



REEL EARTH DAY CHALLENGE

2024 Report



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SUMMARY

In 2024, the fourth annual REEL Earth Day Challenge continued to inspire local film crews, productions, sponsors, and other industry stakeholders to raise funds for Metro Vancouver Regional Parks Foundation, a registered charity that supports the region's parks.

REEL Earth Day remains a special opportunity for B.C. film productions, who frequently film in these regional parks, to give back to the natural spaces where they work, live, and play.

This year, REEL Earth Day raised an impressive \$100,000 to support Metro Vancouver Regional Parks. These funds will help advance five transformational park projects across the region. Since its inception in 2021, the event has raised over \$473,000 to build biodiverse, inclusive park spaces and a more sustainable world.

Industry sponsors once again contributed to the top teams' daily challenge totals, with the production raising the most funds overall recognized as the winner. **In 2024, Team Virgin River stole the spotlight, claiming the top spot on the leaderboard with their unstoppable drive for success and amassing a grand total of \$25,960 raised.**

While the bulk of the project work is scheduled for later in the year, this report will summarize the planned projects and provide updates for the Summer 2024 season.

It's important to note that restoration is not a one-time event but a process that may take years to fully restore the health and resiliency of parklands.



PROJECT 1: INDIGENOUS PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

📍 East Area Regional Parks

Indigenous programming in Metro Vancouver Regional Parks fosters appreciation for Indigenous ways of knowing, connecting park visitors to the land through activities like plant walks, skills stations, and cultural workshops. These programs promote understanding of Indigenous traditions, tools, and medicines while encouraging reflection on Truth and Reconciliation. By creating opportunities for park users to engage with Indigenous culture, these initiatives emphasize the importance of nature in Indigenous heritage and deepen community connections to the land.

🔄 Latest Project Update:

In 2024, the Indigenous Public Programming project reached 1,822 participants across events, registered programs, and open weekends at Campbell Valley and Kanaka Creek Regional Parks. Highlights included a biodiversity field trip led by Kwantlen Elder Karen Gabriel, who shared her plant knowledge with students. Teachers praised the trip as both engaging and educational. Katzie educator Deanna Miller also delivered hands-on workshops featuring traditional practices like soap-making and smudging ceremonies, offering participants a deeper understanding of Indigenous traditions and their resilience. These efforts expanded Indigenous-led programming, supported ongoing favourites, and strengthened relationships with local First Nations.



PROJECT 2: POND CREATION

📍 Campbell Valley Regional Park

The creation of a pond at Rowlatt Farmstead is an essential habitat opportunity for a wide range of plant and animal species, including amphibians, insects, birds, and aquatic plants, contributing to increased biodiversity within the park. The addition of a pond provides opportunities for species that rely on freshwater habitats to thrive, fostering a healthier and more resilient ecosystem.

🔄 Latest Project Update:

In late July, the transformation began! Excavation kicked off, with organic soil repurposed to create lush planting areas and clay used to build a sturdy new trail. Two new culverts were installed to improve water flow into a beautifully designed pond covering 1,760 square metres—over a metre deep at its center! Gentle swales were sculpted to guide water into the pond, while an erosion sock was added to protect its edge. The area came alive with greenery as we planted 922 native species, including 32 towering trees, 460 vibrant shrubs, 150 colourful wildflowers, and 280 water-loving rushes and sedges.

Volunteers from Langley Christian School enthusiastically pitched in, contributing an incredible 116 hours over two joyful planting events. Metro Vancouver staff poured their hearts into the project with 240 hours of planning, planting, and coordination.

The real magic? A generous operator donated weeks of time and machinery to bring this vision to life in August and September. Together, we created a thriving habitat bursting with life and beauty—a space for nature to flourish and for the community to enjoy!





PROJECT 3: FLOODGATE & SALMON RESEARCH

📍 ʕéxətəm Regional Park

This project will investigate how different types of floodgates impact fish passage, particularly salmon, in the Coquitlam River. The research is crucial for understanding and improving the conditions for salmon populations, which play a vital role in ecosystem health as well as informing future floodgate designs to minimize ecological impact while ensuring effective flood control. This innovative study is in partnership with Resilient Waters, UBC Pacific Salmon Lab, kʷikʷəʕəm (Kwkwetlem First Nation), and Metro Vancouver Regional Parks.



