

OVERVIEW

Over 100 years ago, the Bow River flowed freely through Calgary. In 1904, a weir across the river was built near Inglewood to divert water for agriculture in the Western Irrigation District. Although the original weir structure was replaced in 1975, it continues to provide the water that is vital for farming. Unfortunately, the weir has a dangerous side-effect: it creates a lethal hydraulic wave that prevents movement up- and down-stream and has claimed the lives of several people. Recently however, a group of concerned Calgarians established a process for improving the weir area while maintaining its important diversion function.

This group of stakeholders and interested parties has been developing the plan over the past five years, and today it has received widespread support as well as \$6.4 million in funding from the Province of Alberta, Calgary City Council, The Calgary Foundation, and Parks Foundation, Calgary. Our vision is to create “*a river park in the heart of Calgary, to celebrate the Bow River and its natural abundance.*”

Building upon the vision, the stakeholders developed and unanimously endorsed a mission statement and a comprehensive set of objectives and principles to detail and guide more specific facets of the project. More recently, and based on the project’s origins and support from within The Calgary Foundation, the name “Harvie Passage” was given to what is sure to become a spectacular inner-city treasure and a fitting tribute to Calgary’s philanthropic spirit.

Countless benefits will flow from this project - for people, fish, birds and wildlife, and the environment itself. This new park will provide a central connection node for numerous public amenities in the area, including the Calgary Zoo, Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Pearce Estate Park Interpretive Wetland, Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery, East Village and the future site of the Calgary Science Centre. A reconfiguration of the river-bed will result in an aesthetically attractive passage through the centre of the city, while respecting fisheries and the aquatic ecosystem. Naturalization of the area will improve local habitat, movement corridors and riparian functions, allowing all kinds of wildlife to pass freely up and down the river. Perhaps most importantly, the hydraulic roller known as the “drowning machine” will be eliminated, giving safe and unrestricted access to emergency safety patrols, recreational paddlers and fish.

A preliminary concept recommends preserving the prime function of diverting water into the irrigation canal as well as creating two safe mid-stream channels past the weir. The existing headwork’s structures, which serve the intended purpose well, will not be altered. Essentially all of the re-construction is in the riverbed below the weir with very little impact to the adjacent riverbanks. The proposed in-stream rock structures create a series of gentle drops and flat-water pools that will enable most people to pass comfortably in a canoe. Anyone rafting or who accidentally falls into the river will find themselves in a quiet pool of water within easy walking or swimming distance from shore.

Widespread stakeholder support has resulted from a series of extensive public consultations, and further community meetings, presentations and discussions are ongoing. To date, organizations participating in the process include the following: Alberta Environment; Calgary Caucus of MLAs; Alberta Recreational Canoe & Kayak Association; Alberta Sustainable Resource Development; Alberta Transportation and Infrastructure; Alberta Whitewater Association, Bow Habitat Station at the Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery; Bow River Basin Council; Bow Waters Canoe Club; BP Canada; Calgary City Council;

Calgary Science Centre; Calgary Zoo; The Calgary Foundation; Calgary Field Naturalists' Society; City of Calgary Fire Department; City of Calgary Parks; City of Calgary Transportation; Ducks Unlimited Canada; Fisheries & Oceans Canada; Fort Calgary; Inglewood Community Association; the Kahanoff Foundation; the Lifesaving Society; Parks Foundation, Calgary; Red Cross; River Valleys Committee; RiverWatch; Sarcee Fish & Game Association; Trout Unlimited; Water Safety Partners; Western Irrigation District; and various recreation and conservation groups.

The Founding Partners of the project are the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Lottery Fund, The Calgary Foundation, The City of Calgary, and Parks Foundation, Calgary.

The Alberta Lottery Fund contributes to quality of life and reinvests gaming revenues in communities supporting volunteers, volunteer organizations and their community initiatives. Each year, the Alberta Lottery Fund supports thousands of public and community-based initiatives. As a major partner, the Alberta Lottery Fund is a proud supporter of the Calgary Weir Improvement Project. To find out more about the Alberta Lottery Fund, please visit albertalotteryfund.ca

The Calgary Foundation, established in 1955, helps public-spirited citizens find ways to achieve their charitable goals and make Calgary and area a better place to live, now and in the future. Today we are one of the largest and fastest-growing community foundations in Canada with over 700 endowment funds established by donors who are committed to supporting charitable organizations in all sectors of the community. Transparent and accountable, the Foundation serves the broad community by evaluating and addressing community issues, promoting charitable giving, and connecting donors to the critical needs of the community. For more information, please visit www.thecalgaryfoundation.org

The City of Calgary provides a vast array of services to the citizens of Calgary, including parks, recreational facilities, roads, buses, drinking water, sewers, fire prevention, police protection, social programs, and by-laws. It is central to The City's mission to have high-quality parkland and recreational facilities available for Calgarians. Although the weir is owned and operated by the provincial government, The City is encouraging the redesign of the structure to foster positive recreational and educational use of the river and the parkland and natural areas which surround the weir. The City is contributing staff expertise and financial support to the project. For more information about The City of Calgary, please visit www.calgary.ca

Parks Foundation, Calgary strives to make real the dreams of individuals, organizations and communities that wish to create parks and parks-related projects within Calgary. When you and your children play in a playground, or walk along a picturesque river pathway, or fly-fish in the Bow or Elbow River, or visit any number of environmental interpretive sites around town, Parks Foundation, Calgary probably helped make it possible. So the significance and centrality of the weir site was immediately obvious and the Foundation's mandate demanded that we take a principal role in advancing this project. To this date, we have been instrumental in facilitating dialogue and collaboration between partners and stakeholders, and we continue to coordinate the project's overall administration. For more information, please visit www.parksfndn.com

FOUNDING PARTNERS

