

Farmland Riparian Interface Stewardship Program (FRISP)

Program Coordinator Lee Hesketh

FRISP Update

FRISP has had an active year, working hard to meet requests for engagement and consultation on environmental issues with individual landowners, Government and stewardship organizations. FRISP encourages participation in the joint planning of habitat restoration and agriculture land use activities between landowners, resource management agencies, and various community groups. FRISP promotes the adoption of Beneficial Management Practices for riparian/salmon habitat improvement and sustainability. Proper land management requires that landowners understand riparian functions and the negative impact that riparian mismanagement can have on an agriculture operation, fisheries, and the general watershed health. Working directly with the landowners to supply technical services or workable suggestions, has enabled FRISP to provide the reasoning behind the regulations, which brings about understanding, cooperation and stewardship through actions.

The FRISP program has been active throughout the Province over the past 12 months, monitoring completed works, consulting on management issues involving environmental concerns and completing restoration projects. Funding for FRISP was provided through partnerships with the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program [FSWP \$60,000], Fisheries & Oceans Canada [DFO \$25,000], and a grant provided by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2008 [\$29,000]. FRISP also contracted with DFO.

For the 2011 field season, FRISP has recently received confirmation that its funding request for \$50,000 was accepted by the FSWP. Additional funding partnerships are being pursued with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and other organizations. FRISP's reputation for being a little program that solves big issues will hopefully find support as there is always more work to be done.

Organizations, Working Committees and Workshops attended

Riparian Management Framework for Agriculture Technical Working Group

The Committee is looking at moving a process that would apply to the agriculture sector around riparian use forward as a valuable tool to restore and protect riparian corridors effectively. Dave Polster presented on recent use of RAR in surveying species at risk at the coast and the negative feedback that is happening due to setback demands.

Okanagan Water Board Stewardship Committee

Hesketh currently sits with the OWBSC and attends meetings when topics of discussion relate to agriculture and environmental issues. Hesketh has assisted Twin

Lakes Development Committee and Central Okanagan Regional District with funding applications in February's call for funding proposals.

Duteau Creek Watershed Technical Committee

Hesketh sits with the working group to find solutions in maintaining water quality in the Duteau Creek Watershed. This committee is hosted by the Regional District of the North Okanagan. Duteau Creek has high Chinook and Coho values but has been impacted by water extraction and riparian impacts. FRISP is providing dialogue on livestock management in the watershed with range permit holders and the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resources, as well as discussing flow management with Renee Clarke, Water Quality Manager.

Wilsey Dam Fish Passage Committee

The Fish Passage Committee has been established to look at restoring fish passage for Chinook and Coho salmon to the upper Shuswap River. Restoring passage would open an additional 45 km of habitat to the salmon. Flood management practices are influenced by operations of the dam by BC Hydro which impacts both agriculture and fisheries values up- and down-stream. Hesketh is involved in this process in both a personal and an advisory roll through FRISP.

Agroforestry Technical Committee

Hesketh has donated his personal time to sit on the Agroforestry Technical Committee which promotes sustainable land management and environmental protection of riparian corridors. The promotion of grass and trees as well as other production management systems promotes opportunities for diversifying farm and ranch incomes.

Modernization of the Water Act

Hesketh was asked to sit with the Private Sector Technical Committee working with Ministry of Environment to engage on the Water Act. FRISP has had dialogue with Fisheries and Oceans Canada habitat and enforcement staff on issues around the present version of the Water Act and water rights for irrigation and livestock watering. FRISP has been called upon to find an effective interpretation to prevent conflicts and the need to implement the Fisheries Act by DFO.

Presentations or processes engaged by FRISP

Collaborative Water Governance Workshop, Penticton

FRISP was invited to the workshop hosted by the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy [NRTEE] and the Okanagan Water Board in February. The workshop provided some insight into the current direction that Environment Canada policies are heading. It also allowed participants to dialogue on a wide variety of issues related to the environment and it's relevance to the Okanagan. A great deal of focus was on water related issues dealing with quality and quantity.

