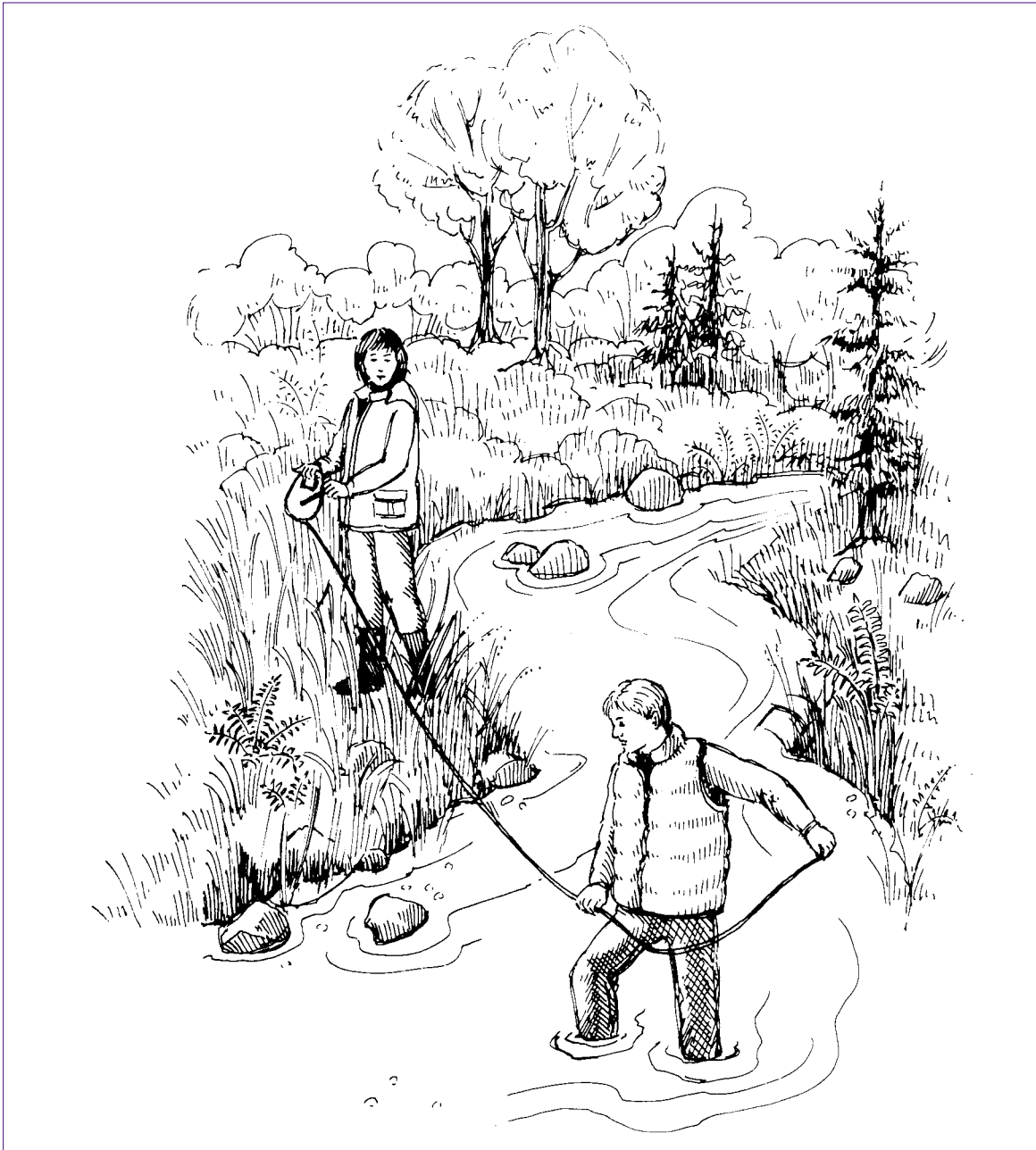


The Streamkeepers Handbook

*A
Practical
Guide To
Stream
And
Wetland
Care*



STREAMKEEPERS

***Module 9
Observe Record
Report***



Project Approval Required	Training	Time Commitment (per year)	Number of People	Time of Year
no	Not necessary	½ day to ongoing	2 per team	Any time

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MODULE 9:

Observe Record Report (ORR)

Welcome to the Streamkeepers Program! The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Community Involvement Program provides these Streamkeepers training modules. These modules encourage “hands on” environmental activities in watersheds in British Columbia. Volunteer groups, schools, and individuals are using this material to monitor and restore local waterways. Your local Fisheries and Oceans Community Advisor can provide more information.

