

# Cleanup makes Gorge a favourite dive spot

## Volunteers help bring waterway back to life

Erin Cardone  
*News staff*

As he made his relatively brief descent, diver Kirk Doherty was surprised by the underwater view.

The Gorge was clear and teeming with healthy life.

"It's actually a lot cooler than you would think," said Doherty, co-owner of Beyond Deep Diving and a volunteer for the Gorge Waterway Cleanup.

"I was a little hesitant at first... but there's actually a lot of life down there."

It turned out to be one of Doherty's favourite dives last year.

With about 15 other divers and a team of on-shore volunteers, last year's cleanup pulled approximately two tonnes of garbage from the Gorge, including a motorcycle cut into three parts and a handful of bullets.

The unnatural debris that remains, much of which has been submerged for years, has become a host for marine life such as crabs, small fish, anemones, kelps and nudibranchs. In those cases, the garbage is left underwater, Doherty said.

The diver, who has called Victoria home for 26 years, remembers when mills dumped their industrial refuse into the waterway. Thanks in large part to cleanup efforts, like the Burnside-Gorge Community Association's event on Saturday, the state of the Gorge has profoundly improved. Although, swimming in it can still leave a lingering scent.

Will it ever be a pristine waterway?

"I think it's a good possibility," said Gillian Rowan, Burnside-Gorge's team leader of recreation services.

She said the cleanup, which stretches from south of the Bay Street Bridge to the Tillicum Bridge on both banks, completely rids the shores of garbage. The water itself is never cleaned of all unnatural items.

The garbage is hauled into bins and recyclables are sorted. Non-recyclable items are taken to Hartland landfill.



*submitted photo*

**A diver makes her way out of the Gorge after the 2009 cleanup.**

"(The Gorge) is an integral part of the entire ecosystem, so for us to do something to clean up this area is important, especially for new divers," Doherty said.

"There seems to be a real sense of ownership of the Gorge."

To get involved with this year's cleanup on Saturday (Sept. 19) from 9 a.m. to noon, call 250-388-5251 or meet the groups at Gorge and Tillicum roads, or on Waterfront Crescent near the Selkirk Trestle. Gloves and rubber boots will be provided.

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### Future Shop - Correction Notice

Samsung 5.9 Cu. Ft. Smooth-Top Self-Clean Stainless Range (FER500WX)10140876. Please note that this range advertised on page 11 of the September 3 flyer DOES NOT have a warming drawer, as previously advertised. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.