



Fall/Winter 2025

Newsletter to Our Members & Community

CLRSS acknowledges and appreciates that our virtual newsletter is being shared on the unceded territories of the following nations:

Quw'utsun (Cow-ut-zun)
Pauquachin (Pak-quw-chin)
Ts'uubaa-asatx (Tsoo-bah-seht)
Malahat (Malah-hat)
Halalt (Ha-lalt)
Penelakut (Pen-EL-ah-kut)
Stz'uminus (Stuh-mee-nus)
Lyackson (Lay-ik-sen)
Ditidaht (Dee-tee-dot)
Pacheedaht (Pah-chee-dot)



CLRSS will be emailing member newsletters very quarter.
 Thanks to ongoing contributions from members: Judy Brayden (editor), Jean Atkinson, and others.

Any questions, comments or feedback please see:

[Home | Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society British Columbia \(cowichan-lake-stewards.ca\)](http://cowichan-lake-stewards.ca)

In this issue:

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Let's begin with a hearty good wish to you and yours in this season of gratitude and joy. Best of the season from the Board of the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS)!



Meet our newest Board member

Josee Dorval is a retired federal public servant who made Lake Cowichan her home in 2023. With a lifelong appreciation for environmental stewardship, camping, and nature hikes her involvement began in spring 2024, when Board Member Jean Atkinson welcomed her to the Cowichan Valley during a hike with the Retreads. Inspired by the collective efforts of CLRSS, Josee soon joined Jean's team, helping to remove invasive blackberry plants at Saywell Park and participating in community events.

Drawing on more than 30 years of experience as an administrative professional, Josee brings exceptional organizational skills to the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS). She has generously volunteered as Secretary for the CLRSS Board and serves on the Communications Committee, ensuring that the Society's work is documented and shared with clarity and care.



Beyond her contributions to CLRSS, Josee continues to hike with the Retreads weekly and is an active member of the Trailblazers. Her dedication, energy, and collaborative spirit make her a valued addition to our community—we are truly grateful to have her with us!

Interested in joining the board? See judybrayden@shaw.ca for more information about current vacancy.

What Have We Been Up To?

In the 2025 Strategic Plan, CLRSS targeted two very prolific invasive species, Eurasian milfoil and yellow flag iris.

To launch that process Jean Atkinson, Jacqueline Sherk and Jim Deck participated in the 2025 Youbou Regatta on Saturday, August 7th. They shared information about Eurasian Watermilfoil ([Eurasian Watermilfoil FINAL 29 03 2019.pdf](#)), Yellow Flag Iris ([Yellow Flag Iris TIPS 2017 WEB.pdf](#)), Quagga-Zebra Mussels ([Quagga-Zebra Mussels Fact Sheet-web.pdf](#)), and Whirling Disease ([Whirling-disease-Dec-2023-post-for-public-input.pdf](#)).

The first two plants are already present in Cowichan Lake and require management (identification and inventory of invasive plant populations, assessment of the risks that they pose, and development of well-informed control options). The mussels and the parasite that causes Whirling disease-are not in our lake and to prevent their introduction and establishment it is important to **CLEAN – DRAIN - DRY** (<https://bcinvasives.ca/play-your-part/clean-drain-dry>).

This means: CLEAN off all plants, animals, sand and mud from your boat and gear; DRAIN all water from your boat and gear onto land; DRY all parts of your boat and gear completely.





yellow flag iris

Eurasian milfoil

managing invasive species
they're here
and doing their damage



and doing their damage

What We're Doing and What We Need From You from Project Lead, Jean Atkinson –

Yellow flag iris (YFI) is an invasive plant species that can establish itself in terrestrial, wetland, riparian and even shallow open-water areas. It readily outcompetes native plants, including many species in riparian and littoral zones. The rhizomes form dense mats, resulting in thick stands that can reduce water flow and clog water channels. The resultant changes in ecosystem function reduce habitat for fish and wildlife species. The seed pods and rhizome fragments can remain afloat for extended periods and may spread long distances through watercourses, Riparian areas and other wet habitats as ponds, marshes, and ditches are often colonized in this manner as well.

Yellow flag iris is classified as a noxious weed under the *BC Weed Control Act, Weed Control Regulation, Schedule A Part II – Regional Weeds*. It is also listed in Invasive Plant Regulations under Section 47 (1) of the *BC Forest and Range Practices Act*. The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has an invasive species strategy; yellow flag iris is one of nine species identified as high priority. A goal of CLRSS's 2025 Strategic Plan is to prevent further expansion of key aquatic invasive species into new areas of Cowichan Lake and the upper Cowichan River and prevent the introduction and establishment of new aquatic invasive species. Provincial, regional, and local initiatives for control of yellow flag iris are in alignment, all seeking to reduce risk to ecological systems, human health and the economy. The intent is to prevent new infestations of invasive plants and the spread of existing ones.