Acknowledgements

Pete Caverhill (B. C. Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks) and Joe Kambeitz of the DFO Community Involvement Program provided material for this module. The B.C. Wildlife Federation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks established the Observe Record Report program several years ago.

Project Activity And Purpose

This module provides guidelines to identify and report unlawful activities that affect fish, wildlife, and aquatic habitat. Your accurate reports will enable enforcement agencies to investigate serious violations. Ultimately, this will help to prevent the loss of habitat and wildlife. Report more serious violations immediately using the hotline telephone numbers. Report non-emergency situations directly to agencies listed in Appendix 1.

Introduction

You may come across people destroying habitat or violating fisheries and wildlife regulations. Sometimes you may find only the consequences. The Observe Record Report or ORR program provides a system for reporting evidence to the authorities.

When people disobey the regulations and guidelines that protect our waterways, they do so out of either ignorance or defiance. Enforcement authorities cannot be everywhere, so many situations go unreported until extensive damage has occurred. ORR provides a means for you to report violations and act as extra eyes for enforcement agencies.

Project Guidance And Approval

You need no formal approval. However, you do need a good understanding of the regulations, guidelines, and local bylaws so you can recognize an offence and assess its seriousness. Your Community Advisor or the agencies listed in Appendix 1 can provide information and copies of regulations. You also need a tactful and informative manner when you deal with members of the public. Avoid anyone who is committing a criminal act. Even trained and armed Fisheries or Conservation Officers approach these situations with caution. Also, remember that you have no right to trespass on private property or confiscate property.

Level Of Effort

You can use ORR if you come across a problem while participating in another Streamkeeper activity, or you may wish to organize formal patrols. You need no formal training and you can commit as much time as you want. If you are asked to be a witness in court proceedings, please consider it seriously. Although it requires extra time and effort, it is a necessary part of our justice system.

Safety

PERSONAL SAFETY

Concern for personal safety is most important. Do not approach anyone who appears to be committing a criminal offence. You may wish to provide information to people who do not seem to know they are harming the environment. Leave if the individuals become agitated.

Work in pairs, never alone. You are gathering evidence, and corroboration with a partner is useful. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Carry emergency phone numbers for police and ambulance.

Do not attempt to wade fast water or water higher than your knees. Watch out for slippery stream beds, undercut banks, waterfalls and fast flowing areas. Log jams can be unstable, so take care to walk around them.

Beware of domestic animals and wildlife.

HEALTH

Do not drink stream water. Although it may look pristine, it can harbour bacteria or parasites that will make you sick. Do not expose cuts or wounds to stream water. Know the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia.

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Avoid foul smelling areas, spills of unknown substances, or containers of hazardous or unidentified materials. Contact emergency response agencies or municipal crews for advice on removal of these materials.

EQUIPMENT

Carry a first aid kit. When working in isolated areas, carry a survival kit containing at least a lighter, fire starter, candle and flares. Take a cellular phone if you have one.

CLOTHING

Dress for the weather and stream conditions. Wear waders with felts when walking in the stream. Wear rain gear or highly visible clothing. Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when working in larger streams.

Time Of Year And Working Conditions

You can watch for violations at any time of year. Weekends and evenings are prime times for illegal activities, because offenders think no one is on duty.

Materials And Equipment

pencil, pens, notebooks

watch

ORR report form (Appendix 2)

list of emergency numbers (Appendix 1)

camera (date monitor -optional)

sampling equipment for toxic spill or fish kill (new ziploc

bags, new glass sample bottles, surgical
gloves, permanent marker)

These items are optional but useful:

video camera (attached to you with a sturdy strap)

binoculars

cellular phone or CB radio

tape recorder

flagging tape

Procedure

The most important step is to assess the seriousness of the offence and decide whether to report it. Report only the serious problems. No enforcement agency has the resources to respond to every incident. For example, toxic spills, fish kills, or dying fish are emergencies you should report immediately. On the other hand, heavy siltation from

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runoff may occur normally or because of unacceptable land use practices. It is unlikely to be an immediate threat to aquatic life, so you can take time to investigate further before contacting the authorities.

You can resolve minor problems, such as a neighbour dumping oil into a storm drain, by politely providing information. However, you need to handle more serious problems very carefully, to protect yourself. The person or persons involved may know they are doing something illegal and may be prepared to respond aggressively. In any situation, you should collect evidence from a safe distance, then decide whether to report the incident immediately.



The story at the end of this section illustrates the importance of remaining calm and making detailed observations. Appendix 1 lists some typical environmental violations and emergency situations, along with telephone numbers of appropriate agencies.

Follow the procedure outlined here if you decide to report a serious offence. Often, enforcement staff arrive too late to witness the violation, so your detailed evidence will be valuable.

