

Cancellation of Mermaid Creek Salt Marsh Restoration Project in Roberts Bay Roberts Bay, Sidney British Columbia,

February 27, 2024 — The Mermaid Creek Salt Marsh Restoration project, aimed at revitalising the delicate salt marsh ecosystem of Roberts Bay, has been regrettably cancelled due to complications surrounding riparian property rights infringement. The decision comes after extensive deliberation and consultation with the project's funders, partners, stakeholders, and regulators.

The Mermaid Creek Salt Marsh Restoration initiative, which sought to enhance biodiversity, improve water quality, and mitigate coastal erosion in Roberts Bay, faced unforeseen challenges related to land use and property boundaries along the bay. Despite meticulous planning and dedicated efforts to adhere to legal and environmental regulations, the project encountered hurdles regarding riparian property rights that proved to be unresolvable in the timeline required for the funding organisations.

In light of these developments, the project partners have made the difficult decision to cancel the initiative. While this outcome is disappointing, we will continue to monitor the marsh and associated habitats and improve education and understanding of this provincially red-listed ecosystem. We will also continue to explore options for future conservation and restoration work in this urban watershed. "We deeply regret the need to cancel the Mermaid Creek Salt Marsh Restoration project," said Kyle Armstrong, Executive Director at Peninsula Streams Society. "While we remain committed to environmental stewardship and conservation efforts in Roberts Bay and beyond, we recognize the significance of respecting property rights and adhering to legal frameworks governing land use. We extend our gratitude to our partners, stakeholders, funders, and community members who supported this initiative."

Cancelling the Mermaid Creek Salt Marsh Restoration project underscores the complexities inherent in balancing environmental conservation goals with legal considerations and property rights, especially in urban areas. Moving forward, stakeholders remain dedicated to exploring alternative avenues for preserving and enhancing the ecological integrity of Roberts Bay while respecting the rights of property owners. The West Coast Environmental Law Centre is examining how the jurisdictional complexity of the coast impacts the future of coastal restoration work in British Columbia despite the policy intentions in the upcoming Coastal Marine Strategy.

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