

Students help protect wetlands in Parksville Qualicum Beach



About 20 people were recently certified as wetlandkeepers with a course in Parksville, taught by Michele Jones, kneeling in front.

— Image Credit: PHOTO SUBMITTED BY FAYE SMITH

- by [Auren Ruvinsky - Parksville Qualicum Beach News](#)
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The importance of wetlands to a healthy environment and water supply is getting more recognition these days, according to at least one local expert.

About 20 people recently attended a wetlandkeepers certification course in Parksville, sponsored by the B.C. Wildlife Federation and the local Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES), said MVIHES Project Coordinator Faye Smith.

The course is offered free to anyone willing to spend two and a half days in the classroom and in the field learning how to identify and map wetland boundaries, produce field maps, survey plants, birds and wildlife and create activities to promote stewardship.

The course was taught by noted biologist, Michele Jones, Smith said.

"The newly certified wetlandkeepers in the area can get their feet wet right away so to speak," Smith said. "They can participate in the research program initiated by the partnership of the RDN's (Regional District of Nanaimo) Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program, the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute and Vancouver Island University to begin ground-truthing and classifying the known wetlands within the RDN, ultimately to assess which wetlands play an integral role in the groundwater system."

Smith quoted Ducks Unlimited Canada that, "Wetlands filter and recharge our freshwater, store greenhouse gases, help prevent flooding and provide habitat for numerous species."

"But surprisingly, wetlands continue to disappear in settled areas of the world," she said, "wetlandkeepers are out to change that attitude."