


Article rank 

Sewer-line breach results in waste in Bowker Creek

Plugged drain blamed on grease from restaurant

CAROLYN HEIMAN *Times Colonist*
cheiman@tc.canwest.com

The city of Victoria will put cameras through its Hillside Avenue sewer line today to ferret out the business that is suspected of illegally putting cooking grease down its drains.

City crews spent almost eight hours yesterday trying to unravel the mystery of why toilet paper and human waste were floating down Bowker Creek, which flows into the ocean in Oak Bay. The condition of the creek prompted the Vancouver Island Health Authority to warn schools bordering the creek to keep students away from the water.

Gary Pleven, the pollution abatement officer, initially feared an aging sewer line had collapsed near the intersection of Doncaster Drive and Hillside Avenue. The line is near a 2.5-by-2.5 metre box culvert that carries the creek underground toward Oak Bay, where it flows on the surface again.

Plans were to start excavating the road to fix the sewer. But in the late afternoon crews, equipped with breathing apparatus, walked 60 metres of the boxed culvert.

They were able to pinpoint sewage coming into the boxed culvert via a plug that had burst from the pressure of backed-up sewage.

"Now we have put two and two together," said Pleven. "There was so much grease upstream that the sewage surcharged back up the system and into the creek culvert."

Pleven theorizes that grease from a nearby restaurant on the south side of Hillside near Doncaster had clogged the 30centimetre sewer pipe, causing sewage to flow back. Today crews will be looking to see which restaurant has greasy pipes entering the sewer line.

Under Capital Regional District codes of practices rules passed in 2006, restaurants are to have grease traps installed. The rules were instituted to curb harmful substances put into sewers. If there is an infraction, the city can seek damages, said Pleven, adding the city will turn its findings over to the CRD.

"We don't see this kind of grease in residential neighbourhoods," said Pleven, explaining his theory that it has come from a restaurant.

Pleven estimated the grease buildup was taking place over a year, as an annually scheduled cleaning was due.

Meanwhile Ian Graeme, president of the Friends of Bowker Creek Society, said the incident highlights the need for improved underground infrastructure.

The society championed the cleaning up of the creek and land abutting it. In 2004 a coalition of government, community, businesses and institutions called the Bowker Creek Urban Watershed Renewal Initiative was formed. Last year \$135,000 of taxpayer money went to the work of the BCI.