

Longview Fibre removes road and culvert for salmon access

By Bill Langmaid

Weeks of rain in December brought a fresh push of native Coho salmon into the Nehalem River. The salmon waited in deep pools until the river rose, then swiftly moved upstream to spawn in smaller tributaries of the Nehalem and Rock Creek. Some earlier arrivals had been spawning on the same gravel beds recently used by Chinook salmon because low river levels made their usual spawning beds inaccessible. One particular Rock Creek tributary, Sanders Creek, was carefully

watched this year for evidence of spawning Coho.

As part of Longview Fibre's commitment to salmon habitat restoration, they retired a road crossing and opened up one mile of spawning and rearing habitat on Sanders Creek, which enters Rock Creek just below the Longview Mainline and drains almost a square mile of forestland. Jim Buxton, a landowner on Sanders Creek, noticed that Coho were present last year, but were blocked from most of the stream by a culvert that was impassible to adult and juvenile

fish. Buxton remembers seeing "fish in the creek each year until about twenty years ago." The watershed council approached Tom Budge, manager of Longview Fibre's Vernonia Tree Farm, and asked him how they could assist in fixing the problem.

In August of 2002, the road and culvert were retired and the creek was reopened for fish passage. The first step was removing the old culvert and road materials, while diverting streamflow around the project. R&M Taylor removed over 500 truckloads of material, and the

stream bank was terraced to mimic a natural shape. The excavator operator did a great job of restoration by placing a quantity of large boulders to accelerate the development of a natural creek in the newly ditched area. They completed the job - and protected the work done - by placing over 200 hay bales to minimize erosion problems.

Surveying the completed work, Buxton said, "...it is one thing to talk about [salmon], but another to put one's money where one's mouth is and actually bear the expense of culvert

removal and road building." Fibre did just that, and the results have been dramatic.

Three surveys during the week of December 15th revealed counts of 13, 19, and 14 Coho salmon above the removed barrier - very positive numbers that demonstrate the quality of the newly available habitat. One goal of the watershed council is to remove fish migration barriers, and results like this show the effectiveness of these actions. It may not seem like many fish, but each of these endangered fish is

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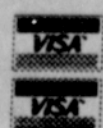
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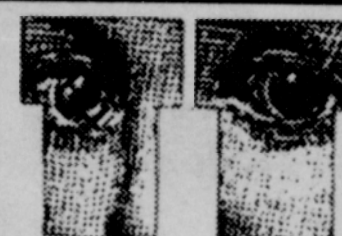
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