



STREAMKEEPERS MODULE 9

Observe, Record and Report

PROJECT APPROVAL

- Not required

TRAINING

- Not necessary

TIME COMMITMENT

- a half day to ongoing

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

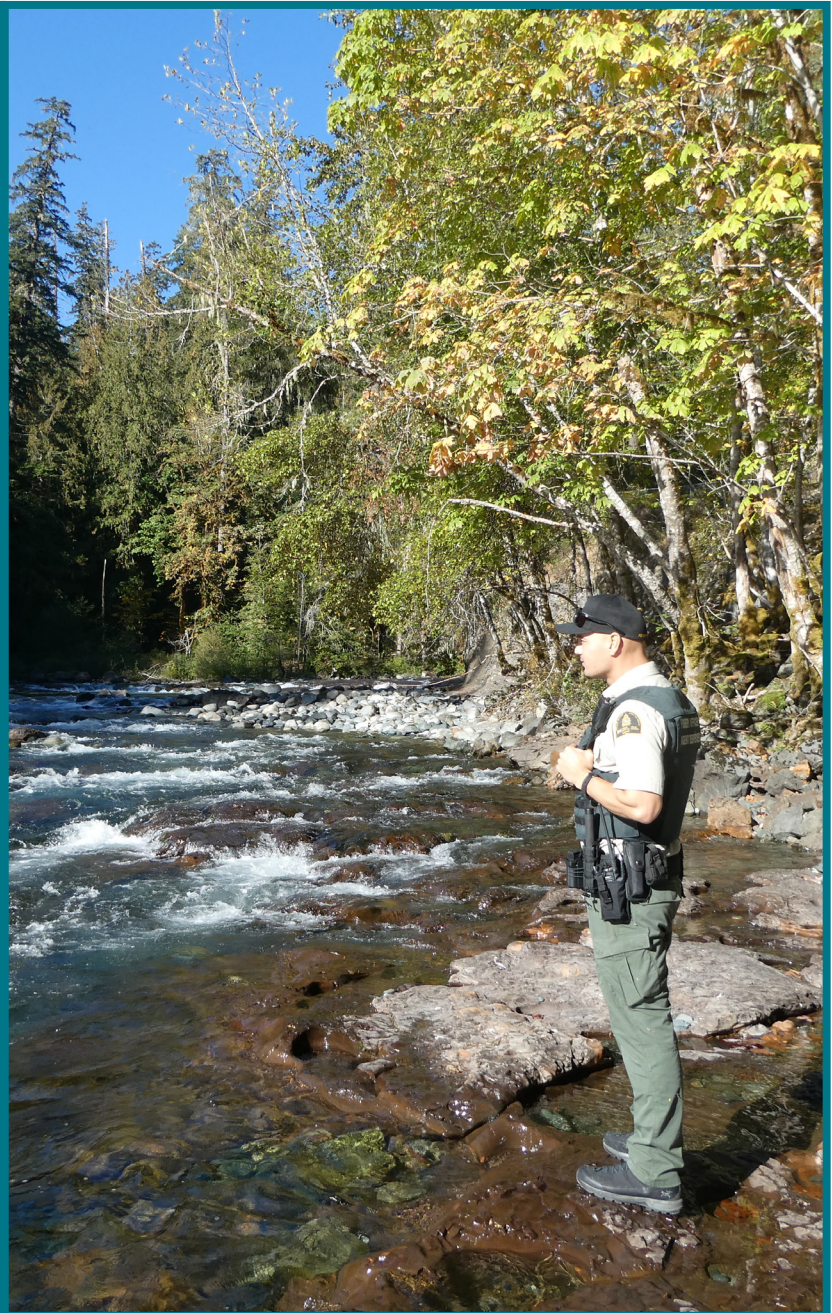
- 2 per team

TIME OF YEAR

- Any time

This module involves making observations, recordings and reporting suspected unlawful activities.

REVISED 2023



Welcome to Streamkeepers

The Streamkeepers Program of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Community Involvement Program provides these training modules. These modules encourage “hands on” environmental activities in watersheds in British Columbia. Volunteer groups, First Nations, schools, and individuals are using this material to monitor and restore local waterways. Your local Fisheries and Oceans Community Advisor can provide more information.

Project Purpose

This module provides guidelines to identify and report unlawful activities that affect fish, wildlife, and aquatic habitat. Your accurate reports will enable enforcement agencies to investigate serious violations. Ultimately, this will help to prevent the loss of habitat and wildlife. Report more serious violations immediately using the hotline telephone numbers. Report non-emergency situations directly to agencies listed in Appendix I.

Introduction

While working on Streamkeepers Module activities or just out for a walk you may come across people destroying habitat or violating fisheries and wildlife regulations. Sometimes you may find only the consequences of past actions. When people disobey the regulations and guidelines that protect our waterways, they do so out of either ignorance or defiance. Enforcement authorities cannot be everywhere, so many situations go unreported until extensive damage has occurred. The Observe Record Report (ORR) program provides a system for reporting evidence to the authorities.

