



## Anchorage Waterways Council

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[www.anchoragecreeks.org](http://www.anchoragecreeks.org)

## Anchorage Waterways Council's Creek Report Card

*"No creek left behind."*

Dear Old Seward/Ocean View and Huffman/O'Malley Community Councils:

The Municipality of Anchorage is about 2,000 mi<sup>2</sup> and has approximately 2,250 miles of creeks and rivers. These creeks and rivers are often listed as some of Anchorage's premier amenities. During the summer of 2012, 70-hardy citizen volunteers surveyed nearly 175 miles of these creeks for issues, problems, access, suggestions for projects and repairs and general comments. These volunteers "graded" the creeks on a variety of criteria, including human impacts, recreational opportunities, natural processes, and aesthetics. Specific findings will be provided to the appropriate agency or organization.

This survey was modeled after the Anchorage Park Foundation's Park Report Card as well as another 50+ citizen creek surveys around the U.S. and a number in other parts of the world. These citizen creek report cards have been encouraged by a number of organizations including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and American Rivers. The Anchorage program was sponsored by the Bullitt Foundation and the USFWS.

Additionally, the Anchorage Waterways Council has volunteer water-quality monitors along our creeks, and is the only organization that routinely monitors the water quality of our creeks.

With this note, the Anchorage Waterways Council (AWC) would like to provide information to you about the "state of the creeks" in your Community Council area. They are one of our urban assets, and **we ALL need to be involved in protecting and enhancing our creeks.**

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Eley, Ph.D.

Creek Report Card Coordinator

Anchorage Waterways Council is a non-profit, membership organization

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Community Council(s): **Old Seward/Oceanview & Huffman/O'Malley**

Creek(s): **Furrow Creek**

Water Quality Monitoring: **Consistently since 2006 at John's Park**

Issues:

- Furrow Creek does not support populations of anadromous fishes (particularly salmon) due to a perched (elevated) culvert at the creek's mouth. If this culvert were fixed, we might again have an anadromous fish population in Furrow Creek.
- John's Park is one of the jewels of Furrow Creek. It is used for a variety of recreation activities and local residents keep the area relatively clean of garbage and pet waste.
- A number of culverts along the creek were plugged with debris, which can enhance flood events and some culverts are perched. The culverts need to be cleaned on a regular basis.
- Several footbridges were found across the creek and these bridges can act as debris dams in flood events and increase the impact of flooding.
- Considerable trash was found in and along the creek, including bicycles, tires, construction materials, pallets, household debris and plastic bags. The area from Johns Road to the Alaska Railroad could benefit from an Oceanview Neighborhood creek cleanup. Cleanup information and supplies can be obtained from AWC.
- Yard debris is being dumped into the creek, lawns are being mowed to the creek's edge, ignoring the 25 foot setback, and trees have been cut down in the setback that were not associated with the September 2012 wind storm.
- The water was generally turbid and sediment filled due to the rainy summer.
- Fecal coliform bacteria (*Escherichia coli*) counts are higher in the summer months on most creeks due to increased runoff from rain events; however, Furrow Creek's counts are higher than most creeks. The sources of fecal coliform bacteria are probably pet waste and leaking septic systems.
- The State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation considers Furrow Creek to be "impaired water" due to high fecal coliform counts, which is a product of urban runoff. (<http://www.dec.alaska.gov/water/wqsar/Docs/2010impairedwaters.pdf>).
- All water quality measurements made by AWC's monitors found Furrow Creek to generally meet the State's water quality. The dissolved oxygen level has several times approached the State's minimum requirement. Dissolved oxygen naturally decreases in the summer due to the physiological activity of fish and other organisms. However, the decomposition of yard wastes dumped into the creek also results in the depletion of oxygen, and **yard wastes should not be dumped** into Furrow Creek.
- The biggest threat to Furrow Creek is most likely from storm water runoff from roads, commercial properties and yards. Storm water runoff, and whatever it carries with it in the way of pollutants, ultimately ends up in our creeks and rivers and **is not routed** through the sewage treatment plant.
- Furrow Creek is a wonderful creek that has not received the attention it deserves. It is important for Old Seward/Oceanview and Huffman/O'Malley neighborhoods' residents along the creek to take responsibility for maintaining the creek's quality.