



Cowichan Watershed Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 20, 2010

**CELEBRATE WORLD RIVERS DAY ON THE COWICHAN RIVER
Cleanup on the River, BBQ & Prizes at the Warm Rapids Inn
Sunday, September 26, 10:00 am
Riverbottom and Mayo Road (Skutz Falls Bridge)**

This Sunday, on World Rivers Day, Don Barrie is leading a Cowichan River clean up between Skutz Falls and Marie Canyon. Shore support workers are needed.

Interested volunteers should meet at Riverbottom Road and Mayo at 10 am. Please bring gloves and good foot wear. The clean up will be followed by a barbeque and prizes at the Warm Rapids Inn.

The idea for World Rivers Day began in British Columbia thirty years ago. By 2005, the United Nations had taken it international and it is now an annual event on the last Sunday in September. Our very own Cowichan was on the 1993 inaugural list of BC rivers to be designated a Canadian Heritage River, and has an international reputation for its fish, recreation, and the incredible valley which it has nurtured and sustained for millenia. Today, the river itself needs our help.

The Cowichan watershed is large and there is much to care for. This month the focus is on river clean up. Gerald Thom recently helped lead a successful clean up day from the lake down to Skutz Falls. On Sunday, we'll be working from Skutz Falls down to Marie Canyon led by Don Barrie of Tourism Cowichan.

If you can't make it to the clean up please take a few minutes to think about our rivers and streams and wetlands and the lives, including ours, that they support. Every day should be Rivers Day here in the Valley.

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For more information, please contact:

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World Rivers Day, 2010

Backgrounder

September 26th is World Rivers Day

The special thing about the United Nation's World Rivers Day is that it is rooted in BC. It began in September 1980 when BCIT's Mark Angelo and 40 others spent the day cleaning up the Thompson River. It was so much fun they continued their efforts the next year. The idea caught on and spread. By 1993 we had an official BC Rivers day and in 2005 the UN took international.

1993 was also an important year for BC's Rivers because the Minister of Environment at the time established a blue ribbon committee including among others Mark Angelo and the Honourable David Anderson (now a member of the Cowichan Watershed Board) to investigate the benefits of BC joining the Canadian Heritage River System. (All provinces except BC and Alberta were already members.) The panel's report, aptly named *What's in it for the River*, noted that BC's rivers were undervalued. As a result the province designated the Adams, Babine, Blackwater, **Cowichan**, Fraser, Skagit and Stikine as BC's inaugural heritage rivers. Then in 2005 the Cowichan was designated as a Canadian Heritage River joining the Fraser and Kickinghorse as BC rivers with national heritage status.

As a heritage river it was envisioned that the Cowichan would be "A model of watershed cooperation among a wide variety of stakeholders." and we are holding fast to that vision. Today the Cowichan watershed is considered to be at the leading edge of watershed management because of the cooperative relationships and commitment to stewardship among business, governments, conservation group and individual citizens. The Cowichan Watershed Board, the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Committee, the Cowichan Land Trust, the Quamichan Stewards and the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society are just a handful of the many positive forces working for a healthy, prosperous watershed.

The **Cowichan Watershed Board** was formally launched in January 2010. Its mandate is to provide leadership for sustainable water management, to protect and enhance environmental quality, and the quality of life in the Cowichan watershed and adjoining areas. Please visit www.cowichanwatershedboard.ca for more information and to keep in touch with the Board's activities.

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