

Restoring runs on the Englishman River

For over 20 years, active and retired commercial fishermen have been working to restore salmon runs to the Englishman River. Through partnerships, the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation (TBSEF) and the Community Fisheries Development Centre (CFDC) have worked with DFO, Pacific Salmon Foundation, and the Regional

District of Nanaimo in building and maintaining a 6-km spawning and rearing channel off the main stem of the Englishman River. The Clay Young Channel now supports over 45 per cent of the total coho production of the Englishman River watershed.

Every fall the fishermen collect approximately 1,000,000 eyed pink eggs from the Quinsam River Hatchery and place them in incubation trays and upwelling boxes in the channel and hatchery. Every spring the fry are released and start their long journey to the sea. The pinks are also a key food source for coho smolts and steelhead in the channel and river.

The project has given commercial fishermen a real opportunity to enhance the resource that they rely upon for a living. As well as rebuilding coho and pink stocks, the fishermen also feed and release 200,000 chinook fry every year. The salmon runs are improving each year, and the fishermen feel very proud of that. Even though there is no directed commercial fishery on any of these stocks, fishermen realize that it is important to rebuild the weaker stocks to maintain access to the larger runs. TBSEF and CFDC hope to recruit some younger commercial fishermen in coming years to continue the commercial industry's involvement in rebuilding the resource for the future.

Bob Grant, TBSEF



Look out, Englishman River! Here come 800,000 feisty pink fry! Photo: Amy Rolfe.

