

For Immediate Release
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Work continues this week to help restore an important salmon and trout river on the east coast of Vancouver Island.

DUNCAN: A crew of 3 head out into the woods Tuesday gathering willow to plant along a man made terrace below a huge glacial sediment bluff on the Cowichan River.

The 800 metre sand and silt bluff near Stoltz pools in Cowichan River Provincial Park was the site of the largest in-stream habitat restoration project ever undertaken on Vancouver Island in the summer of 2006. Silt entering the river from the failing bluff was slowly smothering the river bottom for several kilometers downstream. Chinook salmon egg-to-fry survival below the bluff was less than 6 per cent compared to better than 10 times that rate upstream near Cowichan Lake.

A community partnership known as the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable spearheaded an awareness and fund-raising campaign to launch a Stoltz Bluff remediation plan in late 2004. The river berm and terrace constructed in the summer of 2006, the first phase of the project prevented 6,800 m³ of fine sediment from entering the river in the first winter following its completion.

This is the second year willows will be planted along the protection berm. Phase II of the Stoltz bluff remediation project began early in 2007 with post-winter site surveys, terrace maintenance and bio engineering planting and irrigation. Chris Adams of Adams Environmental Solutions from Victoria, has been contracted by BC's Living Rivers – Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island program to conduct this phase of the bio engineering treatment. James Craig—Project Manager with the BC Conservation Foundation said “Adams is introducing a pilot project where the live willow stakes will be placed into the rock rip rap along the face of the berm.”

Adams added, “It is a time sensitive project that must be carried out now.” He continued, “The technique involves packing dirt in between the rocks, and planting a willow cutting of large enough diameter so that it takes root to prevent the ground from washing out.”

A Cowichan Tribes member is participating in the project to learn about bio engineering. “Bio engineering is a particularly appropriate technique on the Cowichan, with many other sites that could benefit from such treatments in the future,” added Craig.

Cowichan Tribes have been involved from the start of the project. As key members of the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable, they participate in the decision making and delivery of projects.

Biological, geoscience and engineering staff from the Stoltz Bluff project team will help design an effectiveness monitoring plan in 2008. Elements may include water quality, intra-gravel dissolved oxygen, egg-fry survival and other biophysical indicators that can be compared to baseline data collected by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada before the project was built in 2006.



The objective will be to quantitatively assess fish habitat conditions, pre and post construction, to more clearly demonstrate the value of remediation work done to date. It is hoped that some form of effectiveness monitoring will be conducted over several years under a range of weather and river conditions. Water quality and habitat improvements like the Stoltz Bluff project, combined with conservation measures to sustain river flows, are important examples of how BC is adapting to climate change.

Willow planting at Stoltz Bluff is scheduled to begin Wednesday March 19th continuing through Friday.

Funding for Phase II has been provided by Living Rivers – Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island, the Pacific Salmon Commission, Ministry of Transportation and in kind donations of material from TimberWest Forest Corp and Island Timberlands Limited Partnership.

The vision of the Living Rivers - Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island Program is “Healthy watersheds and sustainable fish populations through shared responsibility, stewardship and wise use of water”.

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