

Butchart Gardens steps up for fishway project

[Jeff Bell](#) / Times Colonist

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The Tod Creek fishway is about 30 metres long and functions like a ladder with "step pools" to help the fish around a dam.
Photograph By Submitted

The Butchart Gardens has funded a fishway around the Tod Creek dam, located just outside its borders, with the hope it could restore the creek as a salmon-spawning waterway within five years.

"The time just became right to undertake it," said general manager Dave Cowen. "We certainly have an interest in the environment around us."

The dam, which dates to the early 1900s, is owned by Butchart Gardens. It is inside what is now Gowlland Tod Provincial Park. The gardens use the dam in its irrigation, but it originally supplied water to cement works at Tod Inlet.

The fishway is designed to help coho salmon and cutthroat trout as they travel upstream to spawn.

"As a dam owner, there certainly is a requirement to be aware of fish passage and be proactive about that," Cowen said.

"So we wanted to work with Peninsula Streams and ensure that the right kind of fish channel for that particular location was installed."

He said it is a "significant" project but declined to comment on the cost. The credit should go to the Peninsula Streams Society, Cowen said. "They've put a lot of work over the years into that stream and other good works. We're happy to enable them."

Biologist Ian Bruce, the society's executive co-ordinator, said the fishway is about 30 metres long and functions like a ladder with "step pools" at progressive heights to help the fish through the dam area.

"They had to excavate out the area then bring boulders in to build this channel," he said.

The creek system, which includes Maltby, Prospect and Durrance lakes, has had substantial populations of seagoing fish in the past, Bruce said.

Construction of the fishway took about five weeks, with the design and engineering done by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants.

Bruce praised the Butchart Gardens for stepping in and making the project happen. The Pacific Salmon Foundation was also a supporter, he said.

Butchart Gardens has taken on a project to help adjacent ocean areas, as well, with the purchase of a “pump-out boat,” Cowen said. The boat collects sewage from vessels, rather than it being dumped in the water. Its cost was not disclosed.

“We visit people who are coming and going, either transients or liveaboards, in Brentwood Bay and Saanich Inlet,” he said. “We pump out their holding tanks and then with the co-operation of B.C. Ferries, we unload our boat at the Brentwood Bay ferry dock.”

The service was previously provided by the Saanich Inlet Protection Society, but its vessel was aging and in need of repair.

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