



## 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 Taku/Campbell, Abbott Loop, Mid-Hillside, Hillside East 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. Little Campbell 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): **Taku/Campbell, Abbott Loop, Mid-Hillside, Hillside East and Huffman/O'Malley**

Creek(s): ***North and South Forks of Little Campbell Creek and Craig Creek***

Water Quality Monitoring: **Mile 0.25 South Fork, Mile 0.25 North Fork, 1.0 Mile North Fork, and 1 mile of the South Fork of the North Fork**

Issues:

- Both the North and South Forks of Little Campbell Creek and Craig Creek were surveyed.
- Little Campbell Creek has received many of the same abuses that other creeks in Anchorage have experienced, but it probably suffers most by many people not recognizing **that it is a creek** and not a ditch. This is because of its small size and being channelized in many locations.
- The water was generally turbid and sediment filled due to the rainy summer. Water levels ranged from average to filled to the top of its banks, particularly after the September 2012 wind and rain storm.
- The headwaters of the North Fork are in Far North Bicentennial Park, while the headwaters of the South Fork and Craig Creek are in Chugach State Park. Much of these creeks run through private lands with little public access.
- The State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation considers Little Campbell 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>). Considerable pet waste was seen along the lower sections of the creeks, and horse manure on the upper sections. Pet waste has been shown to be a significant source of fecal coliform bacteria.
- The dissolved oxygen (DO) level in Little Campbell Creek waters generally averages about 10.5 mg/l, which is good. However on several occasions, Little Campbell Creek has exceeded the State dissolved oxygen requirement and has had a dissolved oxygen level as low as 6.3 mg/l. The State’s minimum DO requirement is 7 mg/l in waters for wildlife and the growth and propagation of fish and other aquatic life. Numerous scientific studies suggest that 4-5 mg/l of DO is the minimum amount that will support a large, diverse fish population. Dissolved oxygen naturally decreases in the summer due to the physiological activity of fish, aquatic life, 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 Little Campbell Creek.
- Many residents on the upper parts of the creek, particularly where the creek runs across private property, have pushed snow and lawn wastes into the creeks.
- Considerable trash was found in and along some sections of the creek, including bicycles, tires, construction materials, pallets, household debris and plastic bags.
- Several footbridges were found across the creek, and these bridges can act as debris dams in flood events and increase the impact of flooding.
- Erosion was noted from people crossing the creek on bicycles and on horseback.
- The South Fork of Little Campbell Creek flows through the Anchorage Zoo, and several residents questioned the impact of the zoo as well as nearby horse stables on water quality. This is an issue that deserves some study.
- Some flooding was noted along much of the creek due to downed trees from the September 2012 wind storm.

- The biggest threat to Little Campbell Creek is most likely from storm water runoff from roads, commercial properties and yards. Both the North and South Forks of Little Campbell Creek flow under the New Seward Highway. 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.
- Another potential threat to Little Campbell Creek, and ultimately, Campbell Creek, is both the North and South Forks flow through a highly industrialized area before the creeks join and enter Campbell Creek. Run off from this industrial area could significantly impact water quality with hydrocarbons and other chemicals that are being used in this area. Again, the runoff is going into the creeks and not through the sewage treatment plant.
- Citizens living along the creek should work with the Municipality of Anchorage and State of Alaska to get Little Campbell Creek off the Impaired Waters List.