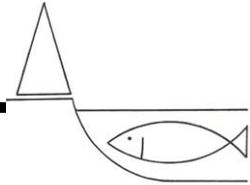


BIGHILL CREEK PROJECT



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Special points of interest:

- Kim Kendal-Knitter’s educational programs are good for kids!
- New regulations are needed for the creek!



“Big fish story on page 4.”

“2009 WILLOW PLANTS UPDATE!”

In 2009, volunteers from the Branches and Banks group, the Millennium Creek Fly Fishers and Bow Valley Habitat Development, planted 450 willow stakes on the Franciscan Friars property. The land is just upstream of the Town of Cochrane Ranch Park.

The planting site was an old beaver dam area, with exposed mud flats and unstable banks. Planting the willows was intended to help in the recovery of riparian growth and stabilize the stream banks.

With willow stake planting, it takes at least one full growing season before you can clearly see the results of your planting efforts. First season plants are always hidden in the tall grass and very hard to find.

The beaver dam site was remnant of a large dam that was flooding the adjacent road and it needed to be removed. As part of the permitting for the dam removal, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans required that willow plants be introduced over the exposed mud flats.



A June 2010 photo of one of the willow plants from the 2009 planting.

“ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL TROUT SPAWNING YEAR!”

Once again, both brook trout and brown trout laid down their eggs, during the fall 2010 spawning season on Bighill Creek.

However, a number of key spawning areas on the lower reach were either dammed by beavers or the passage of

spawning trout was blocked by their dams.

Some of the dams upstream of the Town property were removed to allow migration of spawning trout and the results were evident in the month of October. Trout redds (egg nests) were observed

upstream of the opened beaver dams in the middle of the month.

Every year presents different challenges to these two trout species, when it comes to their survival! Some are natural events and others are created by human activities!

“RANCH HOUSE SPRING CREEK PROJECT DEEMED A SUCCESS!”

During a 2009 fisheries study on BHC, a trout trapping program revealed that juvenile trout were utilizing Ranch House Spring Creek as a nursery habitat.

However, small trout could not negotiate a small waterfall located approximately 100 metres upstream of the confluence with the BHC.

The result was that no fish were present upstream of the water fall in an area that provided suitable habitat for them.

In 2009 a plan and designed was created to remove the small waterfall and modify the channel over a 20 metre reach, to allow fish passage

upstream.

The design plan involved the creation of 10 step pools in the channel, where the gradient was severe and prone to block trout migration.

The step down pools were enhanced by the installation of two large rocks bedded into the stream bank on opposing sides of the channel. These rocks would maintain the small pools and reduce the velocity of flow during high water events.

The project was completed in early July of 2010, with positive results evident soon after. Small trout were observed upstream of the project site, two weeks after completion!



This is the small water fall that was blocking trout migration upstream.

“Small trout were observed upstream of the project site, two weeks after completion!”

This project was funded by the Alberta Conservation Association



A photo of the stream channel project on RHS Creek, after completion.

2010 “YEAR OF THE WILLOW!”

There was certainly plenty of willow and tree planting completed on Bighill Creek this year!

As is always the case, Branches and Banks of Cochrane spear headed their annual planting events with plenty of eager volunteers ready to enhance the banks of the Bighill Creek with lots of willows and trees!

Their efforts are targeted at riparian stream bank recovery on areas of the creek where it is needed.

The program started off with

the Glenbow Elementary students planting of 390 plants in the heart of the community of Glenbow.

The second planting covered areas of the Ranch Park and a length of stream channel on the Franciscan Friars property just upstream of the Ranch Park land. A total of 1,100 willows and trees were planted on both sites.



Left inset: Glenbow Elementary students, hard at work along the creek!

Branches and Banks volunteers planting on the Retreat property!



This is a photo of one of the willow plants that were placed along the stream bank.

“NEW INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE FOR THE BIGHILL CREEK WILL HELP TO EDUCATE!”

You may walk over a bridge spanning the Bighill Creek and not think much about what lies beneath the flowing waters!

In fact, there is a living ecosystem, bounding with life!

Branches and Banks knows this and their new interpretive signage will help to educate the public about the unique environment below the surface of flowing streams.

The B&B sign program has

been slowly taking shape over the last few years,

with some of the latest additions being placed on the lower end of the creek.

If we are going to protect and conserve our trout streams, education will play a major role in this goal!



One of the new signs on the creek.

“EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF GLENBOW SCHOOL’S CURRICULUM!”

Editor’s Note: I asked Glenbow Elementary teacher, Kim Knitter if she would put a few thoughts down on paper for this newsletter. Kim actively educates her students on matters regarding the environment. Especially regarding the nearby Bighill Creek and tributaries.

