

# Okanagan River Restoration Initiative

- BC Ministry of Environment
- BC Ministry of Transportation
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- Douglas County Public Utility district
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- BC Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Okanagan Nation Alliance
- Okanagan Region Wildlife Heritage Fund Society
- The Land Conservancy of BC



## How can I learn more?

The ORRI project is sponsored by:  
 The Canadian Okanagan Basin Technical Working Group  
[www.obtwg.ca](http://www.obtwg.ca)

Specific ORRI contacts within the COBTWG are:  
 Steve Matthews, BC Ministry of Environment 250.490.8200  
 Deana Machin, Okanagan Nation Alliance 250.707.0095

A plan to re-naturalize one of the most biologically important sections of the Okanagan River.

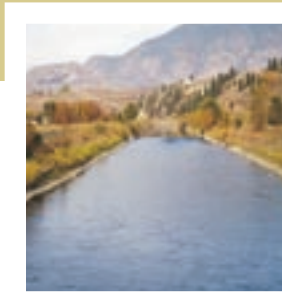


South Okanagan is a treasure of biodiversity important nationally and internationally. This area contains one of Canada's highest concentration of species diversity and species at risk.



Much of the Okanagan River was straightened, narrowed & diked in the mid 1950's. 90% of the channel and adjacent floodplains and wetlands were destroyed.

from this



Diked up to its edge, the channelized river has little vegetation and no functional floodplain.

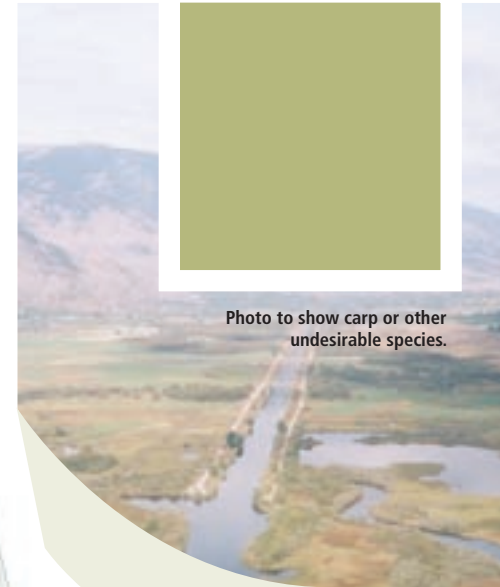


Photo to show carp or other undesirable species.

### The channelized river:

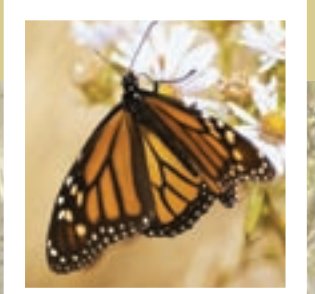
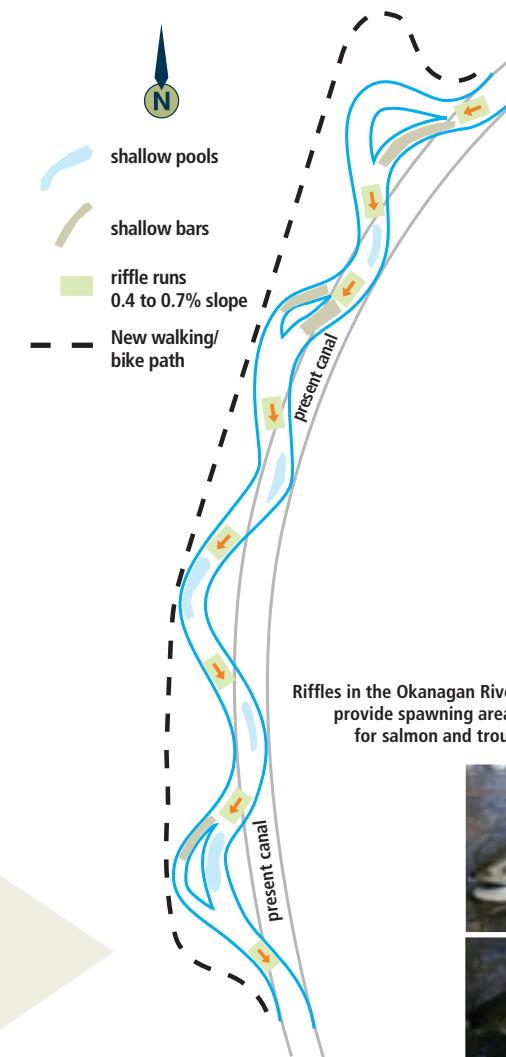
#### Has been diked to the waters edge:

- cutting the river off from its natural floodplain, not allowing the river to benefit from spring flood storage
- leaving no room for riparian vegetation:
  - trees and shrubs like the once common black cottonwood
  - red-osier dogwood
  - water birch/ dogwood swamps
  - hundreds of dependent native bird, mammal and amphibian species

#### Straight, slow moving water flows:

- contain no pools or riffles that typically supported native fish species like salmon and trout
- allow for the colonization of invasive water weeds such as Eurasian milfoil which supports large populations of exotic fishes such as carp, bass, black crappie and black catfish

to this



Monarch butterfly



Spadefoot toad



Cottonwood trees

### A natural river:

#### A functional floodplain due to diking set-back from the river:

- allows for improved management of floods and droughts
- provides critical habitat for nationally threatened species
- catches drainage flows from surrounding developed land, filtering out pollutants and improving the quality of the water entering the river
- allows shallow flooding where during the high flows, fine silts settle in the floodplain not in the river, improving water quality

#### Allows important riparian vegetation to re-establish:

- dogwood and willow and the once common cottonwood provide areas benefiting birds such as the western screech-owl
- shrubs such as wild rose provide nesting areas for the recovery of nationally endangered Yellow-breasted chat
- trees and shrubs along the rivers edge provide shade from the hot Okanagan climate, keeping water cooler, and offering the fish cover from predators

#### Allows varied river flows such as fast-shallow riffles near deep-slow pools:

- riffles in the Okanagan River provide spawning areas for salmon and trout

