's parks and recreation. Goal 6 is to "create a green network that will connect our parks, waterfront and recreation areas" and includes a draft concept for an interconnected green network;

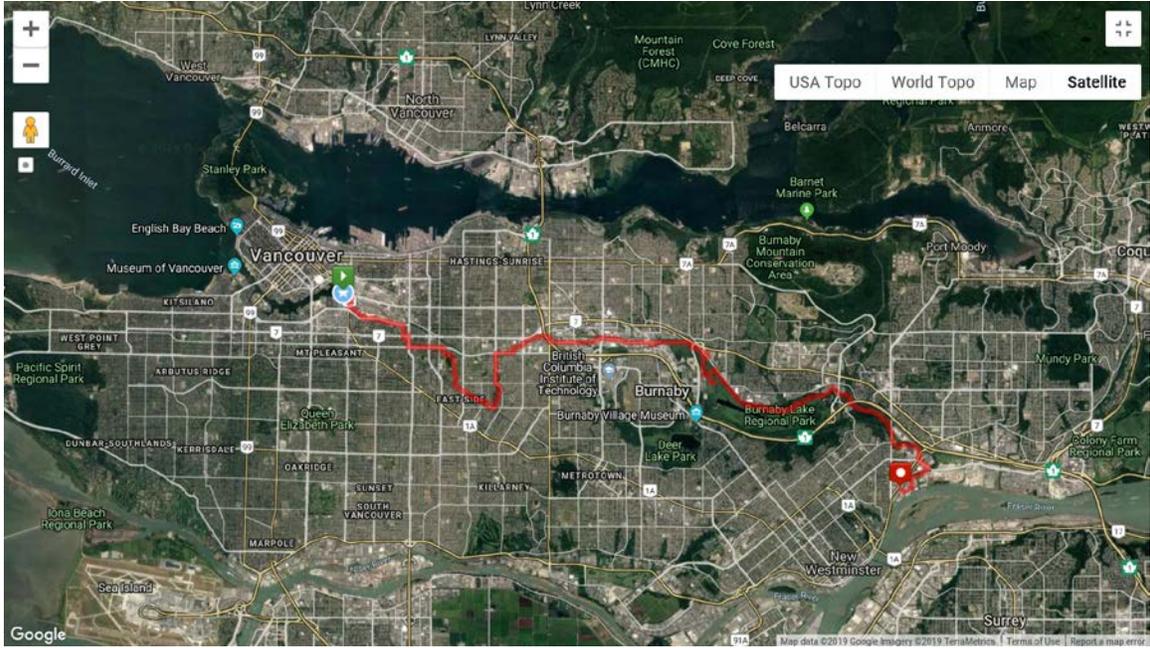
10. The Vancouver School Board approved the first ever Environmental Sustainability Plan in 2019 to advance five key themes: sustainability in education, green spaces, resource conservation and climate change, sustainability transportation and leadership in sustainability. Multiple schools will have connections to outdoor learning on the blueway, with Nootka Elementary having the potential to enhance a portion of the creek on VSB land;
11. Metro Vancouver develops and manages municipal components of the Regional Recreation Greenway Network, working with municipalities and First Nations to identify where appropriate measures to protect, enhance and restore ecologically important systems, features, corridors and establish buffers along watercourses, coastlines, agricultural lands, and other ecologically important features;
12. The British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, a contribution program funded jointly by the federal and provincial government, will deliver up to \$142.85 million over 5 years to support BC's fish and seafood sector, and to ensure the restoration, protection and maintenance of healthy and diverse salmon populations and their habitats;
13. Infrastructure Canada will deliver \$3.917 Billion to municipalities through a bilateral agreement with the Province of British Columbia under four funding streams, including green infrastructure, over the next ten years;
14. The findings of a United Nations-backed report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) were approved by representatives of 132 governments in Paris in May 2019. The report warns that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world. The report also tells us that it is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level from local to global.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct City staff to develop a blueways transformation plan from False Creek to the Fraser River through Trout and Burnaby Lake and report back to Council in November 2019. The Plan is to:

1. Honour, respect and learn from the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Kwikwetlem First Nations traditional and contemporary relationship to the land and waterways and to explore opportunities to collaboratively plan for the future;
2. Align with current and developing City plans, policies and strategies, including the Shore to Core work already underway and to include this plan as part of the report back to Council in November 2019;
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities amongst the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Park Board and the Vancouver School Board, in the delivery of the blueways from False Creek to Boundary Road;

4. Explore opportunities for collaborative planning with Metro Vancouver, the City of Burnaby and the City of New Westminster on a regional strategy, and;
5. Outline appropriate resourcing and coordination of staff, including exploring the establishment of a Blueways Enhancement Fund.

POTENTIAL BLUEWAYS MAP



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