

Crescent Valley Alliance, October 2006

Mission Statement:

CVA encourages responsible stewardship of Crescent Lake, Creek and Estuary through education, communication and cooperation. We strive to preserve and enhance the native biodiversity for ourselves and future generations.

History:

After a 24-hour sampling of the wildlife in the Crescent Valley Riparian System, conducted by the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance (*Pierce County Planning and Land Services* Katherine Brooks, *University of Washington* and the *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*, Karen Dvornich) on June 3-4, 2005, a group of interested landowners met monthly, chaired by Friends of Pierce County's Executive Director Marian Berejikian, to hear from governmental and environmental agencies and list the potential threats to the quality of the Crescent Valley environment, from the lake down to the estuary.

Facts concerning the system's "conservation targets" surfaced:

The best quality zones for wildlife in the area have >80% natural vegetation; areas with between 50 and 80% cover can also function well if greater attention is paid to how small wildlife habitats are arranged. Connectivity is essential to maintain sufficient range (food, water and shelter throughout the year) for wildlife.

Undisturbed wetlands are critical. Buffers of between 0.62 miles and 0.31 miles are important to maintain wetlands species diversity and watershed health.

Threats to the system were identified:

- 1. Habitat Conversion and Fragmentation Due to Human Activity**
- 2. Disturbances on Crescent Lake**
- 3. Invasive and Introduced Species and Predation by Domestic Animals**
- 4. Fish and Wildlife Movement Blockages**
- 5. Erosion and Siltation**
- 6. Water Fluctuation and Draw Down**

Goals and action plans took shape.

Landowners and friends agreed that a range of projects were needed to help improve the chances for Crescent Valley to remain the beautiful natural environment that made us want to live here in the first place. We called ourselves the Crescent Valley Alliance (CVA).

A. CVA Goals

1. Support native vegetation retention and critical area buffer regulations to environmentally sensitive areas within Biodiversity Management Area (BMA) and report any violations to these regulations.
 - a. During review of development proposals the County should strive to approve projects that maintain the core habitat values and ensure mitigation efforts are appropriate and relevant to the development impacts.
 - b. Enforcement of potential violations to existing regulations should receive a higher priority by County Planning and Land Services staff and the County Council should ensure adequate staffing resources for this purpose.
 - c. County Planning and Land Services staff should provide timely response to alleged violations of Critical Area and Tree Conservation/Native Vegetation regulations by conducting a site visit within 2 working days from a complete complaint being submitted.
 - d. Continue to apply the Rural Sensitive Resource zoning within the BMA.
 - e. Future updates to the Gig Harbor Community Plan should, at a minimum, retain the Rural Sensitive Resource zoning to protect environmentally sensitive areas within the BMA.
 - f. In land use planning, bonus density should be given only for dedication of at least 50% of the property as permanent open space within the Rural Sensitive Resource zone.
2. Locate open space set-aside areas in contiguous tracts or within contiguous conservation easements in such a manner as to promote connectivity and proximity to the conservation targets.
 - a. Planners should give high priority open space set aside areas are along watercourses, water bodies and Puget Sound.
 - b. New development in forested areas should provide their open space dedications adjacent to the BMA.
3. Avoid construction of new public and private roads that bisect and fragment the BMA.
 - a. Planners should first consider expanding existing roads located outside or on the fringe of the BMA and install wildlife mitigation measures with the road expansion project.
 - b. Planners should avoid new roads that bisect open space set aside areas and that cross Crescent Creek.
 - c. Planners should utilize the new WDFW – PHS guidance document to help plan where roads should go based on fish and wildlife information.
4. Apply Low Impact Development (LID) standards within the BMA.
 - a. New development proposals should meet the low impact development (LID) standards outlined in the Pierce County Stormwater Management and Site Development Manual.
 - b. During the next substantive update to the Gig Harbor Community Plan, the plan should be amended to require that LID standards within the Rural Sensitive Resource zone, Urban Sensitive Resource Overlay, and Open Space Corridors comply with the Pierce County Stormwater Management and Site Development Manual LID requirements.

B. Proposed CVA Actions

1. Apply for National Wildlife Federation – Community Habitat Program.

- a. Set participation goals for the 454 landowners in the BMA.
- b. Conduct public education and outreach efforts to property owners to participate in this program and certify their property as backyard wildlife sanctuaries.
- c. Establish a 65% native vegetation and forest cover goal for the entire BMA.

2. Conduct surveys and collect ‘best science’ information about the Crescent Valley riparian system.

- a. Encourage members to participate in state Fish and Wildlife Nature Mapping program.
- b. Work with school-related and other citizen projects in surveying the area.
- c. Collect latest information on how to keep private property and the riparian system healthy.
- d. Arrange for Stream Team assistance in collection information on water quality and flow for the next five years.

3. Provide increased education and outreach to property owners, developers and real estate agents regarding impacts of vegetation removal and earth moving. Create and dispense educational materials concerning fish and wildlife habitat stewardship actions.

- a. Maintain signage along Crescent Valley Road that indicates the motorist is traveling through a “sensitive wildlife area” and that this road is a “wildlife crossing area”. Signage should include a caution statement to watch out for and avoid wildlife that may be crossing the road.
- b. Create homeowner information packets that describe the location and importance of corridors. Include all certified backyard habitats/sanctuaries to help inspire people to get involved. Provide homeowners and developers with literature on how to be a shoreline steward.
- c. Create realtor packets with materials on shoreline stewardship and on unique ecological characteristics of community to be given to new residents of shoreline properties.
- d. Provide landscape consultation and on-going workshops (with guest speakers) to homeowners and others.

4. Participate in local land use decisions regarding proposed developments that affect the BMA. Advocate for conditions that eliminate or minimize threats to habitat fragmentation.

- a. Create a phone tree (provide agency numbers of enforcement for community) to contact community members when a proposed development is being reviewed by the County.
- b. Have group placed on interested parties list for notification by the County of any development proposals within or adjacent to the BMA.
- c. Work with the Peninsula Advisory Commission (PAC) and developers to help identify the best locations for designated open space areas during the

development proposal review process. Try and come up with a “win-win” solution (i.e. utilizing density bonus for open space and where best to locate open space areas in relation to the BMA).

5. **Organize volunteer work parties.** Partner with local Boy or Girl Scout troops, schools, or other environmental or civic organizations for volunteers.
 - a. Sponsor annual or biannual native vegetation planting event.
 - b. Sponsor invasive species eradication events.
 - c. Sponsor volunteer “bio-blitz” activities led by professional experts.

- d. Consider a project with the PenMet Parks to create a demonstration project on park land at south end of lake, cooperating with Pierce County Conservation District, Master Gardeners, schools, Boy Scout troops, or other local volunteers. And use the site to promote shoreline dependent species through nest box placement (e.g., wood ducks) and monitor to see if this strategy is effective.