🔄 Latest Project Update:

UBC researchers are studying how different floodgate designs affect juvenile coho salmon in ʕéxətəm (Colony Farm) Regional Park. In November 2024, they tagged and released 900 juvenile coho upstream of three types of floodgates. The fish will be recaptured in spring 2025 to track their growth and survival.

In another phase, researchers tag and release 150 juvenile coho weekly for 10 weeks, monitoring their movement using special sensors at each floodgate. The goal is to see how gate operation affects fish passage.

Why It Matters

This research will help improve floodgate designs and operations, making it easier for salmon to migrate and thrive in the Fraser River Watershed.





PROJECT 4: REFORESTATION MAINTENANCE

Lynn Headwaters Regional Park

Reforestation maintenance of newly planted trees in a looper moth impacted area of Lynn Headwaters Regional Park will contribute to the long-term resilience of the ecosystem, ensuring its ability to withstand future disturbances. The maintenance of newly planted trees plays a vital role in preserving the environmental integrity and safety of the region while promoting sustainable forest management practices.

Latest Project Update:

In late August, bird surveys confirmed the site was clear of nests, allowing maintenance work to begin. Over several days, a forestry team trimmed back competing vegetation around planted trees using hand tools to protect them.

With lower-than-expected costs, the plan expanded to address invasive species. In September, a biologist mapped problem areas, and in November, a crew removed large patches of English ivy from steep slopes using a pulley system. The ivy was safely transported for disposal, with short road closures for safety.

In January, erosion control matting was installed to protect the cleared areas, marking significant progress in restoring the site and ensuring the forest's long-term health. By addressing challenges like invasive species early, the project has set the stage for ongoing reforestation maintenance and healthier, more resilient forests, with continued care from Metro Vancouver Regional Parks staff.





PROJECT 5: INDIGENOUS-LED SUMMER CAMPS

📍 Various Regional Parks

“Mishkoopitum” summer camps (hosted by CTS Youth Society) provide a culturally rich and empowering environment where all participants can learn from Indigenous knowledge and practices, fostering a deep connection to heritage, traditions, and the land. Through storytelling, traditional crafts, and land-based learning, these camps offer valuable opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

🔄 Latest Project Update:

This summer marked the third annual Mishkoopitum summer camps, a program initially funded in its first year by the REEL Earth Day Challenge. Three years later, the REEL Earth Day Challenge continues to make these impactful summer camps possible.

In 2024, CTS Youth Society expanded the program to offer sessions at three overnight camp locations: Tynehead, Pacific Spirit, and Capilano River Regional Parks. Additionally, they hosted a staff-only training session to prepare for the camps. Lorelei from 2MétisWomen lead a pre-camp session, teaching staff traditional crafts. This training allowed staff and volunteers to better support youth during Mishkoopitum camps.

Key Program Highlights:

- 72 youth registrations, with a total of 87 attendees.
- Over 40 youth waitlisted, demonstrating strong demand for the program.
- Youth participants enjoyed reconciliation-focused programming, fostering cultural understanding and connection.



PROJECT 6: GRAND FIR TRAIL RESTORATION

Pacific Spirit Regional Park

The Grand Fir trails hold crucial significance for preserving ecological integrity and enhancing visitor experiences. Through strategic unsanctioned trail closures, forest underplanting, and removal of invasive species, this project aims to restore the natural habitat, protect sensitive ecosystems, and promote biodiversity while providing park visitors with safer, more enjoyable recreational opportunities.

Latest Project Update:

Planning for the project began in January 2024 with site mapping and restoration planning. The proposal was shared with the $x^w m \theta k^w \acute{a} y \acute{a} m$ (Musqueam Indian Band) for input, and funding came through the Reel Green Earth Day Challenge in April.

In May, invasive species mapping began, and by October, during EcoBlitz, BCIT volunteers planted over 200 trees and shrubs, closed unsanctioned trails, and removed 16 kg of English ivy. A follow-up event with community volunteers added 114 more trees and shrubs and cleared 59 kg of ivy.

In November, contractors removed 15 cubic metres of English ivy and treated invasive holly and laurel trees with herbicide. The work has made great progress in protecting old-growth trees and forest soils. Metro Vancouver Regional Parks staff will continue monitoring and maintaining the area to ensure long-term success.





PROJECT 7: SEDE FIELD RESTORATION

📍 Aldergrove Regional Park

This restoration holds significant importance for both ecological restoration and community well-being. By removing invasive species like blackberry bushes and preparing the field for replanting with native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, this project contributes to mitigating habitat loss, supporting local wildlife populations, and fostering a healthier environment for both flora and fauna.

