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Modifications to a domestic water supply pipeline will help protect valuable summer fish rearing habitat in the Sooke River watershed, about 25 km west of Victoria, BC.

VICTORIA: By tapping into a Capital Regional District (CRD) water main which supplies the Community of Sooke, Charters River, the second largest tributary of the Sooke River will no longer be in danger of drying up during the hot, summer months.

Charters River supports a considerable proportion of the system's trout and salmon production. For decades, an old, leaky water supply pipe from the Sooke Lake Reservoir that ran through the area had inadvertently been keeping Charters River wet. When the CRD announced a pipeline upgrade was to take place, stakeholders realized there was an opportunity to permanently augment the flow into the river.

BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) Project Manager James Craig said, "Without an innovative solution to replace leakage flows from June through October, valuable salmonid habitat in Charters River would have been lost."

With stakeholder support of a DFO proposal in 2009, CRD engineering staff developed an adaptation to a planned upgrade of the supply line that would purposefully supplement stream flow in the summer. The concept uses raw water under high pressure as it arrives at the Sooke Road treatment plant, reduces the pressure and sends it up hill via the old supply lines to Charters reservoir where it is released to the river from a pipe.

The opportunity to improve habitat in Charters River was enthusiastically supported by the Capital Regional District. Mike Hicks, Juan de Fuca Director said as the population of the region continues to grow we are challenged to not only be users of water, but to become guardians of that precious resource. "People are looking to industry and government to do its part and embrace a new water ethic, acting in the interest of humans, but also in the interests of all living things."

The Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society also played a key role advocating an all-inclusive approach to finding a way to preserve and enhance the prime fish habitat.

The project cost about \$100-thousand dollars, far less than it could have been thanks to significant contributions of equipment, parts, and labour in a collaborative undertaking involving many partners. BCCF Project Manager James Craig commends the support from industry. "Epcor was a significant influence and helped rally others to the cause, moving the project forward." said Craig. Stantec engineered the design for the plumbing infrastructure to CRD specifications and Chew Excavating supplied materials at cost. CRD Water Services engineering and technical staff completed the installation of the new infrastructure.

Funding was provided by Living Rivers – Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. Living Rivers – Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island facilitates building partnerships between ENGOs, FNs and government to achieve long term gains that enhance habitats, increase fish abundance, improve fishing opportunities and help mitigate impacts related to climate change.

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