

The newsletter for stewards of salmonids and their habitat • Volume 17 • Number 1 • Spring 2010

Heiltsuk First Nation's Tankeeah River project

Determination, leadership and a lot of uphill work help restore sockeye stocks

by Sandie MacLaurin

The Heiltsuk First Nation is centred at Bella Bella on the central coast. Declines in sockeye returns to local rivers and the difficulty in meeting food fish needs were of great concern. In the early 1990s, Heiltsuk Band Council instructed the Fisheries Program to explore opportunities for sockeye enhancement. Work began to decide on a stock, collect information about it, develop an initial biological strategy and obtain a transplant permit.

They chose a site for a sockeye facility on the Caldwell Peninsula at Emily Bay, 45 minutes northeast by fast boat from Bella Bella. It meets the strict criteria for a water supply related to sockeye salmon enhancement. Sockeye salmon are known to carry the infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus, and there are special protocols that Canada and Alaska follow to prevent an increase in the level of the disease in sockeye and other species. Here, the water supply comes from a hanging lake with no kokanee and no access for Pacific salmon. The hatchery effluent can be discharged into a creek with limited or no salmon spawning, close to saltwater where the disease cannot survive.

It is a good location – but not an easy one! All construction materials had to be taken over by boat, ferried to the shore and packed on foot up to the building site – difficult and backbreaking work. There is no building supply store "just down the road" or gas station en route, so it took a lot of planning to stay on target.

An example: installation of the water intake in the lake meant hand-hauling over 900 feet of two-inch black pipe from sea level up a very steep grade to 100 feet in elevation. This was done twice, as a second line was installed in 2006 to provide a back-

up and allow for increased flows during rearing.

Now completed, Emily Hatchery consists of a wood frame building connected by walkway to a smaller storage and accommodation facility. Inside the hatchery building are six incubation units that obtain aerated water from a long distribution tank. Outside is a platform with four rearing tubs. There is a wooden walkway from the high tide mark at the estuary to the hatchery, and a bridge over the creek to access the lake trail and waterline.

The sockeye stock of the Tankeeah (Tinkey) watershed was selected for enhancement. Throughout history, this lake and river system has been an important source of food fish, evidenced by the remains of an old fish weir at the river mouth.

The DFO management target for sockeye escapement to this river is 5,000. When the Heiltsuk started the enhancement program, the annual counts were below 500 – making it a priority for stock rebuilding efforts. This remote watershed is located in the lower portion of Spiller Channel on the Don Peninsula, approximately 40 minutes northwest of Bella Bella by speedboat. On arrival, staff take a combination of trails and boat rides across lakes and up creeks to access the spawning areas, usually with a backpack of equipment, emergency gear, egg cooler, spawning and sampling supplies and a shotgun for bear protection.

A typical egg take on the main spawning tributary takes three days to complete.



Taking eggs is a three-day project. Photo: Sandie MacLaurin.

One day is spent to set up the egg take site, capture ripe sockeye females and place them in bear-proof holding tubes. The next day the adults are spawned,

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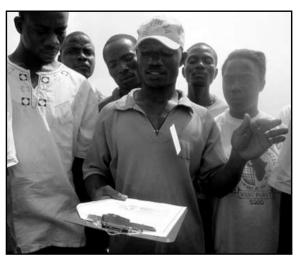
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Shorekeeper lore goes to Africa

by Denis Coupland, Saanich Inlet Protection Society

Bruce MacPhail is with the World Bank's Sustainable Development Division in the Africa Region. He is part of a team developing an inshore coastal and marine resource monitoring toolkit for West African coastal communities. The goal is to support the decentralization of fisheries management by involving local people in monitoring and



Liberian volunteers try out the kit.

managing their community's coastal and fisheries resources.

Last year, looking for models, Bruce visited three North American community-based citizen science survey programs: the Cook Inletkeepers in Alaska; an oystermonitoring program in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland; and the Saanich Inlet Protection Society's Shorekeeping Program.

Drawing on their experience, Bruce worked with the World Bank team to develop a toolkit. The premise is that people with little or no scientific background, and sometimes limited formal education, can be trained in basic physical surveying techniques, species identification and recording. Surveys would be made at the same sites over a period of years, and the results scientifically analysed. Consistent with the countries' decentralization initiatives, communities would then be better able to monitor and manage their coastal and marine resources, and assess their health, which is declining because of over-exploitation and climate change factors.

