

[Home](#) > [Restoration Project](#) > [Weir to Stabilize Water Levels in Beloved Bog](#)



Weir to Stabilize Water Levels in Beloved Bog - Joint project is meant to reverse adverse impacts of development

Saanich News - September 11, 2002 – Vern Faulkner

Work began Monday on a project that aims to stabilize water levels in Rithet's Bog to improve conditions for plants and animals that have been adversely impacted by the construction of new homes.

New development that began to dot the landscape a decade ago introduced asphalt and roofing materials to the area that, in turn, resulted in huge fluctuations in water levels in the bog, particularly during the rainy seasons.

"With all the urban settlement, we get peak levels in the spring," explains Ducks Unlimited biologist Dan Buffett. After spring, the water levels rapidly decrease until they reach a season low in mid-summer. The dramatic fluctuations in water levels has the ecosystem severely stressed out the impact on several species of plants in the bog has been serious.

The creation of a new weir will help minimize changes in water levels so that they are similar to what they were before the housing boom.

"Right now, (the bog) is starting to dry in May or June," Buffett observes. "By holding the water level, we'll keep it to where it starts to dry out in July to August."

The Conservation Data Centre, which tracks various species of plants and animals in the province, has "red listed" as extremely threatened a variety of pine and a type of sphagnum moss that grows near the bog.

The moss doesn't grow in many habitats, save for the moist, acidic conditions found in bogs. The weir will ensure the bog remains moist for longer periods, thus providing the moss with a habitat that more closely resembles the environment it needs to survive.

He is quick to note that while there are two plant species in critical condition, others that are found in the ecosystem are also growing rarer, as their populations succumb to recent stresses.

Restoring the habitat to its original state will do much to address the threat to the entire ecosystem, Buffett asserts.

"Rithet's is a unique bog. It's one of the last remaining bog areas in Victoria," he observes.

Sharon Hartwell, president of the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society (RBCS), is delighted with the project.

The bog, she points out, "has been under a lot of stress, with the lowering of the water tables and all the disruption that's taken place over the years."

The work that begins this week was initiated at the request of Hartwell's society – which is effectively a neighbourhood management group tasked with advising Saanich on the condition of the wetlands.

Once a long-term plan was created, the RBCS encouraged Ducks Unlimited, Saanich, and the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to get on board.

The federal body's participation was imperative because the outflow from Rithet's Bog feeds directly into the Colquitz River, a salmon-bearing stream.

"The work should benefit both the bog and the Colquitz River itself," Hartwell enthuses.

This summer, a temporary weir tested the merits of raising the water level.

The new weir "will keep the water level higher in the bog, but it will also stop flash flooding downstream to Colquitz Creek," Hartwell observes.

As part of the project, willow will be removed from the wetlands to help improve the habitat for wild birds. Willow is considered an invasive species.

Funding for the project – some \$55,000 – was derived from three sources: the municipality of Saanich provided \$20,000 and the remainder came from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and Ducks Unlimited.

Gerald Fleming is the coordinator of design and development for Saanich Parks. He says the joint effort is the first of its kind in Greater Victoria.

“I know that there’s a few partnerships like this in the Lower Mainland, but it’s unique here,” Fleming explains.

[Top of Page](#)