



Anchorage Waterways Council

P.O. Box 241774

Anchorage, AK 99524

www.anchoragecreeks.org

Anchorage Waterways Council's Creek Report Card

"No creek left behind."

Dear Northeast and University Community Councils:

The Municipality of Anchorage is about 2,000 mi² 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. South Fork of Chester Creek 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): **Northeast and University**

Creek(s): ***South Fork of Chester Creek***

Water Quality Monitoring: **Consistently since 2005 at the outflow of University Lake and 2002 at the end of East 17th Avenue**

Issues:

- The South Fork of Chester Creek was completely surveyed from the fork of the Middle Fork and the South Fork upstream to the end of East 17th Avenue and the end of Kluane Avenue.
- 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 State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation considers Chester 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 creek, and pet waste has been shown to be a significant source of fecal coliform bacteria.
- University Lake has a high fecal coliform count but appears to be acting as a settling pond for fecal coliform bacteria, and the water leaving the lake has significantly lower fecal coliform bacteria counts. The high count in the lake could present a problem to people or pets using the lake.
- The South Fork of Chester Creek generally has had dissolved oxygen (DO) levels above 9 mg/l which is considered acceptable for good South Fork of Chester Creek waters. However, on several occasions, Chester Creek has closely approached the lower limit for DO. The State’s minimum requirement is 7 mg/l in waters for wildlife and the growth and propagation of the South Fork of Chester Creek and other aquatic life.
- Dissolved oxygen naturally decreases in the summer due to the physiological activity of the South Fork of Chester Creek 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 the South Fork of Chester Creek. A number of residents are dumping yard wastes into the creek
- The South Fork of Chester Creek has recorded pH as low as pH 6.5, which is the State’s minimum requirement for pH. The State standards are a maximum pH of 8.5 for wildlife and the growth and propagation of other aquatic life, and the South Fork of Chester Creek has not exceeded this level.
- Considerable trash was found in and along the creek, including bicycles, tires, construction materials, pallets, household and yard debris, cups, aluminum cans, fast food debris and plastic bags. Additionally, homeless camps appear to be another major source of trash and well-worn trails lead from the homeless camps to the creek.
- 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.
- One of the more troubling discoveries was that vehicles and ORVs are driving across the upper portions of the creek. This causes severe erosion, damages fish habitat, and is against State Law without proper permits. Many residents in this area view the creek as a ditch and not a creek.

- Some flooding was noted along much of the creek due to downed trees from the September 2012 wind storm.
- The biggest threat to South Fork of Chester 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.
- Citizens living along the creek should work with the Municipality of Anchorage and State of Alaska to get the South Fork of Chester Creek off the Impaired Waters List.