

# **The Evolution of DFO Habitat Banking: What we have learned so far in the City of Kitchener**

**Leah Walter, CET, PEng<sup>1</sup>,  
Brad Fairley, MES<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Design & Construction Project Manager, Stormwater Utility, City of Kitchener*

*<sup>2</sup>Stream Restoration Service Leader, Stantec Consulting*

This presentation will build on the information presented at the 2016 conference by Brent Valere from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) called “An Introduction to Proponent-Led Habitat Banking” which showcased the City of Kitchener’s Filsinger Park Re-Naturalization Conservation Project. An update for the Filsinger project will be provided and development of two additional conservation projects will be discussed along with their unique set of challenges and opportunities.

As discussed by DFO in 2016, proponent-led habitat banks are areas where fish habitat has been created, restored or enhanced in advance and then used to generate credits to offset impacts from a proponent’s future projects. Habitat banking offsets are performance based and achieves measurable conservation outcomes based on measureable ecological indicators and clear performance targets. Credits are accrued as targets are met.

The City of Kitchener has one conservation project established for habitat banking which is the Filsinger Park Re-Naturalization Conservation Project which is entering its third and final year of post-construction monitoring. At the end of 2017, the City will hope to have claimed 85% of the maximum credits available for this project.

Furthermore, the City will be finalizing two more conservation projects with the DFO in early 2018 for the Balzer and Idlewood Creek Restoration Projects. In comparison to the Filsinger project, which involved a concrete channel with no fish habitat, these two projects presented unique challenges. For the Balzer project, the challenge involved developing a way to measure the change in fish habitat from pre-construction to post-construction conditions. The Idlewood project involves the removal of two dams to create direct passage for fish from the Grand River. For this project the challenge involved quantifying the increase in fish habitat as a result of dam removal.

## **Leah Walter - Biography**

Leah has been a Design & Construction Project Manager at the City of Kitchener in the Stormwater Utility Group since 2014. A large portion of her work involves the implementation of the City of Kitchener’s Integrated Stormwater Master Plan which includes completing Stormwater Pond Retrofits, Creek Rehabilitation and Low Impact Development projects along with City Operations & Maintenance initiatives. Leah has become passionate about the work she does at the City because of the positive

environmental impact that each completed project has. She has become well versed in navigating the various requirements of the many regulating agencies that have involvement in her projects and has experience working with First Nations and members of the community to ensure each project is a successful one.

### **Brad Fairley - Biography**

After 13 years of stream restoration work in the US, Brad returned to Canada in 2013 to lead Stantec's Stream Restoration Practice in Canada. His team of more than 10 professionals has completed projects in every province and territory in Canada with the exception of PEI and Nunavut. He draws on his experience in the US to help ensure that we learn from the mistakes made in the US while adopting applicable innovations. He is focused on improving the quality of stream restoration work in Canada.