

Moving People Over Water

By Simone Lee

Calgary River Valleys (CRV) is a volunteer-driven non-profit organization that works to provide opportunities for Calgarians to participate in field work projects to preserve and protect our river valleys. We also provide opportunities for citizens to learn more about and provide input on large scale land use and development proposals across all of Calgary that impact watercourses and wetlands. We consider ourselves “the voice of our rivers.”

In addition to recent input CRV provided on the GreenLine LRT bridge over the Bow River, CRV was also invited to provide feedback on another important City of Calgary project involving development over and near the Bow River as well as Nose Creek: the Deerfoot Trail Expansion project. The City is working with Alberta Transportation to develop both short- and long-term plans to manage traffic and improve safety on Deerfoot Trail. The study is considering a wide range of freeway management strategies.

For the Deerfoot Trail Expansion project, CRV is one of the environmental stakeholder groups that has participated in several meetings with the Deerfoot Trail project team since 2016. The meetings have involved looking at potential improvements for Deerfoot Trail, while balancing costs, safety, and environmental impacts on the Bow River and Nose Creek valleys. Our input has included feedback to:

- Limit as much as possible the impacts on the river ecosystem from new bridge infrastructure within the river and creek, such as a new bridge proposed over the Bow River west of 50th Ave SE, as well the proposal for twinning the Ivor Strong bridge near Bow Bottom Trail SE,
- Minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to the river or creek, such as impacts from potential new ramps that would cross over river-adjacent lands in part of Sue Higgins Park near Southland Dr SE, as well as over the Nose Creek valley at Beddington Trail N, and
- Take into account the future risk of flooding where widening is being considered at locations where the Deerfoot runs adjacent and close to the river, such as between Memorial Drive and 17 Ave SE.

The Deerfoot Trail project team is currently reviewing and evaluating all of the feedback as they work to finalize recommendations for their study. You can find more information about the Deerfoot Trail study at: <https://engage.calgary.ca/deerfoot>

Outdoor volunteer opportunities

Now that protocols for group activities under Covid-19 have become more formalised, CRV is moving forward and planning the first of our riparian restorations for 2020/21. Thanks to the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society, also known as “Cows and Fish,” (www.cowsandfish.org) we have the opportunity to offer a limited number of volunteers free training in preparing Riparian Health Assessments within the City limits.

Riparian Health Assessments rely on visual observations, a little practice, and fine-tuning your ‘eye’ to accurately interpret the health or function of a riparian area. Assessing the health of a riparian area helps us determine the current state compared to an optimal state of each site in terms of riparian health. We look at both vegetation and other physical characteristics to determine the function and

condition of that riparian area. If you are interested in this opportunity, or want to learn more about future volunteer opportunities (Do you like gardening? We plan to re-plant a riparian area in Calgary in September), or about our organization, please contact us at calgaryrivervalleys3@outlook.com.