

CRD Parks' decision kills Craigflower salmon

By Wayne Zaccarelli, Times Colonist November 28, 2010

Re: "Fears for cliff jumpers keep taps turned off at Thetis Lake," Nov. 20.

The lack of water in Craigflower Creek has been identified as the primary limiting factor for salmonid species production in studies over the years.

The lack of a guaranteed minimum flow, in combination with higher than optimal, and sometimes lethal, water temperatures during the critical June 15 to Oct. 15 period results in the mortality of thousands of coho salmon fry. These fry must rear in the creek watershed through the summer before migrating to the ocean the following spring.

The Esquimalt Anglers' Association constructed and monitors a fish-counting fence on the creek. Water height, temperature and other parameters are recorded daily along with fish enumeration during the fall spawning migration.

Coho returns approaching 1,000 fish have been recorded in the best year. Normal returns are 200 to 300 fish. This year only 30 coho have been counted and released, despite the fact coho returns to rivers like Goldstream and Shawnigan Creek have been excellent.

We can conclude this low return of spawning coho is the result of lethal low stream flow during the summer period when these fish were rearing in Craigflower Creek. These annual low water flows are threatening the efforts of the association and our partners to return the watershed's salmonid population to sustainable, historic levels.

The CRD's mandate in the Thetis Lake Park Management Plan is to work with the Environment Ministry "to monitor water levels, maintain water control structures and release water from Thetis Lake to enhance conditions for salmon and trout in the Craigflower Creek system." It should act on the commitment.

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President

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