There is no aquatic herbicide approved for controlling YFI in Canada. Although it is possible to remove YFI by hand pulling, digging, or cutting, the rhizomes must be completely removed because disturbance increases fragmentation and spreading. A method for both terrestrial and aquatic populations using benthic barriers has been researched and piloted in BC by Dr. Catherine Tarasoff of AgroWest Consulting Scientists. YFI infestations are cut to the ground and tarped with PCV matting for up to one year. Smothering the rhizomes with benthic barriers induces anaerobic respiration which kills the plants. Check out these videos to see how this method works:

<https://youtu.be/murvqXlfUPk>

CLRSS is seeking funding for a pilot project that would be conducted in the spring of 2026 using the benthic barrier strategy. Dr. Tarasoff has agreed to provide a half-day workshop for 15 attendees at a selected site. If successful, the method could be implemented over time on other sites using trained volunteers.

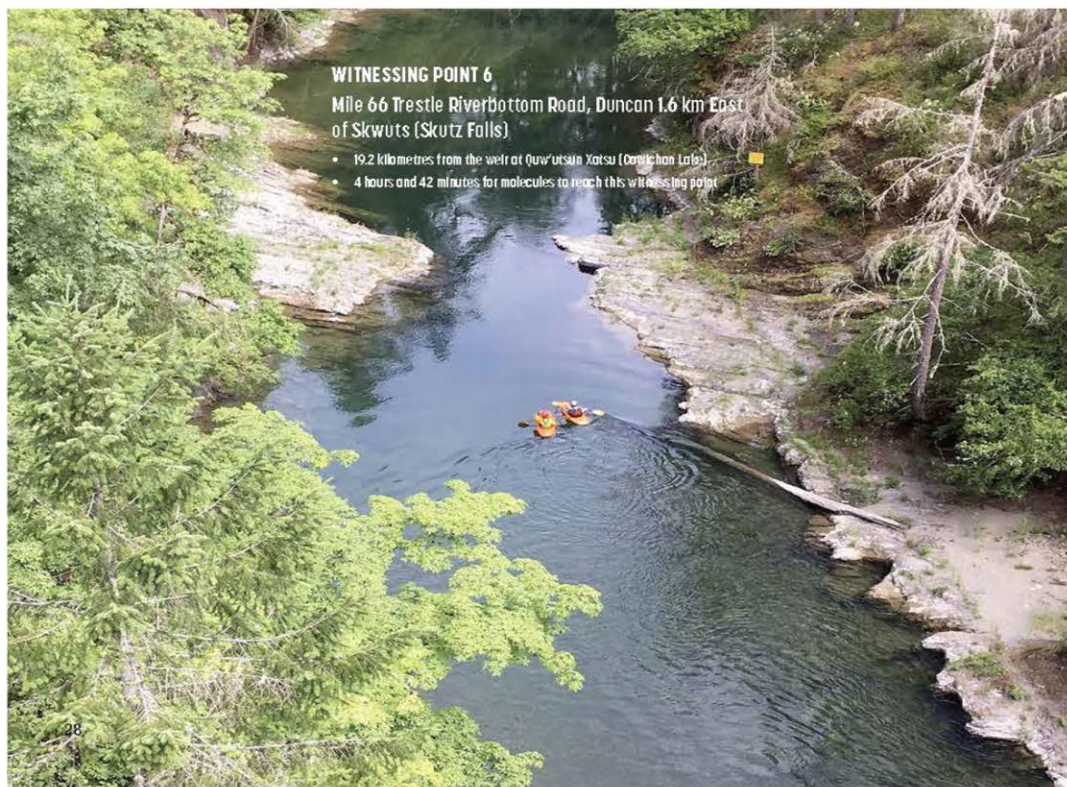
We are looking for a waterfront property owner in Area I (Youbou/Meade Creek) who has yellow flag iris and would like to provide a training site for our project. A good site would have easy access and a soft grassy lawn to work on. It would have a gradual drop-off so that no one needs to go into more than a few feet of water. A few small YFI patches and a large area that is greater than 10 ft by 10 ft would be ideal. The site would be monitored by CLRSS members for up to a year following the initial treatment.

*We are also looking for 15 volunteers who would attend the spring workshop and be willing to help others in the future. The exact date of the workshop is yet to be determined. **Please contact Project Lead, Jean Atkinson (jean.atkinson2024@outlook.com) if you can provide a site or wish to participate in the workshop.***

The Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society

has a seasonal gift idea for you!

Because you know how important our Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Cowichan Heritage River is to our community, why not gift friends and family a copy of ***Witnessing the Water – an authentic relationship***, a 56-page, full colour book that includes a map of the entire river with 14 public access points highlighted for ease. Experience the whole watershed in all its beauty. Includes wise words from 14 river stewards and a personal dedication by David Suzuki!



"Late one night in 1998 my husband Dave, our young family, and I rolled into the drive of our rental cottage after moving across the province. We woke to see and hear the Quw'utsun Sta'lo. I fell in love with it. My heart was home. After all these years, I sense that I am walking in Indigenous footsteps. I hear the land and the water speaking to me...this sacred place, home to Quw'utsun Mustimuhw since time immemorial."

Genevieve Singleton

Books are on sale at the *Kaatza Museum*, the *Chamber of Commerce kiosk in Lake Cowichan* or by contacting judybrayden@shaw.ca (250) 701-0570 to arrange a personal delivery.



Single book \$30 - 5 or more \$25 each