

Project to Protect Riparian Habitat in French Creek Receives Grant Funding

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is pleased to work in partnership with the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society (FFCCS) on the French Creek Community Park Riparian Protection and Enhancement Project. The project, once completed, will protect and enhance the mature tree canopy and creek banks in French Creek Community Park from potential damage caused by pedestrian use. A Pacific Salmon Foundation Grant of \$25,798, awarded to FFCCS, and funds from the Electoral Area G Community Parks budget will be used to complete the project. The RDN also plans to improve the park entrance and parking area off Lee Road West.

Coho salmon, sea-run cutthroat trout and steelhead populations are in severe decline due, in part, to changes in riparian habitat along river corridors. The riparian habitat in the park is one of the less disturbed areas of French Creek and needs to be conserved. The mature tree canopy helps keep the water at temperatures needed for fish survival, and the extensive tree root system provides bank stability, reducing erosion and the build-up of sediment in the creek. To ensure the park remains a safe habitat for fish and other species, the project includes:

- A 320-metre split-rail fence along the trail to remind trail users to stay on the footpath to avoid damaging tree roots and compacting the soil which can inhibit the absorption of rainwater for vegetation.
- The planting of native, shade tolerant shrubs to discourage park visitors from climbing over the fence and native, drought-tolerant saplings to provide bank stability and secure future tree canopy shade as mature trees die naturally.
- Signs to educate park visitors about the importance of French Creek for native fish species and the value of mature and old-growth trees in moderating the effects of climate change on riparian habitats.

The project will begin this summer with the installation of the fencing followed by planting in fall 2024.

To learn about parks in the RDN, visit rdn.bc.ca/parks-services. For information on the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society, visit ffccs.ca.

Quotes

“This project is a great example of how the Regional District of Nanaimo works in collaboration with local organizations and funding partners to help preserve our region’s important natural habitats. We are grateful to the Pacific Salmon Foundation for their generous funding support and to the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society volunteers for their valuable time and expertise to spearhead and help execute this project alongside the RDN.”

Lehann Wallace, Electoral Area G Director

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“We are pleased to be partnering with the Regional District of Nanaimo on this important project. It is significant when local governments support the conservation of critical habitats because it spreads hope through the community about the future of our natural world. The collaboration with the RDN and funding from the Pacific Salmon Foundation will result in a robust and sustainable riparian area for the protection of the creek bank and fish habitat. Visitors to the park will learn about the fish species and habitat in French Creek and how to protect them before it is too late.

Sandy Robinson, Director, Friends of French Creek Conservation Society

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