

Protecting Stoney Creek and Coquitlam's Watersheds

The City of Coquitlam is committed to protecting local watercourses, including Stoney Creek, which plays a vital role in supporting ecosystems and enhancing community well-being. With more than 300 km of watercourses across 27 urban watersheds, Coquitlam has developed a comprehensive program to safeguard these resources.

Through policies, monitoring, and enforcement, the City has implemented significant measures to improve water quality in Stoney Creek. Coquitlam continues to take measurable steps to address pollution concerns and preserve this important natural resource.

Key Facts

Stoney Creek Watershed

- Stoney Creek is an urban watercourse that flows through Port Moody, Coquitlam and Burnaby before connecting to the Brunette River.
- The creek supports a diverse range of aquatic species, including salmon. In 2024, it saw record numbers of Chum salmon returning, along with strong Coho salmon returns (which arrive later and are still being counted).
- In Coquitlam, Stoney Creek runs through the Oakdale neighbourhood, a Transit-Oriented Area near SkyTrain that is undergoing significant densification.

Watercourse Protection Policies and Enforcement

- Coquitlam's [Stream and Drainage System Protection Bylaw](#) (the "Bylaw") prohibits the discharge of harmful substances into watercourses.
- The Bylaw includes specific limits to turbidity and pH for water discharged from construction sites. These limits have been set to ensure compliance with provincial and federal regulations.
- In 2023 the City expanded the team of Environmental Officers that enforce the Bylaw and now has 4 full time staff proactively monitoring construction sites and investigating Bylaw infractions. The Bylaw is enforced through stop-work orders, fines and remediation requirements, holding non-compliant parties accountable.
- [Construction site impact mitigation](#) is a high priority for the City of Coquitlam with a zero-tolerance approach taken to bylaw infractions and sites that do not follow the City's [Good Neighbour Development Policy](#).
- To ensure that enforcement can effectively drive compliance, Coquitlam is advocating for changes to provincial legislation, which currently caps the maximum bylaw fine at \$500 (noting that any rehabilitation costs are already charged back to the offender).

Real-time Monitoring

- In 2022, the Bylaw was amended to require large construction sites in the Stoney Creek catchment to install real-time monitoring and discharge control systems to enhance watercourse protection (in addition to existing [Erosion and Sediment Control \(ESC\) requirements](#)).
- These real-time systems monitor the discharge from on-site water treatment systems and recirculate any non-compliant water for further treatment before discharge to the stormwater drainage system which connects to the creek.
- These systems have now been installed at 14 construction sites in the Stoney Creek catchment, preventing millions of gallons of non-compliant wastewater from entering local creeks.
- This requirement proved so effective that in 2024 the City [expanded real-time monitoring requirements city-wide](#) with 21 real-time monitoring systems installed across the City.
- Two real-time water quality monitoring systems are also installed in Stoney Creek, along with a camera, that provide the City with continuous (by the minute) data and the ability to view changes in water quality at any time. The City receives automatic alerts 24/7 if creek water quality changes and falls outside provincial and federal guidelines.
- Additional water quality testing is conducted in the creek to identify potential contaminants and guide mitigation strategies.
- [Rain gauges](#) have been installed across the City that provide real-time data to help monitor correlations between weather events and creek water quality.

Investments in Infrastructure

- Coquitlam has two types of sewer systems and is investing in enhancements for both systems in the Stoney Creek Watershed:
 - [Storm sewers](#) and catch basins collect stormwater (e.g. rainwater and melting snow) from homes, businesses, construction sites, roads, sidewalks, roof or gutter downspouts and building foundation drains, which then empty directly to watercourses.
 - [Sanitary sewers](#) collect wastewater (e.g. toilets, sinks, laundry, dishwashers, showers) from homes and businesses and carry it to wastewater treatment plants.
- In late 2024, the City completed installation of a \$2 million dollar stormwater treatment system on North Road that treats 36 hectares of stormwater for oil, grease, suspended sediment and other pollutants before they enter Stoney Creek. This is the largest treatment structure of this type and quality in Canada and is designed to protect Stoney Creek from hazardous material spills (e.g. oil and gas) and stormwater pollution.
- The City has invested \$3 million in sanitary sewer system improvements, reducing inflow and infiltration by 35% and minimizing the risk of overflows during extreme weather events.

- In collaboration with Metro Vancouver, Burnaby, and Port Moody, Coquitlam is addressing sewer capacity challenges, including the replacement of an aging trunk sewer that serves the Stoney Creek area. Metro Vancouver is planning to begin construction of the first phase in early 2025.
- Interim projects, such as a diversion sewer, have already increased capacity by the equivalent of over 10,000 people’s wastewater flow, providing immediate relief to the system.

Programs to Protect Creek Health Citywide

- Coquitlam has implemented programs to prevent pollution and support creek health, including:
 - [Integrated Watershed Management Plans](#) and [Riparian Areas Protection Regulation](#)
 - [Rain garden and infiltration trench designs](#) to manage stormwater naturally
 - Storm drain marking and Adopt-A-Catch Basin programs and partnerships with community groups, supported by online [resources](#)
 - Education campaigns targeting [concrete companies](#), restaurants, food trucks and proper household chemical disposal to reduce harmful discharges to the creek.
 - A Private Sewer Connection Grant to help residents repair improperly connected downspouts and reduce stormwater entering the sanitary system as nearly 50% of the sewer system is on private property.

Addressing Misinformation

Claim: There are “many daily pollution dumps” into Stoney Creek from Coquitlam construction sites. **Fact:** Real-time monitoring systems installed on construction sites in Stoney Creek prevent the release of non-compliant water from on-site construction activities. The City’s monitoring shows that instances of non-compliance are isolated and addressed immediately through fines, stop-work orders, and remediation requirements.

Claim: Pollution levels in Stoney Creek are “worse than ever before.” **Fact:** The implementation of real-time monitoring and stricter bylaws has led to improved oversight and prevention of potential pollutants entering the creek. Real-time monitoring equipment is now installed at all large development sites which has reduced the release of high alkaline pH water – one of the most significant risks for salmon.

Claim: The City has taken no action to address pollution concerns. **Fact:** Coquitlam has implemented a multi-faceted approach, including real-time monitoring, bylaw updates, enforcement, infrastructure investments, staffing enhancements, and community education and engagement, demonstrating a strong commitment to protecting Stoney Creek (additional details above).

What You Can Do

Report Concerns: Anyone witnessing a contaminated creek or stream, chemicals entering the storm drainage system, or materials spilled onto public roadways is asked to report it as soon as possible to:

- Phone: 604-927-3500 (monitored 24/7)
- Email: epw@coquitlam.ca (monitored 24/7)

Stay Informed: Keep up to date with the City's initiatives to protect Stoney Creek by visiting [City of Coquitlam website](#) and following the City's official social media channels.

Practice Responsible Stewardship: Ensure that downspouts and drainage systems on your property are correctly connected to the storm sewer system, and do not dispose of any household waste or chemicals into storm drains. Participate in community programs like the [storm drain marking initiative](#) or [Adopt-a-Catch Basin Program](#) to promote watercourse protection and consider volunteering for one of the many environmental stewardship organizations in our community.

Contact Information

For more information about the City's efforts to protect Stoney Creek, contact:

Engineering and Public Works

604-927-3500 (monitored 24/7)

epw@coquitlam.ca (monitored 24/7)

coquitlam.ca/stoneycreek