Practical Safety Guidelines for Working In and Around Streams

The Friends of Bowker Creek (FOBCS) is committed to providing a safe and positive environment for volunteers working in and around Bowker Creek. Working near water and on uneven terrain involves inherent risks. Volunteers should exercise good judgment, follow the direction of the activity leader, work within their abilities, and never undertake an activity they consider unsafe. These guidelines are based in part on recommendations of the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation.

1. Before You Start

- Review and be aware of these safety protocols.
- Work in pairs or groups; do not work alone in or immediately beside the stream.
- Identify an activity leader and always tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Check weather, stream flow and site conditions before beginning.
- Check the location of a first-aid kit and have a charged mobile phone readily available.
- Wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather, terrain and activity.
- Use gloves, eye protection, waders or other protective equipment where appropriate.
- Know your own abilities and limitations. Do not undertake a task or use equipment you are not comfortable with.

2. Working In and Around the Stream

- Avoid entering the stream during or shortly after heavy rainfall or flooding.
- Do not wade in fast-flowing water or water deeper than approximately knee height.
- When in doubt, don't enter the stream. Safety always takes priority over completing the activity.
- Watch for slippery rocks, sudden changes in depth, steep or undercut banks, unstable logs and other tripping or falling hazards.
- Use a wading stick or other support where appropriate.
- Cover cuts and open wounds before contact with stream water, and do not drink stream water.
- Take particular care to avoid disturbing sensitive habitat and unstable banks

3. Be Alert to Urban Creek Hazards

- Watch closely for hazardous material such as needles, broken glass, sharp metal, garbage.
- Do not handle unidentified substances or potentially hazardous materials. Make a note of the location and report to your activity leader to coordinate removal.

- Avoid areas with unusual odours, spills or suspected contamination and report concerns to the activity leader.
- Use care when handling tools, rocks, woody debris or other heavy or awkward materials.
- Keep clear of machinery and do not operate unfamiliar equipment.

4. If Conditions Feel Unsafe

- Any volunteer may decline or stop a task they consider unsafe.
- Stop work if stream levels, weather, site conditions or other hazards make the activity unsafe.
- Report injuries, hazards and significant near misses to the activity leader.
- Higher-risk activities involving fast or deeper water, heavy equipment or substantial instream construction require additional planning, supervision and appropriate safety equipment and should not be undertaken as routine volunteer activities.