Project Guidance and Approval

You need no formal approval. However, you do need a good understanding of the regulations, guidelines, and local bylaws so you can recognize an offence and assess its seriousness. Your Community Advisor or the agencies listed in Appendix I can provide information and copies of regulations. You also need a tactful and informative manner when you deal with members of the public. Avoid anyone who is committing a criminal act. Even trained and armed Fisheries or Conservation Officers approach these situations with caution. Also, remember that you have no right to trespass on private property or confiscate property.

Level of Effort

You can use ORR if you come across a problem while participating in another Streamkeeper activity, or you may wish to organize formal observation times. You need no formal training and you can commit as much time as you want. If you are asked to be a witness in court proceedings, please consider it seriously. Although it requires extra time and effort, it is a necessary part of our justice system.

Personal Safety

Concern for personal safety is most important. Do not approach anyone who appears to be committing a criminal offence. You may wish to provide information to people who do not seem to know they are harming the environment. Leave if the individual becomes agitated.

Work in pairs, never alone. You are gathering evidence, and corroboration with a partner is useful. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Carry emergency phone numbers for police and ambulance.

Do not attempt to wade fast water or water higher than your knees. Watch out for slippery stream beds, undercut banks, waterfalls and fast flowing areas. Log jams can be unstable, so take care to walk around them. Beware of domestic animals and wildlife.

Health

Do not drink stream water. Although it may look pristine, it can harbour bacteria or parasites that will make you sick. Do not expose cuts or wounds to stream water. Know the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia.

Avoid foul smelling areas, spills of unknown substances, or containers of hazardous or unidentified materials. Contact emergency response agencies or municipal crews for advice on removal of these materials.

Clothing

Dress for the weather and stream conditions. Wear waders with felts when walking in the stream. Wear rain gear or highly visible clothing. Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when working in larger streams.

Time of Year

You can watch for violations at any time of year. Weekends and evenings are prime times for illegal activities, because offenders think no one is on duty.

Material and Equipment

- ORR Report Form (Appendix 2)
- pen, pencil, notebook
- camera (date monitor optional)
- GPS

OPTIONAL but useful:

- video camera
- binoculars
- cell phone or CB radio
- tape recorder

FIRST AID KIT

Carry a first aid kit. When working in isolated areas also carry a survival kit containing at least a lighter, fire starter, candle and flares. Take a cellular phone if you have one.

SAMPLING EQUIPMENT

(for spills or fish kill)

- new ziploc bags
- new glass sample bottles
- surgical gloves
- permanent marker

Procedure

DO NOT approach anyone if you think there is even a remote chance of aggression!

REPORT THE SITUATION TO THE AUTHORITIES.

The most important step is to assess the seriousness of the offence and decide whether to report it. For example, toxic spills, fish kills, or dying fish are emergencies you should report immediately. On the other hand, heavy siltation from runoff may occur normally or because of unacceptable land use practices. No enforcement agency has the resources to respond to every incident. If it is unlikely to be an immediate threat to aquatic life you can take time to investigate further before contacting the authorities. Report only the serious problems.

You can resolve minor problems, such as a neighbour dumping oil into a storm drain, by politely providing information. However, you need to handle more serious problems very carefully, to protect yourself. It is important to remain calm and make detailed observations. The person or persons involved may know they are doing something illegal and may be prepared to respond aggressively. In any situation, you should collect evidence from a safe distance,

Appendix I lists some typical environmental violations and emergency situations, along with telephone numbers of appropriate agencies. Follow the procedures outlined on the form when reporting a serious offence. Often, enforcement staff arrive too late to witness the violation, so your detailed evidence will be valuable.



Observe

Make accurate and detailed observations. They should answer the five W's: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY. For example, if you find dead fish in the river, note the species, number, location, time, and condition of the fish. Try to find out the cause of the kill. If you see a bulldozer in a stream, note the make, colour, and any identifying marks. Confirm details with your partner.

Record

Record your detailed observations using notes, video recordings, and/or photographs. Include the date, time, and specific location. Describe any vehicles, including license numbers, the physical appearance of the offenders, and details of the offence.

You may want to take samples as evidence. Water samples for suspended solids or turbidity analyses are typically safe to handle, as are most fish samples taken to detect cause of death. Never handle materials that can pose a hazard to human health. Ask your Community Advisor for help with sample bottles and procedures.

Take photos while you are still some distance away, and more as you approach. If you wait until you reach the location, you can miss the opportunity for both distance and close-up shots. Take photographs discreetly, so you do not alarm the violator.

