

Cliff Erosion Management Framework Report... A Caution with Booming Ground Creek

Judy Williams, Chair WBPS
February 27, 2004 Brief to GVRD Board

We have built a level of trust with GVRD Staff at GVRD West Area Parks over the years since GVRD took over stewardship of Pacific Spirit where we can openly discuss issues. We appreciate their following of the Wreck Beach Preservation Society's mandate "to preserve the Wreck Beach foreshore, cliffs, and surrounding areas in as nearly a natural state as possible." GVRD is also committed to "any course of action being determined with full public participation," and "that all UBC projects deemed to adversely impact the Park environment will receive full public review, coordinated by the proponent, to ensure the public has input into these projects." That is good, but a caution...

February 13, we expressed concerns about the inadequacy UBC has shown historically in advertising its public meetings to the general public. We said that entrusting UBC to oversee due public process was akin to putting the proverbial fox in charge of the proverbial hen house. We are uneasy that the heartfelt input of over an hundred individuals in an all-day February 7 UBC-GVRD workshop, still has not been discussed by the joint UBC-GVRD Committee. UBC is still carrying on with its South Campus planning seemingly disregarding a strong public voice to expand the APC membership and to implement a commission that would oversee all development on campus. Only in this way can GVRD ensure that the "public has full input." And suddenly, UBC is exhorting GVRD to accept the CEMP report. One must ask why the sudden haste?

In its "a Legacy & a Promise," page 11, UBC says in its Principle 4 that it "will be a responsible steward, respecting and valuing the land, air and water that sustains this environment, and proposed changes to buildings, external spaces, or services will be considered in relation to their long-term impacts on people and the natural environment. The wise and judicious use of water and energy is highly valued."

This is extremely questionable given that UBC would like to rip-rap and culvert Booming Ground Creek. It is also extremely odd that after two years of sitting on the Cliff Erosion Mitigation Plan, UBC suddenly wants to move forward on it at the same time they start moving on development of the South Campus. UBC says that SW Marine Drive is in imminent danger of washing out, and therefore, the incredibly beautiful Booming Ground Creek and ravine must be sacrificed for safety. Please note the photos on page 25. The photo on the left says the erosion is due to "a culvert under SW Marine Drive." Nor does it say that the eroded section is on the northwest side of the ravine. The photo does NOT show that the culvert is far below SW Marine Drive. The photo on the right does not show that the eroded area is on the southwest side of the creek, nor does the caption indicate that it is 448 feet downstream of the first area! But, the visual conclusion the viewer reaches is that both areas are influenced by the culvert on SW Marine Drive. My photo composite shows you the relatively gentle slope from the edge

of SW Marine Drive and that it is the result of surface erosion, not from the culvert at the bottom of the creek! That section of cliff erosion doesn't begin until 69 feet from the edge of SW Marine Drive. I offer a tour of Booming Ground Creek to any member of this Board who wishes it. Booming Ground Creek ravine is an historical, anthropological, geological and visual jewel. It would be a shame to destroy it needlessly!

Former habitat manager for Fisheries and Oceans, Otto Langer, has said of the options favoured by UBC for Booming Ground Creek:

“What I find most disturbing of these suggested works is that excessive rip rap works may be installed (the hard engineering approach). Rip rap is often a stream's greatest enemy if done in excess. More development at UBC could enhance erosion and lower water quality. Any campus development that gives rise to greater impermeable surface areas must look at storm water retention/detention as a way of not increasing peak flows and settling out any pollutants including sediments. Such works can be designed into the works in the development as a wet pond feature and add to the garden atmosphere as well as to better base stream flows characterized with better water quality. If one does not look after the headwaters of a stream and resorts to excessive rip rap in the lower reaches, there is little one can do to enhance the bottom reaches of a stream other than to maintain it as a tidal channel. It should function as more than just a tidal channel. “

Finally, I wish to correct a mistaken answer made at the Parks Committee meeting when Chair, Ms. Judy Higginbotham asked about ways the problems with Booming Ground Creek could be corrected. The answer given her by the UBC representative was specific to the cliffs below the Coach house, not Booming Ground Creek, but I could not speak at that point in time. I want that incorrect response duly noted.

While we have a number of concerns regarding the Draft Plan, we also recognize that some of these concerns will be addressed in site-specific planning. However, we would be remiss to not have raised this cautionary note and to not have made a plea that true public input be allowed with regard to any decisions affecting the cliffs and GVRD parkland without pressure from UBC.

The challenge will be with any such plan as pinpointed by the Draft report's author, to “be an ongoing body of work open to new and creative options.” (Page 1 of the Draft).

The following questions can be perused at your leisure:

1. Why is the option in some areas “to do nothing” not considered valid?
2. Why doesn't the report mention the “spit-lagoon” concept for controlling toe wave action in the Trail 4 area as originally proposed by Shore Resource Consultant, Wolf Bauer, rather than suggesting more beach armament or extension of the berm in this area? Why is there no mention of the recognized impact watering of Martha Piper's lawns is having on the Trail 4 cliff face water sapping? Is the emphasis on erosion as being more

a toe problem in that area an excuse to justify future increased beach armament on the Trail 4 beach?

3. Why isn't the WBPS's strong opposition to destruction of the Point Grey "Scar" included in the draft?

4. Why hasn't surface disruption of the Loonie Lot been considered as a possible contributory cause of the major slide below that lot in 1997?

5. Why doesn't the report mention STRONG WBPS opposition to the destruction of Booming Ground Creek by being culverted and rip-rapped in order to take the diverted flows from the Botanical Garden Creek and the Trail 7 creek? In the light of that strong public opposition (Wreck Beach users are also members of the public), why has UBC gone ahead with implementation studies since 2001 for putting the storm waters from South Campus over the cliffs at the expense of Booming Ground Creek and its lovely ravine? That ravine is a living classroom according to Dr. Bert Brink, Order of Canada recipient and Professor of Agriculture emeritus from UBC. Dr. Brink says the exposed Paleolithic beds are one of the only places in Vancouver where students can see this geological treasure. And, why would GVRD even consider accommodating the destruction of its parkland in order to be a "good neighbour" to UBC? How much influence will the public have on this proposed action by UBC should a commission be established and should the number of members on the APC be increased?

Finally, our site-specific concerns are many, but this is not the best forum to flag them today. We trust that the Park Committee will recommend adoption of Option #1, but we cannot emphasize enough that Wreck Beach users should play a significant role along with the proposed new advisory South Campus Working Group in the preservation of the natural beauty of Booming Ground Creek and its ravine.

Thank you!