🔄 Latest Project Update:

The restoration plan focused on removing blackberry bushes around the field and replacing them with grass, mowed regularly to prevent regrowth. The field itself was cleared, tilled, and planted with 892 native plants, including trees, shrubs, sedges, and ferns. These were grouped over 1,283 m², surrounded by a 2,124 m² wildflower meadow. A mowed trail was added around the field for public enjoyment.

To support plant growth, mulch was placed around the new plants, and a custom grass and wildflower mix was reseeded, protected with straw. More red-osier dogwood and willow stakes will be added in winter 2024/2025 to enhance diversity.

The project included one volunteer work party with the BC Geocachers Association, where 27 volunteers contributed 94.5 hours. Metro Vancouver staff added 33 hours for planning, coordination, planting, and seeding. This effort is creating a beautiful, diverse, and accessible natural space.





PROJECT 8: ECOBLITZ STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

📍 14 Regional Parks

EcoBlitz is an annual environmental stewardship event aimed at restoring, enhancing, and protecting regional parks while engaging volunteers. While a very productive time for environmental stewardship, the event also fosters a sense of community ownership and responsibility towards the preservation of regional parks, empowering individuals to take an active role in environmental conservation.

🔄 Latest Project Update:

This year, 590 volunteers joined 37 EcoBlitz events across 14 regional parks, contributing over 1,479 hours to plant more than 4,900 native trees and shrubs and remove over 4.5 tonnes of invasive plants.

Highlights included:

- Hedgerow planting at Delta Heritage Airpark in Boundary Bay Regional Park
- Wildflower meadow care at Burnaby Lake Regional Park
- Pond and wetland creation at Campbell Valley Regional Park
- Riparian planting at Crippen Regional Park's Lagoon
- Native plantings at Derby Reach, Kanaka Creek, and Tynehead Regional Parks
- Understory restoration in old-growth areas at Pacific Spirit Regional Park

Thanks to these efforts, regional parks are thriving with restored habitats and flourishing ecosystems!

2024 SPONSORS

These sponsors donated \$84,500 in support of the REEL Earth Day Challenge projects. Together they represent the commitment of the motion picture industry to implement sustainable practices, benefit our local community and protect the environmental.

The contributions from these sponsors were pivotal in enabling the REEL Earth Day Challenge to achieve its ambitious goals. Their support underscores the growing awareness and responsibility within the motion picture industry to not only entertain but also to lead by example in sustainability. By prioritizing these values, these sponsors are helping to create a lasting impact on our local ecosystems and inspire others to follow suit.





2024 Challenger Teams

A HUGE thank you to the 2024 Production Teams. You made all of these projects possible. It's the individual team members who make this event so wonderful.

This year, it was Team Virgin River that sailed to the top of the leaderboard, riding the current of their incredible fundraising efforts to a remarkable victory, raising an impressive \$25,960 with sponsor prize top-ups.

Team Virgin River now has their name proudly added to the champions plaque on the REEL Earth Day Chairs along Brunette Fraser Regional Greenway, symbolizing their exceptional contributions to environmental storytelling and inspiring visitors to take action for a sustainable planet.

We'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our production teams. Your generosity has created a blockbuster impact, providing vital support to Metro Vancouver Regional Parks Foundation and the five amazing projects we've funded this year. With your help, we've made a lasting difference for our parks, wildlife, and local communities.



2024 Donors

In addition to the \$84,500 raised in sponsor contributions, we had 123 donors contribute over \$15,500, for a grand total of \$100,00 raised. Thanks to these amazing fundraising efforts, eight transformative park projects will be brought to fruition.



A Lasting Legacy: Tracey Friesen



In memory of Tracey Friesen, a beloved champion of the REEL Earth Day Challenge and a true advocate for sustainability in the film industry. Tracey's leadership, from her roles as a producer and editor to her time as Managing Director of the BC Branch of the Canadian Media Producers Association, left a lasting impact. Her passion for using media to promote environmental change and her commitment to the Canadian film industry's sustainability will be remembered. Tracey's dedication to real, positive change inspires us to carry forward her work. Let's honor her legacy by continuing to collaborate for a better, greener future.

**Thank you for
your generosity.**

**Your continued support for Metro Vancouver
Regional Parks allows us to keep up the good work
(and the good news).**

Questions?

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