Report

1. Fill in ORR reporting card (Appendix 2) or a longer written report, complete with photographs. The length of your report will be based on the seriousness of the violation and the amount of evidence. The information collected here will be needed when calling the ORR Hotline.
2. Call the ORR Hotline 1-800 465-4336. Warn them about any hazardous substances.

If you feel the situation is an emergency call the ORR Hotline or local police immediately.

The following case study illustrates the importance of arriving prepared, remaining calm and polite, making and recording detailed observations, and reporting the incident.

Case Study

How to report a suspected violation

Muddy water has flowed in a nearby stream for the past three weekends in November. This morning a neighbour telephoned at 9:00 a.m. to report the situation. You call your partner and agree to meet at the stream at 10:00 a.m. You pack your camera, sample bottles, note pad, binoculars, and boots.

You take a water sample as you walk upstream and label it with date, time, and location. You plan to take another sample upstream of the disturbance. As you round a curve, you see a large yellow excavator near the creek, with one man operating the machine and another giving directions from the bank. Trees are down, a stretch of the bank is bare, and soil is sloughing into the water. You snap some photos and confer with your partner. You estimate the extent of bank damage, count the number of felled trees, and make notes.

You observe the workers through binoculars. One man is about 5'8", 45 to 50 years old, 190 lbs., with receding dark hair and a heavy mustache. The other is very tall and thin, about 6'4", 38 to 42 years old, with blond hair. As you leave, you notice a lowbed trailer and truck parked near a house. You walk up the road and note the house address and the make and licence number of the truck. You take a long distance photo of the excavator in action and sample the

water upstream of the disturbance. When you return to your car, you and your partner go over the details, make written notes, and record the time.

You call the 24-hour hotline immediately. You will call the appropriate agency later, during regular office hours, to check on progress. Email them a written report. Your photos, water samples, descriptions of people, and estimate of the number of trees cut form the basis for a strong report. Although you can send a report without these details, a completed form will help the agency investigate the situation and may be needed for a successful conviction.



Follow Up

Keep a copy of your report and include the File Number. Follow through on your report. Note the name of the person to whom you make your report. Call back a few days later to check on progress. If no one pursued your report ask why. Perhaps you need to improve your techniques or reports, or send the information to other staff or agencies. Often government agencies are inundated with cases and cannot investigate every report.

Public Relations

You can clean up streams, monitor their condition, and undertake enhancement projects, but you need the support of your community for these projects to succeed. Talk about your project with others whenever and wherever you can, including at schools and public meetings. Place signs at visible projects. Contact newspapers, radio stations and television stations. Module II contains specific information about increasing community awareness and working with the media.

Violation Type	Agency Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage causing harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat and pollution • Salmon fishing violations; illegal gear, over daily limit, fishing in a closed area • Significant sediment discharge • Fish kills 	<p style="text-align: center;">DFO (Federal) 24 hour phone line 1-800-465-4336</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife kills, illegal hunting • Resident freshwater fish angling offences • Illegal dumping of waste/chemicals/etc. • Poor forest practices • Pesticide use without permits • Introduction of aquatic invasive species • Off-Road Vehicles; i.e. causing damage to habitat • Dumping hazardous materials into stream 	<p style="text-align: center;">RAPP (Provincial) 24 hour phone line 1-877-952-7277</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large chemical or oil spills • Extreme erosion, sedimentation, flooding • Hazardous discharges to stream 	<p style="text-align: center;">Environment Canada Provincial Emergency Response 1-800-663-3456</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewer overflows • Dirty or turbid water, minor erosion and sedimentation • Dumping garbage in or near water 	<p style="text-align: center;">Municipal Engineering Department Call 411 for Operator Assistance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report a violation <p>NOTE: This is a 24/7 confidential line Your information will be forwarded to the appropriate authority</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BC Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest fires 	<p style="text-align: center;">Zenith 5555</p>

DFO : Department of Fisheries and Oceans

RAPP : Report All Poachers and Polluters

ORR REPORT FORM

DETAILS OF THE VIOLATION

TYPE OF VIOLATION WITNESSED _____

Did you observe the violation in progress? YES / NO

DATE _____ TIME _____ am/pm

CITY _____ LOCATION _____

Violator's actions / comments _____

DESCRIPTION OF VIOLATOR(S)

How many? ____ NAME(s) (if known) _____

SEX _____ AGE _____ RACE _____ HEIGHT/WEIGHT _____

HAIR (colour/style/facial) _____ CLOTHING _____

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES (tattoos, scars) _____

PECULIARITIES (accent, mannerisms) _____

VEHICLE or VESSEL or EQUIPMENT _____

LICENSE NO. _____ PROV. _____ MAKE _____ MODEL _____

COLOUR and UNUSUAL MARKS _____

OTHER EVIDENCE _____

WITNESSES

NAME(s) _____

PHONE(s) _____

EMAIL(s) _____