OBSERVE

Make accurate and detailed observations. They should answer the five W's: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY. For example, if you find dead fish in the river, note the species, number, location, time, and condition of the fish. Try to find out the cause of the kill. If you see

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a bulldozer in a stream, note the make, colour, and any identifying marks. Confirm details with your partner.

RECORD

Record your detailed observations using notes, tape recordings, video recordings, and/or photographs. Include the date, time, and specific location. Describe any vehicles, including license numbers, the physical appearance of the offenders, and details of the offence.

You may want to take legal samples as evidence. Water samples for suspended solids or turbidity analyses are safe to handle, as are most fish samples taken to detect cause of death. Never handle materials that can pose a hazard to human health. Ask your Community Advisor for help with sample bottles and procedures.

Take photos while you are still some distance away, and more as you approach. If you wait until you reach the location, you can miss the opportunity for both distance and close-up shots. Take photographs discreetly, so you do not alarm the violator.

DO NOT APPROACH ANYONE IF YOU THINK THERE IS EVEN A REMOTE CHANCE OF AGGRESSION! Report the situation to the authorities.

REPORT

Call the ORR Hotline (DFO or WLAP number) or the local police department immediately, if you feel the situation is an emergency. Warn them about any hazardous substances. Send a permanent record to the authorities. It may be an ORR reporting card (see APPENDIX 2) or a longer written report, complete with photographs. The length of your report will be based on the seriousness of the violation and the amount of evidence.

Handling A Situation Effectively And Safely

This story illustrates the importance of arriving prepared, remaining calm and polite, making and recording detailed observations, and reporting the incident.

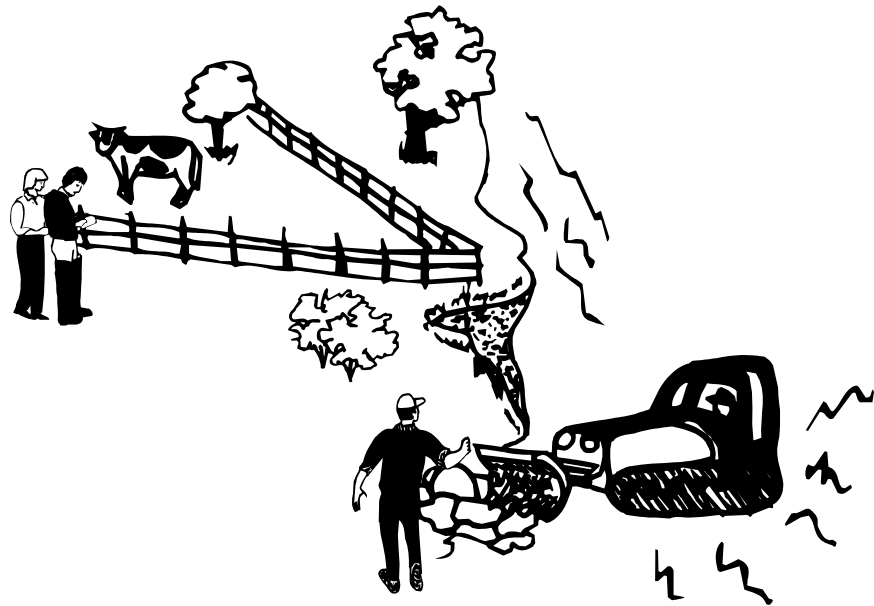
Muddy water has flowed in a nearby stream for the past three weekends in November. This morning, a neighbour telephoned at 9:00 a.m. to report the same thing. You call your partner and agree to meet at the stream at 10:00 a.m. You pack your camera, sample bottles, note pad, binoculars, and boots.

You take a water sample as you walk upstream and label it with date, time, and location. You plan to take another sample upstream of the disturbance. As you round a curve, you see a large orange bulldozer in the creek, with one man operating the machine and another yelling directions from the bank. Trees are down across the stream, a stretch of

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the bank is bare, and soil is sloughing into the water. You snap some photos and confer with your partner. You estimate the extent of bank damage, count the number of felled trees, and make notes.

You observe the workers through binoculars. One man is about 5'8", 45 to 50 years old, 190 lbs., with receding dark hair and a heavy mustache. The other is very tall and thin, about 6'4", 38 to 42 years old, with blond hair.



As you leave, you notice a lowbed trailer and truck parked near a house. You walk up the road and note the house address and the make and licence number of the truck. You take a long distance photo of the bulldozer in action and sample the water upstream of the disturbance. When you return to your car, you and your partner go over the details, make written notes, and record the time.

You call the 24-hour hotline immediately. You will call the appropriate agency later, during regular office hours, to check on progress. Send them a written report. Your photos, water samples, descriptions of people, and estimate of the number of trees cut form the basis for a strong report. Although you can send a report without these details, detailed evidence will help the agency investigate the situation and may be needed for a successful conviction.