Last December, a successful field test of the draft toolkit took place in two communities in Liberia, in partnership with the Liberian Bureau of National Fisheries. Participants performed eight monitoring procedures including a shoreline survey. They laid out a 20 metre rope to mark off an area and noted the various debris items found on the beach, repeating the process on a monthly basis. The pilot testing was highly successful and welcomed by both community members and the Bureau of National Fisheries as an important endeavour.

The World Bank is now finalizing the toolkit for publication and distribution. Community monitoring initiatives are expected to be extended to Ghana and a number of other West African countries.

Our Shorekeepers do exceptionally valuable work for their own communities. Now they can take pride in knowing that their experience can help people half a world away.

Heiltsuk Sockeye Project

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biological samples and data collected and gametes transported to Emily Hatchery, where fertilization and egg plant is completed. On the third day, the biological samples are packaged and sent to the Pacific Biological Station diagnostics lab. Data is reviewed to ensure it is complete and correct. Equipment is disinfected, garbage is dealt with and boats are cleaned, fuelled and readied for the next project.

Some long days are put in that end with travelling home in the dark on boats with no warm cozy cabin. Combine that with the often inclement weather in late September through October and you get a picture of the commitment and resolve it takes just to show up for work!

In 2001, the project began to get encouraging results, and when Mike Reid took the helm in 2003 its success was assured. His consistent leadership, experience in construction and the fishing industry and handson approach has resulted in constant improvements, with increasing survivals and production capacity. Mike shares his success with his team, long-time staff members Randy Carpenter and Walter Campbell, and others who have contributed over the vears. The Heiltsuk Band Council backs the fisheries program when they ask band members to refrain from fishing at the inlet to the Tankeeah to allow more adults into the system and onto the spawning grounds.

Is it working? The numbers tell the story. Since 2001, the Tankeeah sockeye/Emily Hatchery team has consistently met egg targets (from 25,000 to 100,000), cared for the eggs and alevins over the winter and released healthy sockeye fry back to Tankeeah Lake in the spring. The fry are surviving and contributing to increases in adult abundance and returns. In the spring of 2004, all the fry from the 2003 brood had their adipose fins removed prior to release. In 2006 and 2007, the number of enhanced fish returning was impressive, providing the crew with a clear measure of success. Over the past few years, adult abundance has risen to a level where the fisheries program could endorse limited food fish catches and still get over 3,000 fish to the spawning grounds. With their goal for the Tankeeah sockeye so close at hand, the crew is in the enviable position of considering when to turn their enhancement efforts to another salmon stock in need. Good for them and good for the salmon!



Award-winning volunteers overcome a catastrophic landslide...

by David Judson

Up to 150,000 chum fry were released into Vancouver Island's Stocking Creek in 2009. The eggs were harvested jointly by four First Nations groups – the Lyackson, Penelakut, Chemainus and Halalt – and members of the Ladysmith Sportsmen's Club and Chemainus Rod and Gun Club. The fry were raised at the Bush Creek Hatchery.

This success comes after a catastrophe in December of 2007. A huge slide carried debris into the creek, filling the entire creek bed. The force carried garbage, metal and rocks up the sides of the creek, wiping out plants and trees. Official estimates were that 400 truckloads worth of material were deposited in the stream.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District, the local disaster coordinator, DFO and the Ministry of the Environment were appalled at the situation and agreed that it was an emerging environmental concern. However, other than free dumping offered by the Regional District, no funds were available for cleanup. It was up to volunteers to do the job.

Fish eggs in the stream further down meant machines could not go in. Logs were hand picked out of the mess. A boat was brought into the estuary to float out some of the debris. Other loads had to be packed out overland.

With a grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF), a geotechnical engineer was hired to assist in plans for bank stabilization. The assessment cost more than the grant, but the clubs helped out.

The work began in the July/August 2008 fisheries window. With the help of volunteers and donations of time, supplies and equipment from Gregson Excavating, Surfwood Supply, Can-Am Recycling, Brant Tractor, Kevin Godkin Trucking, Ray Peters Trucking, Porter's Dairy, Bedrock Concrete, John Beggs Contracting,

Dave Stalker Excavating, Coastal Trucking, Tim Horton's and Dave Clough Consulting, the project removed 55,000 pounds of metal and 10,000 pounds of garbage, cleaned up tree debris and placed lock blocks to stabilize the banks. The estimated value of the work was in excess of \$30,000.

