



Friends of the Oxbows

Newsletter

Issue No. 14 Winter 2016

Friends of the Oxbows

In 2008 a group of three citizens residing near the oxbow wetland at the foot Brandon Avenue met to discuss what they could do to promote rejuvenation of this rapidly infilling water body. They decided they would call themselves the Friends of the Oxbows (FOTO), and that they would lobby for a clean-up of this wetland.



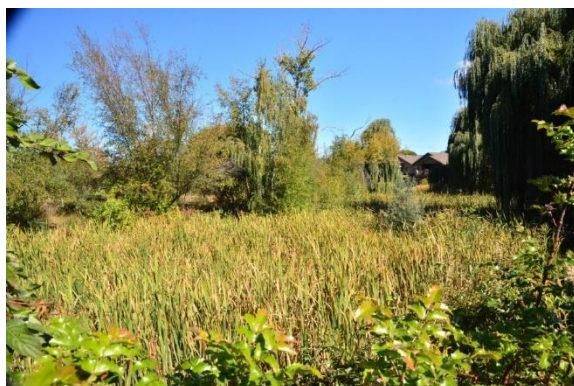
After cleanup, 20 September 2016

Since then, what tremendous progress has been made!

In September 2016, the Brandon Avenue oxbow went from a cattail choked marsh (picture bottom left) back to something that looks more like a true wetland (picture top right). Although this clean-up was undertaken by the City of Penticton, we like to think we had a hand in facilitating this action through the planning and promotion of our vision for better treatment of our scarce local wetlands. Previously, the City installed a silt interceptor on the storm sewer on Brandon Avenue to reduce the rate at which silt accumulates in the Brandon Avenue oxbow (picture middle right).



Silt Interceptor



Before cattail cleanup, 12 September 2016

There is more to be done!

The Friends of the Oxbows believe there is much left to do to rejuvenate *all* our oxbow wetlands.

- We have developed a conceptual Management Plan.
- We have undertaken to collect data on birds and turtles occurring in the oxbows in cooperation with the South Okanagan Naturalists Club.

- We are collecting water quality information in cooperation with Okanagan College on the oxbows south of Ellis Creek and east of the Okanagan River Channel.
- We have initiated the identification of invertebrate species living in the oxbows in cooperation with a volunteer who is an expert in that field.

Some of the things we recommend include:

- Rewatering the Loco Landing and ECOmmunity oxbow wetlands
- Diverting water from Ellis Creek to flow into the Warren Ave oxbow, and through other oxbows east of the Okanagan channel.
- Re-sloping the banks of the Warren Ave oxbow, protecting the riparian vegetation with fencing, and providing limited access viewing structures at the north end.
- Linking Kinney Ave, Falcon Court and Brandon Ave oxbows with a managed trail including limited-access viewing structures.
- Protecting and stabilizing the bank on the Yorkton Ave oxbow to control erosion and promote regrowth of riparian vegetation.

Why are these oxbow wetlands so important?

