

Latest segment of Penticton Creek restoration project now complete

(Penticton, BC – May 29, 2024) – Work on the latest segment designed to restore Penticton Creek to its natural habitat is now complete.

"This is an important milestone in this project that serves two functions: creating a more resilient community and improving the fish habitat," said Mayor Julius Bloomfield. "It's also a great example of the power of partnerships, working with the Penticton Indian Band, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, community groups and the federal and provincial government to move the project from dream to reality."

This restoration project is part of the City's ongoing efforts to remove the "channelized" concrete banks that were installed during the 1950s. By naturalizing the creek, it will support native fish species and other wildlife and assist in mitigating future flood risk.

"This project not only rejuvenates Penticton Creek but also renews our commitment to preserving our natural environment for future generations. Like a salmon swimming upstream, we continue to navigate challenges together to support the health and vitality of our precious fish habitats," said Penticton Indian Band Chief Greg Gabriel. "Working with the City and other partners, we've taken a significant step towards restoring the ecological balance of our watershed."

The work involved in-creek work, removing the concrete liner to replace with rocks, pebbles and boulders to support the banks and encourage natural fish spawning areas. In addition, landscaping and lighting upgrades have been made to surrounding walkways and greenspaces, also with substantial traffic safety improvements implemented throughout the neighbourhood.

"Restoring Penticton Creek will help protect the community from any future floods while also helping preserve the local fish and wildlife habitats," said the Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities. "We will continue working to preserve our waterways and ecosystems for future generations."

Construction on this section began in 2022. Crews were limited to conduct work in the creek during a designated "fish window" each summer, which is the timeframe when native fish are least likely to be in the water and impacted by construction.

“The climate crisis is increasing the risk of flooding and other disasters, and we must work together to protect people and communities,” said Bowinn Ma, B.C. Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. “Completion of the latest segment of the Penticton Creek restoration project provides improved flood safety measures, while supporting the continued health of native fish populations and ecosystems.”

The value of the latest restoration work including design and construction was \$4.5 million. Grant funding was provided by provincial and federal agencies through the Province’s Community Emergency Preparedness Fund, Structural Flood Mitigation stream (\$750k) and the Investing In Canada Infrastructure Program, Adaption, Resilience, and Disaster Mitigation sub-stream (\$3.75M).

The City intends to continue restoration further downstream from the latest work, focusing further efforts to remove the concrete channelized portion of the creek that runs between Ellis Street and Front Street. This section spans 350 metres through the downtown area and is a significant barrier to fish passage. Restoration design is planned to begin this year with construction phased beginning in 2026.

By the numbers

- Work was conducted on a 320-metre section of the creek.
- 1,010 cubic metres of topsoil placed along the creek banks to support planting native plant species, shrubs and assorted plants.
- 10,985 tonnes of rock and boulders placed throughout the creek.
- 2,550 tonnes of concrete liner and 6,540 cubic metres of earthwork removed to shape the creek.
- 1,030 tonnes of spawning gravel added to this section of creek.

A summary of the project to naturalize Penticton Creek and preserve the flood protection qualities can be found at penticton.ca/restore-penticton-creek.

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