

Rivers Institute of the British Columbia Institute of Technology

FALL UPDATE, 2011

- The RI oversaw a major restoration project along the upper parts of Guichon Creek. While BCIT made a major investment to stabilize a steep slope that was sliding into the creek, the RI piggy-backed on their efforts and significantly expanded the amount of pool-riffle habitat along this portion of the stream. This was a major initiative and contributions came from several sources. More than \$100,000 came from BCIT. Another \$45,000 came from the RI via the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. The RI also contributed an additional \$10,000 or so. This project will have significant benefits from both a public safety and environmental perspective while also resulting in significantly improved fish habitat. While salvaging fish for temporary relocation prior to commencing with the project, we also found large numbers of very healthy cutthroat trout, which was very encouraging to see.

- Plans for our upcoming World Rivers Day on Sept. 25 are proceeding well and thousands of events in 70 plus countries will take place, ranging from stream clean-ups and habitat enhancement projects to educational outings and community riverside celebrations. There will be literally millions of people participating world-wide. The event has its roots here in BC and more than 100 events will take place in our province alone.

- The feedback from Global TV's airing of our Water for Life benefit has been extremely positive. The show handily won its time slot and there are current discussions about rebroadcasting it. The soon to be released DVD will also be shown on Rivers Day in a large theater in Brisbane Australia as a major benefit to raise funds for much needed river restoration work in the flood-ravaged parts of Queensland.

- On Sept. 23, I'll be attending the formal opening of the new Heart of the Fraser display at the Fraser River Discovery Center. This major display has both a static and video component and is nicely done. It promotes the many values of the Heart of the Fraser while also promoting the efforts of both the RI and the Nature Trust of BC.

- The RI is working with a number of partners on a major effort to re-establish a fishery in Britannia Creek. This is an exciting and inspirational project in that the idea of sustaining a fishery was unthinkable only a decade ago in light of pollution levels pertaining to acid leachate from the old Britannia mine. However, since the treatment plant has come on line, water quality in the stream has improved dramatically. I think this is one of several factors behind the ecological rebirth that we're seeing in much of Howe Sound. In the last 2 weeks, we've also seen several dozen pink salmon in the lower Britannia Creek for the first time in several decades, which is good news!

- The RI will be supporting several student projects this year, one of which will entail the assessment of off-channel habitat along the Fraser just downstream of Hope. This will be the third successive year we have supported this project and a significant amount of good information on the habitat value of these areas to young salmonids is being accumulated.

- The RI continues to be involved in several international projects. These range from an assessment of governance models on the Rhine - to providing advice on new streamkeeping and Rivers Day organizational efforts on the River Sheen in Ireland. This summer, while on holiday, I also spent time on the upper Indus River in Ladakh India. In concert with Geographic Expeditions, I developed a promotional video on this incredible part of India - and while doing that, I produced segments pertaining to the impact of climate change and receding glaciers on the Indus River and it's potential impacts on the water sharing agreement currently in place between India and Pakistan.

- On the evening of October 27 at the annual Distinguished Alumni Awards, I'm honoured to say that the Alumni Association will be presenting me with Lifetime Achievement Award and that same evening, I'll become an honorary BCIT alumnus. The work of the RI as well as the great efforts of the Fish, Wildlife, Recreation Program will be featured and the evening will have a river-related theme.

- On September 25, one of the largest Rivers Day events in the country will unfold along Guichon Creek. This is an event the RI is coordinating and activities will include interactive and cultural displays, streamside planting, a fish release, children's activities, entertainment, a barbecue, a farmer's market, etc, etc. It will be a major high profile, family-oriented event that will offer something for everyone, while also promoting the river restoration efforts that have unfolded along Guichon Creek. A large committee is helping us organize this major event and my RI colleague, Tom Saare, has played a particularly key role. The event will run from 11 AM to 3 PM - and if the weather is good, we could attract several thousand people.

- this fall, renowned fisheries biologist Marvin Rosenau will serve with the RI part time as a visiting scientist and will complete work on a major paper looking at water use comparisons between Brisbane, Australia and Vancouver. This stems from a leave Marvin undertook last year when he spent time with the Australian Rivers Institute. During this time, his leave was partially sponsored by the RI at BCIT.

- Plans are underway to organize some major new projects for next year. One of these will look at the fisheries and habitat related impacts of the Lillooet slide near Pemberton. The RI will be a major sponsor and we hope to involve BCIT's Ecological Restoration students on 5 day field trip to the area. My hope is that Ken Ashley, currently an instructor in this program, will lead this effort. We also hope to undertake new river projects on Vancouver Island working closely with the BC Conservation Foundation and with individuals such as Craig Wightman.

- On November 9, I'll be delivering the keynote address to the Pacific Parklands Foundation annual luncheon at the Vancouver Convention Center.

- I am currently in the final stages of a new book that will be a photo essay entitled, "Wild Water, Wild Earth. I hope to have this completed by late this year. The book will have a conservation theme and a limited first edition will be produced to promote the efforts of the RI.

- In light of the success of Water for Life, I've been approached by the Image Media Farm, who produced the TV show, about the possibility of starting work on a new film focusing on river conservation and restoration. While they're very interested in events such as World Rivers Day, I think such a film could also be a great mechanism to document some of the work of the RI. Filming will probably take close to a year and, at present, there appears to be a host of possibilities in terms of where the finished program might air.

- And lastly, we're putting the finishing touches on a new admin model for the RI recognizing the fact that I'll be retiring from full time work late this year and will then carry on in a Chair Emeritus capacity in 2012. Funding for the RI has been secured for the foreseeable future and our goal is to expand capacity by bringing in several new staff. More details will provided as they become finalized.