The stream banks were seeded with grass, and spawning beds enhanced. Water flows were restored almost to what they were before the slide. In the fall of 2008, over 500 fish returned to the stream and spawned in the newly restored gravel beds and pools.

This year the PSF provided an additional grant of \$12,500 to continue with the project. The TD Bank Friends of the Environment has given \$5,000, as has the BC Wildlife Federation Dream Adventure Lottery. As well, Ladysmith Sportmen's Club and Chemainus Rod and Gun Club have helped fund this project.

The members of both clubs were proud to hear the news that they were awarded the Louis Lemieux Award for the Best Conservation





Photos taken before and after the restoration work. What a difference!

Project for 2008. This recognition of their hard work and success is much appreciated by the volunteers who met the challenge at Stocking Creek.

...and vandalism, as well

by Courtney McKinnon

To say the volunteers of the Ladysmith Sportsmen's Club were disappointed to find their aluminum holding tank in flames in early January would be an understatement. Why would anyone destroy a \$5,000 tank for less than \$100 of scrap metal?

Four months later, they are almost ready to return to business as usual.

Club president David Judson says it has been a long and expensive recovery. The refurbished tank now rests on a concrete foundation to prevent vandals from prying it up. A new laser alarm system is in place.

"The downfall of the hatchery is its location. We're so isolated out here," Judson explained.

While the act of vandalism saddens Judson, he is concerned that people hear about the positive side of the story as well as the negative. The community's willingness to help with the recovery gives him hope.

Volunteers work to raise and release fish, put on events to educate the community about fish and their ecosystems, and restore streams in the area. In return they get plenty of community support, which keeps Judson and the other participants optimistic about the future of the hatchery despite recent setbacks.

To help with restoration projects or the hatchery, contact the Ladysmith Sportsmen's Club at 250-245-3690 or email judsonboys@shaw.ca.





Streamkeepers VIP Insurance Policy

- for Pacific Streamkeepers Federation members

We are pleased to again provide insurance coverage for our members. However, there are new challenges and changes as well.

Only groups that are **registered societies** can be covered under the Streamkeepers VIP Insurance Policy.

A new form, **Guardian Risk Prop 8**, is the application for your Directors and Officers Insurance. It informs the insurance company of the assets that you are wishing to insure.

To obtain the insurance, you must submit your **PSkF membership application, Streamkeepers VIP form, Guardian Risk Prop 8, membership list, and a cheque**. To ensure a speedy process, please take care that all forms are filled out completely and legibly. Keep a copy for your records. Please call ZoAnn at 604-986-5059 or 1-800-723-7753 if you have questions.

We can submit new policy requests on May 31 and again on July 31. All policies end April 15, 2011.

Our 2010/2011 application package was emailed to our membership and many from the community involvement directory. If you did not receive it, download it at http://www.pskf.ca/program/insurance.html

To assist groups who may wish to become societies, we have posted helpful tips on our message board. Go to www.pskf.ca and click on the message board button at the top right. Scroll to April 8 postings.

Squamish herring project

For several years, Squamish Streamkeepers have been experimenting with a variety of methods and materials to attract spawning herring back to the Squamish estuary (see Stream Talk, spring 2006 and spring 2008). Herring coordinator Jonn Matsen sends this update:

Herring spawned moderately in 2010 at Squamish on February 2 and heavily on February 22 on the training dyke boulders, the south end of Squamish Terminals bladderwrack, probably under the east dock and especially under the west dock. The first spawning heavily covered the west dock experimental wrappings over the inner 38 concrete pilings. The second respawned the six-foot-high wrappings and all the way up the rest of the concrete pilings – even onto the concrete ceiling of the dock. This occurred on all 800-or-so concrete pilings to some degree.

It appears that as the herring run increases the fish are likely to spawn more heavily under the west dock on pilings made of concrete, which we suspect kills their eggs. Results so far show they prefer to spawn on our wrapping material rather than on bare concrete. However, we're not getting 100 per cent survival on wrapped concrete pilings as we did on the wrapped wood/creosote pilings under the east dock. Perhaps chemicals from the concrete are leaking through the wrapping, perhaps there's still oil residue from the recent oil spill or perhaps the organic matter on the pilings is decomposing under the wrappings and is affecting the eggs.

