



Spring News from the Tsolum River Restoration Society June 2022

Thanks to our members and donors. Your donations help us to continue our restoration work and our outreach and education



Outreach and Education

We were happy to resume our school outreach programs this spring. We took our watershed model presentations to Valley View, Huband, Queneesh and NIDES (Navigate) schools to over 630 students. We also worked with Cumberland Elementary offering wetland exploration field trips to five classes, and Towhee Creek juvenile salmon monitoring with the homeschoolers group. We took part in the River Never Sleeps Festival and in Isfeld's Ecofair.



Fish Outmigration Spring 2022

Our season of monitoring the fish as they leave the river for the ocean (called out-migration) has just wrapped up. This involves putting a floating trap with a rotating drum (RST) that passively traps fish that swim down the river. The caught fish are temporarily held in tanks on the trap that volunteers check daily to count and identify the fish before releasing them. Our rough estimate of pink fry leaving the river was over 1,000,000. In order to come up with an out-migration estimate we need to calculate our trap efficiency. This is done by marking or temporarily dyeing fry and then releasing them upstream of the trap to see what portion of the fish moving down river the trap catches.

This year we had over 21 volunteers who dedicated their time in often rainy weather to check the trap and record the data. Thanks also to the landowners along the lower river who gave us permission to access the trap by crossing their land.



Dedicated volunteers identify and count the fish captured in the RST (Rotary Screw Trap)



Tsolum Wetland Interest Group

In our second year, the Tsolum Wetland Interest Group (TWIG) is a branch of TRRS that formed to monitor and learn more about wetlands in the Tsolum watershed with a focus on amphibians and fish. TWIG engages with local neighbours in areas where there are significantly important wetlands. We monitor populations of western toads and would like to better understand which wetlands they use for breeding, and also migration routes of the toadlets when they leave their birth ponds.

We are looking for volunteers to help with the toadlet migration monitoring so we can reduce mortalities when toadlets cross roadways. We are also looking for volunteers to help with our bullfrog program which involves building traps and learning more about control methods. To learn more or to get involved, send an email to tsolumriver@shaw.ca.

Projects- Portuguese Creek

We have received funding from Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) Community program to improve the habitat and water quality in an important instream pond in Portuguese Creek just upstream from Merville Road. The pond is an important summer refuge area for rearing coho salmon. However, water quality deteriorates over the course of the summer with low levels of oxygen exacerbated by the high volume of organics in the pond. We are going to use a vacuum truck to remove some of the silt that has been filling up the pond. This work will take place in mid August.

We also want to connect with farmers who have livestock who access Portuguese Creek to see if we can partner to provide and install restrictive fencing. Livestock with unlimited access to Portuguese Creek have the potential to trample and damage stream banks, eat emerging riparian vegetation, and contaminate the water with their manure. We are trying to get a sense of the scale of this situation in the Portuguese Creek watershed and see if we can come up with collaborative solutions. Our goal is to create an inventory of fencing needs and good candidate areas for fencing that will provide the maximum benefit to the creek. Then we will seek funding to help install the fencing which is likely to happen in summer of 2023. If you are involved in agriculture and have livestock that enter Portuguese Creek and are interested in support to restrict their access please give us a call at 250-897-4670.

Willow staking

We are planning on doing our fifth season of live willow staking this coming September in the lower Tsolum River. After this season is over we will be close to finishing our highest priority areas for re-planting. Thanks to Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) for their continued three year financial support for this work. Sign up if you want to help for any of our volunteer activities at tsolumriver.org on the volunteer drop down tab.

K'omoks First Nations Puntledge Campground flood protection

TRRS assisted the K'omoks Fisheries Guardians and KFN band with obtaining a grant to build a set back dyke on their property to stop the ongoing and potential flood damage. Part of the work will involve removing a portion of a huge gravel bar that is constricting water flow and using the material to raise up the land set back from the edge of the river. This higher area will prevent the river from charting a new course overland and eroding a new channel. It is a preventative measure that was identified in our 2016 Recovery Plan as a high priority project. Cory Frank from the KFN Fisheries Guardian Program is managing and coordinating the project.



Watershed Health Assessment Gearing up Volunteers are needed

Under the guidance and direction of local fisheries biologist Derek Tripp, TRRS is embarking on collecting information on the status of the Tsolum watershed. We are looking for dedicated volunteers for this initiative that will involve visiting different areas of the watershed to collect data on a range of parameters. We are going to be offering training sessions to interested volunteers starting in July. Training sessions will take 1.5 days, and then we are hoping trained individuals will be able to offer at least 7 days or more of their time to collect the data over the next year. This fieldwork will be physically challenging and will also provide good technical training to anyone who is interested in fisheries biology.



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