

Gabriola Streamkeepers [GSK]

Adapting the Streamkeepers Handbook for GSK use

Nick Doe

These are my personal views only. The document is a draft and will probably evolve.

The [Streamkeepers Handbook](#) produced by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Vancouver lists fourteen “project modules” for streams and another seven “project modules” for wetlands. While this comprehensive list is a useful reference for streamkeepers and wetlandkeepers in general, I think it could be usefully modified and considerably simplified for the purposes of GSK, the reasons being:

1. GSK is a small organization and cannot hope to take on all the tasks in these twenty-one modules. Having so many is dispiriting in that it suggests that we are not doing enough when we fail to get to some of them.
2. Although we may aspire to match the quality and detail provided by qualified professional consultants, it is unrealistic to suppose that we always can.
3. I don't think it is useful for GSK to separate streamkeeping activities from wetlandkeeping activities. In my view, wetland activities, including swamps, freshwater and salt marshes, and ponds and lakes are too often neglected. This feeling is of course reflected in the name “streamkeepers”.
4. On Gabriola, there is a heightened awareness of, and interest in, the relationships between streams, wetlands, and groundwater. Monitoring stream volume flow just twice a year, as is suggested in the Stream Keepers Handbook, provides insufficient hydrological information to those interested in either surface or groundwater budgets for the island.
4. Most streams on Gabriola are not affected by urban pollution, and few are affected by agricultural activities or black-top runoff. Comprehensive (and expensive) monitoring of pollution (or lack thereof) is seldom warranted.
5. On Gabriola, almost all of the streams are small intermittent creeks, dry in summer, with a special ecology of their own.
6. There is, in my view, from Gabriola's perspective an over-emphasis in the modules on salmonoid species and fish as game species. I think of more interest to GSK is the overall ecology of streams and wetlands including mammals (beaver), amphibians, invertebrates, aquatic birds and plants, as well as small freshwater fish like sticklebacks and pond perch.
7. As is widely recognized, GSK is an apolitical organization and a few of the modules that touch on land management and surface water usage issues that are best left to the Islands Trust, appropriate government agency, or more widely-based environmental groups.
8. Adhering strictly to the handbook guidelines could inhibit original research. I like to think there is room for projects on Gabriola that are not a regular part of streamkeepers

activities or which differ in methodology in keeping with the differences between Gulf Island ecology and the ecology of the mainland and Vancouver Island.

The DFO Streamkeepers Handbook project modules

Streamkeepers Modules:

- SK 1: Introductory Stream Habitat Survey
- SK 2: Advanced Stream Habitat Survey
- SK 3: Water Quality Survey
- SK 4: Stream Invertebrate Survey
- SK 5: Storm Drain Marking
- SK 6: Stream Clean-up
- SK 7: Streamside planting
- SK 8: Streamside Fencing
- SK 9: Observe, Record, Report
- SK 10: Community Awareness
- SK 11: Juvenile Fish Trapping and Identification
- SK 12: Salmonoid Spawner Survey
- SK 13: Creel Survey
- SK 14: Stream Channel Improvement

Wetlandkeepers Modules:

- WK 1: Introducing Wetlands and the Wetlandkeepers Program
- WK 2.1: The Initial Wetland Assessment
- WK 2.2: Conducting a Survey of Wetland Plants
- WK 2.3: Conducting a Wetland Bird Survey
- WK 3.1: The Law Relating to Wetland
- WK 3.2: Developing and Implementing a Public Education Program
- WK 4.1: Wetland Clean-up

With this in mind, I would propose we characterize our activities in the following way, in no particular order:

- GSK 1: Administration—accounts, funds, grants, equipment, membership, liaison
- GSK 2: Surveys—mapping, stream surveys, naming, signage, comprehensive reports
- GSK 3: Hydrology—flows, budgets, quality, physics and chemistry, hydrogeology, climate
- GSK 4: Anadromous and catadromous (sea-going) and brackish water fish
- GSK 5: Invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, freshwater fish
- GSK 6: Riparian and aquatic plants
- GSK 7: Mammals (beaver), birds, and “occasional users” of stream and wetland resources
- GSK 8: Restoration, clean-up, pollution concerns, land management issues
- GSK 9: Training, introductory studies, education, public relations, media and website
- GSK 10: Other—record keeping, library, research, information gathering. ◇