The logical next step is to try wrapping a few pilings with an impermeable inner plastic layer, and to cover that with an outer layer of our regular wrapping. This should determine if noxious chemicals seeping through the spawning material are the problem. If this works, the next goal will be to start wrapping the 20 or so rows of concrete pilings. The materials, with Velcro sewn in, will cost about \$950 per row of 38 pilings. A punt, preferably two, will be necessary to apply the materials during the lowest tides between May and August.



Streamkeepers at Work

These bright reflective safety vests are available for purchase through the Streamkeepers Federation.

The vest on the left is quilted, has a zipper, and costs \$15. The lightweight vest on the right has a Velcro closure and costs \$10.

"We were out marking storm drains on the weekend and got a lot of attention due to the vest. A great investment!" – Jane, Byrne Creek Streamkeepers Society

"...wearing these safety vests as you conduct spawner surveys has decreased the number of concerned calls to the municipality. Residents can now easily identify you as Streamkeepers walking along the streams in their backyards." – Steve, West Vancouver municipal staff

Order forms are at www.pskf.ca/saw.

Ugly Bug Ball IV

Mark your calendars!
We are confirmed for
June 12, 2010, once again
at the A Rocha site in
Surrey. Watch the Pacific
Streamkeepers Federation
website for details –
www.pskf.ca.



Eelgrass explorations

by Diane Sampson

Salmon fry weave through dense blades of eelgrass after leaving their birth stream, using the vibrant habitat for protection and food until they are ready to migrate.

Herring spawn on the blades in March, providing food for birds, marine mammals and other fish. Plainfin midshipmen lay their eggs on nearby rocks, drawing eagles, herons and gulls. Hundreds of invertebrates, fish and other species use these beds during their lives, many for laying eggs and raising young.

Eelgrass protects the shoreline from erosion, and is a wildlife corridor between adjacent habitats. Local and migrating birds, such as Brant geese, come to rest and feed.

The blades of eelgrass capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and provide nutrients for salmon, other fish, birds and invertebrates.

Eelgrass beds are found from Victoria to Haida Gwaii, along the BC mainland and on both sides of Vancouver Island.

Helping to protect them are local coastal groups that have joined the Seagrass Conservation Working Group. The organization provides advice, networking, education and access to resources.

Twenty-seven coastal community groups have been trained to map beds. The extent of a bed can change as a result of land practices and water use. Monitoring by local stewards keeps communities informed.



You never know who you will meet in an eelgrass bed. This kelp crab feels right at home.

One member, the Nile Creek Enhancement Society, is recording the species in local beds. This will indicate food availability for salmon fry and provide details on the ecosystem.

Other groups who would like to participate may contact the Seagrass Conservation Working Group at www.stewardshipcentre.bc.ca/ eelgrass/index.html

SHREP is born

by Mark Johnson

In 2006, Chilliwack School District Education Centre teacher Bryan Foster was looking for a salmon project for his students. He toured the old decommissioned Elk Creek water supply distribution site. There he met Skowkale Fish Hatchery manager Harold Archie. They discussed the difficulty of establishing a new salmon enhancement facility at Elk Creek. They soon realized the many benefits of partnering, and the Skowkale Hatchery Revitalization and Education Project (SHREP) was born.

Skowkale First Nation has been operating a hatchery for over 25 years (Harold has been there for almost all of them) and has always welcomed students to learn about salmon and the salmon culture process. Through Bryan's contacts, they were thinking the facility could become a more well-developed fisheries education centre. DFO offered assistance by community advisor Joe Kambeitz, Cultus Lake fisheries technician Dave Barnes (now retired) and the staff at Chilliwack River Hatchery, especially Ron Valer.

The hatchery was in need of an upgrade The group dedicated itself to the task of fundraising and construction. Bryan applied his skills to really ramp up the drive. Working closely with Skowkale band manager Lydia Archie, the group was able to secure enough funds to move forward with hatchery reconstruction.