I teach because I have the privilege to work and play with children. One of the most important things that I do in this capacity is to take kids outside. It is during these adventures that I see immense joyfulness and the bubbling forth of curiosity in my students.

Nature continually delights and informs them of many things, both spontaneous and planned. We often take our interactive walks along the Bighill Creek because of the greater biodiversity that is typically present there.

When I told a birder about some of the species we had encountered on our creek walks, he was quite amazed. Consequently, his spring bird walks now include walking the creek too!

Last spring my grade fours and I spent a few hours wandering along the creek with Guy Woods. We quickly felt the passion and knowledge Guy has for fish and all that is aquatic.

I don’t think most of us realized how many living things depend on these small waterways for their existence. As adults, many of our decisions in regards to the environment are uninformed and can end up degrading our fresh waters. The cost to nature is often not considered.

In order for our ecological consciousness to take root, one begins with teaching our children to love, relate, and understand nature.

These immersive walks are excellent fodder for developing this awareness and utilizing the expertise of someone like Guy Woods enriches the students’ experiences and fascination of being in a natural space.

Article by: Kim Kendal-Knitter

“Thanks Kim!”



A group of Glenbow Elementary students lesson and learn a little more about the ecology of the



A Silver Striped Sedge. This caddis fly is common on Bighill Creek.

“HEALTH OF BIGHILL CREEK FISHERY IS DEPENDANT ON BETTER MANAGEMENT!”

With improving management practices for the sport fishery in Bighill Creek, we can expect a stable and productive fishery that will continue to thrive into the future.

One of the primary goals, in the next few years, is better protection for spawning trout that are actively recruiting new generations of fish into the system every fall.

Both brook trout and brown trout start their spawning in the last week of September and continue through until the third week of October.

Presently, there is a fall fishing closure, effective on October 31st. However, this is out of sync with the timing of the actual spawning season on Bighill Creek.

Bow Valley Habitat Development has submitted a letter of recommendation to ASRD Fish & Wildlife, with a request for a change in the season closure, to October 1st.

Hopefully this small change will happen in the next year or so. In the meantime, as anglers, we should all respect the fact that fishing during a spawning period is not very sporting.

Trout undergo considerable stress during their fall spawning event. If they are caught during this time of the year on a hook, it could be too much unnecessary trauma for them.

It is great, having a small trout stream that is so close to home. If we take care of it, we can enjoy it for many years to come!



Fly fisher Jake Gotta hooks into a large trout on the Bighill Creek.

Bow Valley Habitat
Development

Published by:
Guy Woods
5 Glenport Road
Cochrane, AB T4C 1G8

Illustrations and photos by the author

Phone: 403-932-4467
Fax: 403-932-4467
Email: guywoods@telusplanet.net

Google the “Bighill
Creek Project” for a
website review.

*This newsletter is published to
inform the citizens of Cochrane
about what plans and activities are
taking place on Bighill Creek!*



You can now see some of the projects or results of them on you-tube. Just go to the You-tube home page and type in the search the site box “MrGuyWoods channel site” or “Bow Valley Habitat Development”. Type MrGuyWoods as one word with capitals MGW. There are presently 9 videos to view.

“ THE SMALLEST TROUT THAT I HAVE EVER CAUGHT!”

On page two of this news-
letter, I mentioned a project
on a small spring creek that
flows through the Town Office
parking lot. I call the stream “
Ranch House Spring Creek”.

After the project was com-
pleted, I needed to see if trout
were now passing upstream
of the enhancement site and
utilizing the habitat.

A few weeks after the pro-
ject was completed, I spotted
small trout further up the
stream, but I needed to cap-
ture one of them for confirma-
tion.

The only way to legally catch
one of them for a closer look,
would be by angling. So I de-
cided to rig up some extra
small fishing tackle and give it
a try.

I used a length of invisible
thread, which is basically
monofilament line, which I
wrapped onto a small spool.
For a lure, I tied on a very
small midge fly imitation that I
had in my fly box.

After a few minutes of jig-
ging the fly along the side of a
large boulder, where I had
previously spotted a trout, I
had a take!

I caught a very small brook
trout. The smallest trout that I
have ever caught!

This confirmed that small
trout were actually moving
further up the creek now and
that the project had suc-
ceeded in its primary objec-
tive.

It was a fun way of collect-
ing evidence for a fish habitat
enhancement project!!

Below:

The fishing hole where I caught the trophy trout!



Right:

The tackle used to
catch the fish!

Note: You can see the
small fly that I used to
catch the fish.



Above: This is the smallest trout that I have ever caught on a fly or by sport angling!