Collecting, Reporting And Evaluating Information

Keep copies of your reports, even if they are not used in the formal ORR system. For example, you may wish to keep a list of people who dump harmful substances in the storm drain even after you have advised them against it.

Follow through on your reports. Note the name of the person to whom you make your report. Call back a few days later to check on progress. If no one pursued your report, ask why. Perhaps you need to improve your techniques or reports, or send the information to other staff or agencies. Often government agencies are inundated with cases and cannot investigate every report.

Public Relations

You can clean up streams, monitor their condition, and undertake enhancement projects, but you need the support of your community for these projects to succeed. Talk about your project with others whenever and wherever you can, including at schools and public meetings. Place signs at visible projects. Contact newspapers, radio stations and television stations. Module 11 contains specific information about increasing community awareness and working with the media.

APPENDIX 1:

Environmental Emergency Response and Violation Contact Numbers

APPENDIX 2:

Sample of the Observe, Record and Report Card, available from B.C. Water Land and Air Protection.

Appendix 1: Environmental Emergency Response and Violation Contact Numbers

SITUATION	WHO TO CALL	PHONE #
EMERGENCY		
fishing violations: illegal gear, overlimit, or fishing in closed areas	ORR (DFO Hotline) (salmon/marine species) ORR (WLAP Hotline) (freshwater species)	1-800-465-4336 1-800-663-9453
wildlife kills, illegal hunting	ORR (WLAP Hotline)	1-800-663-9453
hazardous chemical or oil spills; hazardous discharges to storm drains; fish kills; dumping hazardous materials in streams	Environment Canada ORR (DFO Hotline) ORR (WLAP Hotline)	1-800-663-3456 1-800-465-4336 1-800-663-9453
sewer overflows	municipal engineering department	check blue pages of your phone directory
extreme erosion, sedimentation, flooding	Provincial Emergency Response operator	1-800-663-3456
forest fires		Zenith 5555
NON-EMERGENCY		
dirty or turbid water, minor erosion and sedimentation; dumping garbage in or near water	urban: municipal engineering department rural: local DFO or WLAP office	check blue pages of your phone directory
requests for information	Environment Canada Information	1-604-664-9100

WLAP: Ministry of Water, Land, Air Protection

DFO: Department of Fisheries and Oceans

Appendix 2: Sample of the Observe Record Report Card

WE REQUEST YOUR HELP TO:

- Enforce Fish and Wildlife Laws
- Report Pollution and Littering

Everyone who uses or enjoys the outdoors has a responsibility to protect and maintain it. Fish and Wildlife law violations, pollution and littering hurt all of us and cost everyone a lot of money. You can help prevent these acts and bring violators to justice by serving as an accurate witness.

Do not confront a suspected violator — you as a citizen cannot make an arrest or collect evidence. Use this card to record important facts — then notify the nearest office of the following:

- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- B.C. Environment
- R.C.M.P. Detachment

Or telephone the toll-free-number 1-800-663-WILD (9453) where your complaint will be registered and directed to the right action centre.

* * *

RECORD IMPORTANT INFORMATION

VIOLATION WITNESSED:

DATE _____ TIME _____ pm
am

VEHICLE, VESSEL OR AIRCRAFT DESCRIPTION:

LICENSE NO. _____ PROV. or STATE _____

MAKE _____ MODEL _____

COLOUR _____

UNUSUAL MARKS _____

DETAILS OF VIOLATION:

LOCATION _____

SPECIES TAKEN _____

HOW TAKEN _____

LOCATION OF CARCASS (if applicable) _____

POLLUTION OR LITTERING _____

OTHER _____

DESCRIPTION OF VIOLATOR:

NAME (if known) _____

SEX _____ AGE _____

HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____ EYES _____

HAIR _____ BEARD/MOUSTACHE _____

PHYSICAL MARKS OR SCARS _____

CLOTHING (hat, coat, etc.) _____

PECULIARITIES _____

OTHER EVIDENCE (type of gun, etc.) _____

REMARKS: _____

WITNESS(ES):
Name _____

Telephone _____

Address _____

PLEASE ACT IMMEDIATELY

With timely, accurate information, an apprehension and conviction can often be obtained without it being necessary for you to appear as a witness.

If you are willing to appear and testify in court, please complete below.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ PROV. _____

PHONE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Immediately take this card to one of the agencies listed inside, or mail to one of the following:

Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans General Investigation Unit 555 West Hastings Street Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5G3	B.C. Environment Conservation Officer Service Parliament Buildings Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X5
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Observe Record and Report