Thanks to strong support Hatchery from the Pacific Salmon manager Foundation, the project has made it most of the way home. Many local businesses have kicked in with in-kind support, and students and work experience crews have put in hours of labour. The SHREP team and teachers from the Sto:lo Alternative, A'mut, and the Education Centre completed a long-term plan with funding from the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program. This map for the future will help the project reach its full potential and become a real community treasure.



Thanks to strong support Hatchery manager Harold Archie, Lieutenant Governor Steven Point, band manager Lydia Archie and chief Willy Hall, with a young hatchery fan.

Each year, SHREP hosts an Earth Day celebration for the community complete with guest dignitaries and First Nation ceremonies. Stakeholders offer interactive education displays, a live fish release, and a barbeque lunch. In 2008, Lieutenant Governor Steven Point, a Skowkale First Nation elder, helped open the new hatchery building. Skowkale Hatchery Revitalization and Education Project is blessed with elements of the old and the new, all blending together to make a powerful fisheries educational force within the community.



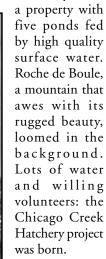
One of the truly great ones

A tribute to long-time volunteer Tim Lemky

by Brenda Donas

I met Tim on a cool fall day back in 1993. He was a logger, a very brusque logger. He and his friend, Jack Williams, wanted to raise some fish.

Tim and his wife Gladys had



Tim drove the logging

truck and did carpentry, plumbing, mechanical work and welding. He'd get a vision in his head and then turn around and build it. He liked to sing. Tim could sing all the old country and western songs and he sounded pretty good, too!

Tim also did "healing touch" therapy. At the end of a session, you got a big hug that said, "I care about you and I want you to be well." I would have paid the \$25 just for the hug!

Tim helped put together the first hatchery building based on an old trailer. He built the incubation building, laid the water lines and drain lines and hooked up the troughs. Tim designed the Mission Creek Coho Assessment Fence, built it, installed it and ran it. Into his mid-70s Tim worked right along with the younger volunteers, raking the fence, sorting the coho and transporting some of them upstream of a barrier.

In 2004, the original hatchery building burned down. With the

insurance, nothing daunted, Tim and the volunteers of the Chicago Creek Community Environmental Enhancement Society constructed a new one. It housed a rearing area, a shop and a meeting room with small kitchen and washroom. Many a lively meeting was held there.

When Tim had a heart attack in 2008, it brought home the fact that he really was in his 70s and maybe it was time for him to slow down just a little. But nothing could dampen Tim's enthusiasm for the hatchery and fence projects.

The day we put the Mission Creek Coho Fence into the creek in September 2009 was a tough day for Tim. He wasn't feeling that great so he had to supervise while we installed the fence. To have a guy who is used to doing things almost single-handedly have to sit and watch was upsetting to us all.

During the 2009 fence season, we noticed he was getting short of breath and tired very quickly. On February 10, 2010, Tim Lemky passed away. I received a tearful message from one of

the volunteers with the news we had all been dreading.

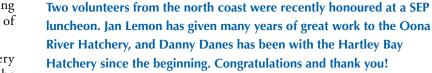
I have been thinking about Tim a lot. I have been remembering all the things he taught me – the basic carpentry and plumbing tips, the lessons on all the ways you can use a winch (and some ways you shouldn't!), what to do if you are out in the bush and a cougar starts to follow you, how to use your truck when you don't have a backhoe and how to get your truck unstuck when you are in mud up to your axles. No matter what Tim decided to tackle, he gave it his all. He gave so much to his family, his friends and to the salmon resource.

I started to think that Tim's passing had left a BIG hole in my heart. When I remembered that mischievous twinkle in his eye and the unlimited repertoire of stories he loved to tell, I realized that Tim had *filled* my heart.

Sadly, we say good-bye to Tim but he very definitely lives on in our hearts, always.



30 years!





Project Highlight

A way to increase coho returns? Matching release time with food availability

The BC Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences, in partnership with DFO's Quinsam River Hatchery and the A-tlegay Fisheries Society, is studying the food needs of juvenile coho salmon and the availability of these food sources as the young fish enter the marine environment. This research will help determine optimal release times for juvenile coho that will improve early survival and ultimately increase returns to the hatchery.

by Paula Galloway

Availability of food following hatchery release is crucial to the early survival of salmon. Without better knowledge about food sources or the ability to monitor and correlate early food availability with stock return data, good early survival of juvenile salmon as they enter the marine environment is hard to achieve.

