

## WHY THE GREENSTREAM STRATEGY

The Somenos watershed has long faced challenges from development, agriculture and industrial activity. These disturbances have led to a decline in water quality and wildlife habitat. Additionally, the riparian corridors along the tributary creeks of S'amuna' xatsa' (Somenos Lake) have been fragmented, affecting the movement of wildlife from the valley to the surrounding forests. The tributaries play an integral role in providing habitat for five species of Pacific Salmon: Coho, Chinook, Chum, Cutthroat Trout and Rainbow Trout are all culturally, environmentally and economically significant to the Cowichan Valley.

Cutthroat Trout are a Provincially significant **blue** listed species residing in the upper reaches of Bings Creek



Photo: S. Lappo

## WHAT IS A RIPARIAN AREA?

A riparian area is the land adjacent to a water body that provides many ecological services and is often characterized by its unique and diverse plant community.

Healthy riparian areas benefit everyone. They provide ecosystem services such as erosion control, flood mitigation, water filtration, and wildlife habitat.

The restoration and protection of riparian areas will result in higher biodiversity, cleaner water, healthy fish, reduced erosion, increased surface water retention and reduced damage caused by flooding.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is to restore and protect the riparian area of the Somenos watershed to promote clean water, suitable fish habitat, biodiversity, wildlife corridors, and foster new relationships within the community. We hope that this model will be used by others to promote sustainable development in communities across Vancouver Island. The projects carried out as part of the GreenStreams vision will work to clean our water, protect our fish, and connect our community.

Photo: E. Ross

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

*There are steps you can take at home to get involved with the GreenStreams Strategy*

- **Becoming a citizen-scientist:**  
Learn the basics of water quality testing or fish monitoring and become a steward of Bings Creek or Menzies Creek.
- **Living on the Bings or Menzies creek?**  
Let us know and our team can provide you with expertise and technical support in riparian area restoration.
- **Volunteer with Us:**  
We will have volunteer opportunities in ecological restoration through native vegetation planting, fish habitat enhancement, and invasive species management.

## CONTACT US

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# The Green Streams Strategy

**Restore, Protect & Reconnect**



**Somenos Marsh  
WILDLIFE SOCIETY**

*Stewards of the S'amuna/Somenos Marsh Conservation Area*



MUNICIPALITY OF  
**NORTH  
Cowichan**

## THE GREENSTREAMS' VISION

To fulfill the GreenStreams vision, the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society will conduct a series of projects to restore and protect the streams and riparian areas from summit to sea. With phase 1 beginning with the Bings and Menzies creek system, linking Swuq'us (Mt. Prevost) to S'amuna' xasta' (Somenos Lake).

**“Ensure clean water for residents and wildlife, restore and protect fish populations, and create strong community networks”**

This strategy will be applied through research, ecological restoration, citizen science programs, and community partnerships. This will help us to better understand how to connect environmental stewardship with sustainable development. With the successful completion of this, we will be able to develop a model that can be adapted and implemented by communities anywhere.



## GREENSTREAMS: PHASE 1 PROJECTS

S'amuna' xasta' (Somenos Lake), E. Ross

### Ecological Health Study

To determine the existing conditions of the creeks, we are first conducting an ecological health study. We are looking at riparian vegetation coverage, wildlife presence, fish populations, benthic invertebrates, and slope erosion.

### Reviving Cultural Corridors

The Somenos watershed has long been used by Cowichan People for medicine and food harvesting as well as other cultural uses. The recognition and acknowledgement of these uses could be an important part of the reconciliation process. Discussions have begun with our partner, Cowichan Tribes, to seek input on how best to respect, represent and acknowledge the cultural aspect of a GreenStream corridor.



### Engaging the Community

Of all the tributaries in the Somenos watershed, Bings Creek drains the largest proportion of urban area. For this reason it is the most vulnerable to erosion, contamination, and disturbance. Residents and industries along Bings and Menzies Creeks are invited to take part in citizen-science research and will be receiving our expertise, guidance and technical support in riparian area restoration.

### Stormwater Management

Two projects have been designed to improve stormwater management in the lower reaches of Bings creek. The Bings Creek restoration project will create a meandering stream between the culvert at the Trans-Canada HWY and S'amuna' xasta' (Somenos Lake) this will enhance both the salmon spawning potential, and the storm water treatment capabilities of the creek. Second, the Canada Ave. Wetland project, proposed for the existing police station property, is being looked at as a potential wetland that provides fish habitat, flood mitigation, stormwater filtration and educational opportunities.

### Enhancing Water Quality

We will collect data on basic parameters such as temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and conductivity to establish a baseline from which to quantify further developments. To enhance the filtration capacity of the riparian area, native trees and shrubs will be planted to help capture sediments and contaminants from surface water runoff before they enter the creek. Additional studies will be conducted to identify which contaminants are present and determine toxicity levels. This will be done at several locations to identify if there are any point sources for contaminants.

### Developing a Sustainable Future

We will work with the Municipality of North Cowichan to enhance the protection given to the riparian zones surrounding our waterways. The Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society is championing a no-loss policy to the Official Community Plan and advocates for the full protection of riparian areas while providing guidance and support to local residents and industrial sites.

Swuq'us (Mt. Prevost), E. Ross