

## Gas spill heads for creek

By Laura Lavin  
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A heavy smell of gasoline permeated the air in the parking lot of West Corporation on the west side of Keating X Road last week.

A slow slick of the smelly stuff was oozing along the edge of the parking lot toward a storm drain along the western side of the paved lot.

Ian Bruce discovered the oil slick as he was doing some "routine snooping" for Peninsula Streams, a local group dedicated to preserving, protecting and restoring local waterways.

"We don't really know if this is ongoing or a slug of it has come down with the storm last night," said Bruce.

As soon as he discovered the gas which was running into a storm drain that leads to Sandhill Creek, one of the last fish bearing streams on the Peninsula, Bruce contacted the Provincial Emergency Program. When they didn't respond, Bruce contacted the District of Central Saanich who sent out Public Works director Brian Shields, who put absorbent pads around the storm drain.

"This is my frustration - the whole system and the lack of accountability in the system. It's supposed to be about people protecting the environment and in the end it's up to the volunteers to do it," Bruce said.

Don McDonald, director of communication for the Ministry of Environment, said protocol is "for the closest responder to respond" and that is what happened.

"We received a call yesterday at 11 and by 2 we were contacted by public works in the municipality of Saanich who had taken care of it, I'm told, by 2:30 yesterday. Today folks from our ministry, DFO and the city of Saanich are at High Rise to see what the cause was and to prevent further spills," McDonald said.

High Rise Steel is directly west of the property and is thought to have been the source of the gasoline.

"Once you know about [a spill or leachate] it's your duty to do something about it," said Central Saanich councillor Zeb King, who attended the Keating site last week.

"Our first job is to contain it and our second job is to find out the cause and make sure it doesn't happen again," said McDonald. "We responded in less than 24-hours ... Most spills - nine out of 10 - the first response is the fire department ... we manage and contain it as quickly as possible."

West Corporation sent out maintenance personnel to check out the situation, but response from their headquarters in Omaha was noncommittal. A representative from West Corp. responded that they lease the building and parking lot, and had been attempting to contact their landlord to investigate the problem. They were also attempting to contact the neighbouring business.

"West has taken an effort to work with the municipality and have a good environmental image," said King. "They will probably want to do something about it."

"If my frustration is showing through, let it show through," said Bruce. "This is beyond stewardship, this is a pollution problem."

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Laura Lavin photo

**Ian Bruce of Peninsula Streams checks to see how the absorbent pads are soaking up the oily running off a property that runs into a storm drain that leads to Sandhill Creek.**