The goal of the Discovery Passage Plankton Monitoring Project is to develop a simple tool to help monitor marine productivity and use this information to adjust enhanced coho releases from Fisheries and Oceans Canada hatcheries.

The monitoring program is being used to assess the following:

- 1) Is poor survival due to a mismatch of smolt release timing and food availability in the near-shore marine environment?
- 2) Is good survival correlated to improved food quality and availability at the time of smolt release?
- 3) Can chlorophyll a (a pigment in phytoplankton) be used as an indicator of increasing



Using a beach seine to collect juvenile coho in the near-shore environment.

phytoplankton levels followed by increasing zooplankton levels in Discovery Passage?

To address these questions, chlorophylla levels are compared to phytoplankton levels and zooplankton composition (type/species) and abundance. This

information is compared to the stomach contents of juvenile coho salmon to correlate what the fish are eating compared to what is available in the near-shore marine environment.

This pilot project is in its fourth of five years and to date the data collected has confirmed that there is no predictability to the productivity cycles and food availability and, therefore, monitoring is the best way to ensure that juvenile coho get maximum benefit from well-timed release dates. Other interesting and important findings include:

- Juvenile coho stomach content analysis indicates that wild and hatchery reared salmon may prefer different zooplankton upon immediate arrival in the marine environment.
- Fish released into plankton blooms in 2007 and 2008 had higher survivals and returns than those released outside of bloom times. Staggered release dates may help ensure that some populations are released when food sources are good.



Close-up of crab larvae (zoea), and copepods, preferred food items for juvenile fish during early seawater migration.

 Chlorophyll a values are an effective way to monitor phytoplankton levels; however, these values are not a predictor of ensuing zooplankton levels and composition.

While the project has focused on coho out-migrating from two neighbouring rivers, this study's findings can be applied to the specific needs of other Pacific salmon species and to rivers throughout BC.

Initially funded by the BC Ministry of Environment, the ongoing project relies on community funding. In 2010, the following organizations contributed funding to this project: Campbell River Salmon Foundation, Aboriginal Fisheries Society, Positive Aquaculture Awareness, Marine Harvest Canada, City of Campbell River, and Campbell River and District Fishing Guides Association. Their generous support is much appreciated.

To learn more about the Discovery Passage Plankton Monitoring Project and to view 2007-2009 project reports, go to www.cahs-bc.ca.





www.magicalthread.com

The Yukon Conservation Society has created Magical Thread, an interactive website at which students can read or listen to a story, do activities, and collect "wisdom pieces". Along the way they meet creatures, including salmon, and learn something about their lives. Easy, medium, and hard activity levels correspond to Grades 1, 2 and 3/4 respectively, and there is information linking the stories to curricula in BC and Yukon.



The Bug Book, A Guide to the Benthic Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Families of California
Published by the Friends of Deer Creek. Illustrated by Christine Elder

This new book contains illustrations and descriptions of 76 aquatic insect families within nine orders, plus 12 non-insect taxa. In addition, information on taxonomy, ecology and pollution tolerance are included. Designed for scientists as well as volunteer water quality monitors who are interested in identifying the taxa in their streams as a way to gauge the health of the aquatic ecosystem. View ordering and price information at http://www.friendsofdeercreek.org/bugbook.html

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StreamTalk

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Postal No. 40063830

Re-Inventing Rainwater Management:

A Strategy to Protect Health & Restore Nature in the Capital Region Gordon McGuire et al., University of Victoria, Environmental Law Clinic

This report, submitted to the Capital Regional District in Victoria on behalf of the Veins of Life Watershed Society, documents the toxic effects associated with an "obsolete 19th century stormwater management system," and makes recommendations for its thorough overhaul. Download it at http://www.elc.uvic.ca/press/documents/stormwater-report-FINAL.pdf

"Speaking for Salmon" workshop summary

Watershed Watch Salmon Society and the Centre for Coastal Studies at Simon Fraser University have made available the conveners' report from the February 2009 workshop, "Reconciling the conservation of wild salmon and the production of enhanced salmon under Canada's Wild Pacific Salmon Policy." The discussion centred on how the artificial enhancement of salmon relates to Canada's commitment to protect and conserve wild salmon and wild salmon diversity. Download the report at http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/science.