

29 September 2011

Re: *Bow River Float with Calgary City Council, Planning Commission and Others*

Dear members of Calgary City Council,

On behalf of Calgary River Valleys (CRV) Board of Directors, I'd like to thank you for making time to join us for our guided tour of Harvie Passage and float down the Bow River. We sincerely appreciate your interest in Calgary's irreplaceable rivers and natural resources.

The Bow and Elbow Rivers are central to life here in Calgary, but human activities influence their health as well. Incremental and cumulative impacts from all kinds of development produce local and regional effects that we cannot ignore. Up-close observations and personal experiences – such as we enjoyed on Friday – are critical for understanding the effects of past decisions, so we can manage local aquatic and riparian environments wisely in the future. Comprehensive planning principles and processes aren't enough; we also need our planners and decision makers to be conscientious, caring and informed.

One of our key objectives is to raise awareness and collaborate with people in both public and private sectors in helping to protect and steward Calgary's precious water resources. This trip took us through a busy section of the Bow River, where we saw a range of disturbed, undisturbed and reclaimed areas, as well as intensive in-river construction. Your participation was a strong indication of our success in reaching out to key audiences.

Another CRV objective is to connect and engage watershed-management stakeholders in meaningful discussions about the value and importance of our water courses and natural amenities. The attendance list for this float is also a sign of our ability to generate positive attention and constructive dialogue:

PARTICIPANTS

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| ◆ Gael MacLeod, Ald. Ward 4 | ◆ Brian Meagher, Trout Unlimited Canada/CRV |
| ◆ Richard Pootmans, Ald. Ward 6 | ◆ Cathy Ryan, University of Calgary Geosciences |
| ◆ Druh Farrell, Ald. Ward 7 | ◆ Adam Rich, Fisheries & Oceans Canada |
| ◆ Brian Pincott, Ald. Ward 11 | ◆ Mac Hickley, Calgary River Valleys |
| ◆ Dave Taylor, MLA Calgary-Currie | ◆ Mark Bennett, Bow River Basin Council |
| ◆ Manu Chugh, Calgary Planning Commission | ◆ Mike Kelly, Bow River Basin Council |
| ◆ Shawn Ripley, Calgary Planning Commission | ◆ Genevieve Pare, Riverwatch Institute |
| ◆ Nico Bernard, City of Calgary Parks | ◆ Kris King, Riverwatch Institute |
| ◆ Twyla Hutchison, City Water Resources | ◆ Al Nilson, Alberta Transportation (weir tour) |
| ◆ Ken Uzeloc, Calgary Fire Department | |

Float coordinated by Mac Hickley (CRV) and Rob Vickers (Riverwatch).



CRV AT A GLANCE

Calgary River Valleys represents water interests throughout Calgary. Our membership network encompasses industry, environmental groups, post-secondary and research institutions, three levels of government, residential communities with significant wetlands and river edges, and interested citizens at large. Together with our partners, we work to ensure that the health and integrity of Calgary's river system are maintained as effectively as possible in the face of ever-increasing social and economic pressures.

Awareness

An informed public is an invaluable asset. CRV champions the protection and conservation of water resources, promotes open and inclusive communications, and believes that public involvement in water management is essential to a sustainable future for Calgary and the entire Bow River watershed. We develop educational materials and host regular public forums on topical issues such as riparian values, river recreation and urban biodiversity.

Engagement

The past ten years have seen significant progress in the areas of water and watershed management. The Government of Alberta is collaborating with numerous stakeholders through its *Water for Life Strategy* and *Land-use Framework*, multiple jurisdictions are planning cooperatively for mutual regional outcomes, and The City of Calgary is poised to become a model for wastewater treatment and the provision of water services. There is much still to do, but we're making progress and further opportunities appear regularly.

Policy

Piping stormwater directly into the rivers leads to obvious problems. However, enhanced pre-treatment techniques are now required for new developments, a comprehensive retrofit program is being implemented in older communities, and commitments have been made to reduce pollution downstream. In the next few years, CRV will be partnering with The City to help develop and promote leading-edge, appropriate and consistent guidelines for riparian restoration, riverbank stability, flood protection, biodiversity and urban growth.

At times like this, working in the field of urban environmental management is a pleasure. Abundant clean water is an essential element of our quality of life – its future is our future!

Thank you again for your interest in and support of Calgary River Valleys.

Sincerely,

Mac Hickley, MEdes, RPP, MCIP
Executive Director, Calgary River Valleys

Cc: Bow River Float participants
CRV Board of Directors and Advisory Council



Sanctioned abuse of Bow River shocks officials on boat tour

Event intended to highlight care of 'precious' resource

By Deborah Tetley, *Calgary Herald* September 24, 2011 7:44 AM



Ald. Druh Farrell, left, MLA Dave Taylor, lower right, and other civic and federal officials float along the Bow River on Friday to look at development pressures on the waterway.

Photograph by: Christina Ryan, *Calgary Herald*



Cllrs. Farrell and MacLeod and others round a bend in the Bow River to disembark and enjoy a picnic beside the WID Canal.

Photograph by: Mark Bennett, Bow River Basin Council

A handful of civic, provincial and federal employees spent an exceptionally hot Friday afternoon in shorts and sandals enjoying a lazy float down the Bow River talking about rock snot and eating cookies and peaches.

Not a bad day at the office. Despite the optics, the group was hard at work learning about the impact of the city's industrial and residential development on the banks of the Bow River – from the "river's perspective."

Much of what officials learned during the three-hour tour of the south end of the river between the Cushing Bridge and Graves landing was eye-opening, heartbreaking and disgusting, said Druh Farrell, alderman for Ward 7. "It was hard, seeing the mistakes we've made, like the amount of garbage and old railway refuse we've used as shoring for bank stabilization," said Farrell. "We still abuse our river, even though we know how precious it is."

Farrell said most shocking was learning that an entire colony of bank swallows, possibly as many as 1,000 birds, was eliminated recently when a subcontractor tried to stabilize a portion of the river bank following flooding. "That's a bird that's already decreasing, so we really need to have better monitoring of projects like that."

Along with Farrell were several other council members, staff from water works, an MLA, a University of Calgary geophysics professor, interpreters, a federal department of Fisheries and Oceans employee and a representative from Trouts Unlimited.

The tour, guided by the River Watch Institute and organized by the Calgary River Valleys committee, is held every few years. "The purpose is to celebrate the river and show the decision-makers of Calgary that we have a wonderful amenity running through the city," said Mac Hickley, executive director of Calgary River Valleys.

He said many decisions made over the years have been detrimental to the river and the ecosystem, including shoring the banks with rock, concrete and garbage when there are more environmentally responsible ways to do the job.