



A Wetland Venture

Dallas-Barnhartvale Nature Park Wetlands Restoration Project 2013

by Heather Toles and Milt Stanley

Human intervention reduced open-water wetlands to a mud bog over-grown with invasive weeds, trees and shrubs.

How do you reclaim five damaged wetlands in your neighbourhood's only Natural Area Park? You start by forming a small committee of dedicated and experienced wetland enthusiasts who are willing to hang in there for the long haul.

Then you plan. A lot.

And you seek advice from the experts. People like Neil Fletcher of the BCWF Wetlands Education Program, who is willing to help anyone who is passionate about wetland restoration. People like Tom Biebighauser, wetlands expert with over 1600 wetland restoration projects in the US and Canada.

Tom first looked at the possibility of wetland restoration at our site in 2006 and declared that he would “love to see healthy wetlands here.” He also made good on a promise to be here for us when we were finally ready to begin the project.

Milt Stanley, Diane James and Sue Huddard discuss slopes with wetland-restoration expert, Tom Biebighauser.



You also get the support and commitment of the land owner, in this case the City of Kamloops Parks and Recreation Department. Another essential component is permission from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. Networking with others in government departments, educational institutions, and wetland restoration groups doesn't hurt either. We found helpful advice and encouragement wherever we looked.

An equipment operator with local knowledge of soil types and water drainage helps ensure project success. Here contractor Tim Hall puts his Series 200 excavator through its paces.



Fund raising comes next. Be prepared for rejection! But try all possible avenues, not forgetting local industries and businesses. We found that our community gave us the most support. People are receptive to repairing the damage done to the local environment through past actions or neglect. Our project turned out to be truly local, with gratifying enthusiasm and financial support from our own business community.

It also doesn't hurt to have the talents of an experienced equipment operator like Tim Hall, who has teamed with Tom Biebighauser in other wetland restoration projects. Tim had a clear picture of our project design and the experience required to make changes on the fly. He also has invaluable experience with local soil conditions, in this case a mix of sand and silt on a 15% slope, offering its own challenges.

Heather Toles, Project Advisor, transplanting cat-tails from her own wetland.



Be prepared for surprises. Water is tricky... it can fool you. We expected our wetlands to be fed by a seep line and fill slowly. Instead we uncovered an underground spring whose volume and intensity immediately re-shaped our design. We had to react quickly and appropriately to avoid erosion and harden inflow and outflow channels with rock. Fortunately we had a good supply available from McLean Rock Products. Brian McLean donated all the rock we required, seven loads delivered to our worksite.

Publicity helps greatly when the project is underway. Getting the word out to the community helped us attract hard-working volunteers to assist with all the manual tasks: weeding, planting,

shovelling gravel and rock, raking machine tracks, installing fencing, erecting signs. And volunteers to support the volunteers, making coffee and lunches, providing first aid services and site safety.

Scott Davidson, of New Afton NewGold environmental office, hydro-seeding our site with native grass mix.



We found staunch allies in New Afton Mines' environmental office. Their excitement for our project was contagious and their staff stepped up by providing hydro-seeding equipment and native grass seed mix. Thompson Rivers University instructors helped with plant identification, restoration advice, and finding creative ways to involve students in the project. City of Kamloops Parks and Recreation staff have shown appreciation for the project.

Jim Sloper (right), first to try out Horse Pond. Jim is Chairman of the Wetlands Restoration Committee. The Park welcomes equestrians to the trail network.



Are we done yet? Projects like these are not completed in a season. We realize we have much to do: more weeding. More planting of native plants, trees and shrubs. Interpretive signage. Managing visitors by building trails and viewing areas that protect the site. Stay tuned for phase two of our wetland venture.

Duck Pond, Spring 2014



We will know we have reached our goals when we see healthy, functioning wetlands enhancing conservation, education and recreation in our park.

