

At a council meeting on Monday October 5, 2009, Surrey City Council voted against approving an East-West (West-East) connector road that would have severed Bear Creek Park in Surrey. That new road was proposed to alleviate traffic congestion at the nearby busy 88th Avenue and King George Highway intersection. Building this road would have significantly impacted both wildlife and fish habitats (a unique convergence of forest, field and riparian habitats – a rare combination within the boundaries of a major municipality) and destroyed the peaceful ambiance of the park which is cherished by so many residents and visitors. But it would have been only a temporary stopgap measure as a traffic alleviation measure.

We (DSF) intervened in this matter on behalf of a local citizens groups (Save bear Creek Park) and helped to make this a public issue and petitioned directly to the Mayor and Council (go here for a copy of the letter sent to Mayor and Council) to opt for a new way of dealing with traffic other than building more roads and destroying a unique piece of the City's natural environment (the remnants of which are under heavy development pressure).

Prior to our involvement in this issue a small cadre of individuals numbering approximately 15 had gathered to fight this proposed road but there was little public exposure on the issue. One of our biologists, John Werring was contacted by a reporter from the Surrey North Delta Leader newspaper and asked about the issue. This culminated in a lead front page story that brought the issue to the forefront with the public ([http://www.bclocalnews.com/surrey\\_area/surreyleader/news/61243662.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/surrey_area/surreyleader/news/61243662.html)). The efforts of the small collective of individuals began to bear fruit and within a few weeks a petition opposing the project had grown from around 2000 signatures to over 6000 and it drew between 350 – 400 people to a public meeting. All attending were opposed to the project. An overflow crowd also showed up at a council meeting at City Hall on October 5 at which Council was to vote on the issue. Instead of approving the road, council over-whelmingly voted against the project (by a vote of 8-1)and passed a motion calling on City staff consider other viable options to manage transportation issues in the City and ensure broad, meaningful stakeholder consultation is undertaken.

This was a huge victory for the residents of Surrey.

What is significant in our view is that when this proposed road has come up in the past (and it has done so three times), only a handful of citizens would rally to try to stop it with generally less than 200 signing a petition against the project. This time there were scores of people that got involved in spreading the word, hundreds of people that came out to meetings and to City hall and the petition opposing the project numbered over 6000 names.

The David Suzuki Foundation's intervention in this issue figured prominently in the debate.