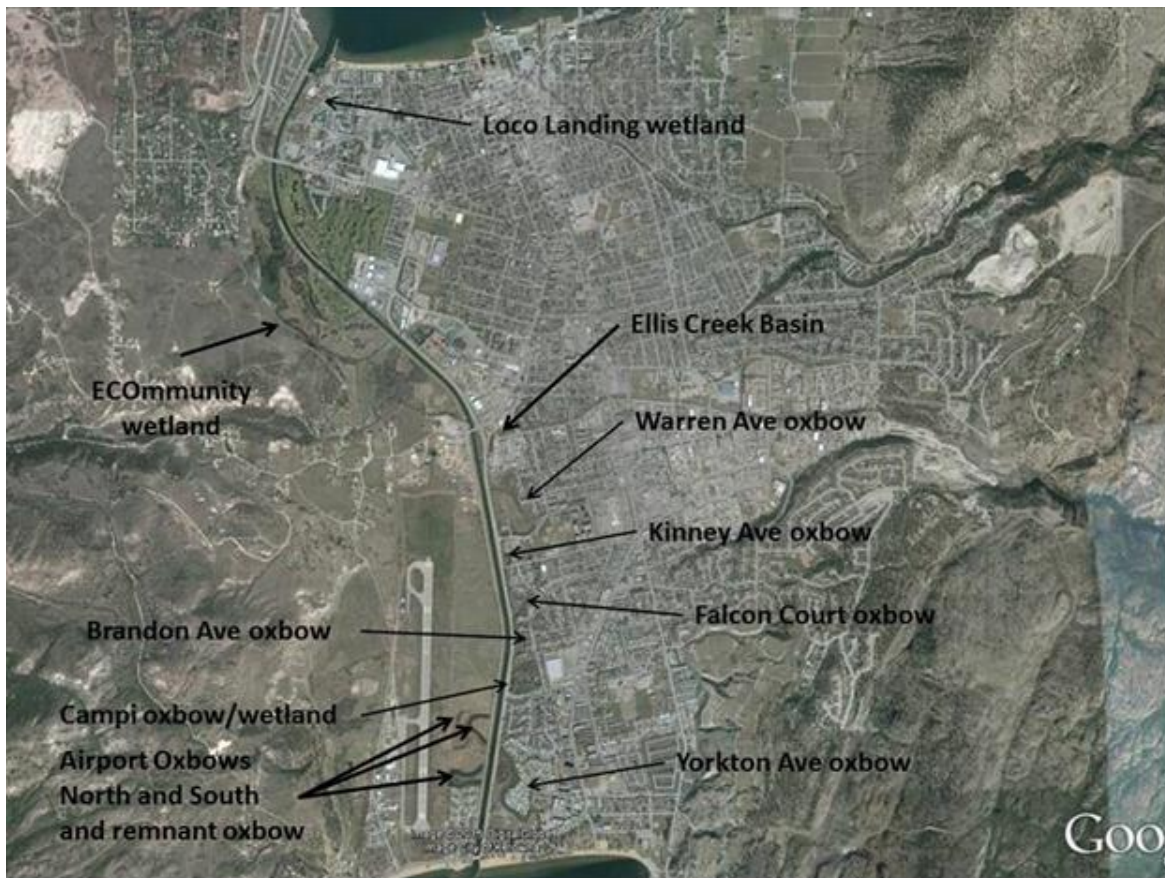
Wetland loss and water conservation is an issue world-wide, and is of concern in a dry area like Penticton. Of all the water on Earth, salt water makes up about 97% of it. Less than 2.75% is fresh water and most of that is frozen. Freshwater lakes contain about 87% of the fresh surface water, and oxbows and other wetlands contain less than 0.009%. That tells us that wetlands are very rare indeed and yet, they are considered to be amongst the most productive of natural habitats.

In our area, oxbows are one of the very rarest wetlands, and they are also found in the heart of our city. If protected and managed with sensitivity, they can continue to play their roles as urban wetlands, by receiving runoff from adjacent roads and uplands, providing attractive views, and continuing to be “biodiversity hotspots” in our rapidly developing landscape. With proper care they can be managed to provide easily accessible natural areas within the city, consistent with the city's proposed Parks and Recreation Plan. Protected and enhanced they can also showcase the our city more favourably, as an one enters from either direction on Hwy 97

What You can do!

If you live on an oxbow you can help by:

- Protecting and restoring the vegetation between your property and the water's edge. No need to completely block your view of these interesting areas, but allow yourself a limited amount of access so as to reduce disturbance to the birds, turtles, other animals living in or beside the wetlands.
- Not depositing yard waste in the wetlands. That artificially increases the amount of organic matter in the system leading to pollution in some cases and usually to a more rapid in-filling of the wetlands. That in turn will necessitate an earlier and possibly more expensive clean-out sooner than is desirable.
- You can advocate for protection and management of these wetlands by contacting city, provincial and federal government representatives and telling them you want these wetlands managed to sustain their natural values.
- Join our mail list and keep up with what we know to be happening on behalf of these wetlands. Contact FOTO Secretary Bob Anderson and he will add your name.



PENTICTON OXBOWS

Waterfront Care

Is your property near or adjoining one of the Penticton Oxbows? Have you wondered what was the best way to landscape that area? There is a free, day long workshop on Saturday, Feb. 25th. It is sponsored by the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen and the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The first portion will be in the Board Room of the RDOS and the afternoon will be an outdoor session at a waterfront location. If you are interested contact Eva Antonijevic Phone—250-496-5318 or email: eva.anton@shaw.ca for more information.

Museum Brown Bag Presentation

There is an opportunity to be updated on the activities of Friends of the Oxbows. Rick McKelvey, a retired Biologist, will be speaking at the Museum's Brown Bag Presentations. He will be talking about the many developments with Friends of the Oxbows since he last spoke. This event will be held at 12 noon, Tuesday, Jan. 17th at the Museum Auditorium. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sponsors

Friends of the Oxbows appreciates the sponsorship of the following businesses:



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Information about our group can be found on our website at:

<http://members.shaw.ca/pentictonoxbows/>