Weather, Climate and Risk Prediction Workshop, Kelowna

The workshop was hosted by Environment Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in February. Hesketh presented on behalf of FRISP and BCCA to stress the importance that resource agencies work with the agriculture sector in providing accurate weather forecasting information. The ability to forecast drought conditions is a valuable tool for all resource users as it allows for preventative actions.

Provincial Ranching Task Force

The Task Force was formed by the Provincial Government in 2008 to address major issues facing the ranching sector. FRISP was requested to provide a talk in late January on Ecological Goods and Services, providing an opportunity to promote the green economy and concepts such as Salmon Safe or Think Salmon.

BC Water Symposium

Hesketh attended and presented at the Kelowna Symposium hosted by UBC Okanagan. It was a great opportunity to dialogue with a broad cross section of interests including Ministry of Environment and First Nations, and to emphasize the need for food security and the ecological values provided by the ranching sector.

BC Interior Flow Management Study

FRISP contracted with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to complete flow monitoring studies on a number of tributaries throughout the southern interior impacted by heavy irrigation withdrawal. Information collected will help in better understanding the dynamics at play with the individual systems.

Environmental Farm Plan

With the conclusion of the EFP in 2009, FRISP had to wait until mid May 2010 before Phase 2 of the program became available. Need for the program has decreased due to the economic downturn of the agriculture sector and a decline in uptake.

Promotional Material and Education

Livestock, Drinking Water and Fish Brochure

The brochure was completed and published by FRISP in early March with official unveiling at the B.C. Interior Stewardship Conference. The brochure has been well received with requests now coming in from organizations wanting the PDF for reference on their web sites and brochures for handing out. Only 200 copies were printed to allow for feedback, possible editing changes and any additions.

Horsefly River - Horsefly Roundtable & Land Conservancy

Hesketh mentored the Horsefly River Roundtable's Technical Committee to facilitate the development of projects benefitting Chinook and Coho in the Horsefly River. In recent years there has been a change in landownership within the watershed and there may be an opportunity to explore projects on land previously 'unavailable' to the group.

Cariboo – Chilcotin areas - Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society

Hesketh has met and discussed preliminary ideas with the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society Technical Committee members about possible activities for spring 2011. A field day with the Regional Cattlemen's Association, EFP representative and FRISP is being considered.

Hesketh also met with Ted van der Gulik from the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss the implementation of the Water Act in the Chimney Creek area. Ministry of Agriculture is looking at hosting irrigation workshops with local agriculture interests in spring /summer 2011.

DFO Habitat Management staff has raised the issue of needing to improve screening on irrigation intakes on ranches located on the Chilcotin River. The contractor is seeking to establish relationships with ranchers and to facilitate the development of some demonstration projects.

Dialogue has also taken place with Winter Feeding Systems along Riparian Meadows Cariboo Region Technical Committee. FRISP will stay engaged with process working on feed ground protocols that will prevent issues with source protection.

Upper Mud (Chilako) River

FRISP is supporting DFO and other NGO partners in seeking new and current agricultural land owner partners to complete riparian and stream bank restoration projects in this watershed.

FRISP has also been requested to provide technical input to a ranch in the Upper watershed to address a major bed-loading issue. Permitting, prescriptions and cost estimations are required to apply to the Environmental Farm Plan and regulatory agencies.

Plans are being made for a field session later in the spring involving landowners and representation from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Local acting CA, Shona Smith, and DFO, Guy Scharf, have expressed interest in attending.

Murray Creek - Murray Creek Enhancement Society

FRISP is coordinating with the Murray Creek Enhancement Society to provide Livestock, Fish and Drinking Water Presentations to local cattlemen's groups in the Prince George/Vanderhoof area.

Narcosli Creek, Quesnel River Bouchie Lake

FRISP is developing a drainage management plan for three landowners living along a small creek that has in the past made major negative impacts on the Quesnel River.

This project has received a great deal of interest due to the litigation between the landowners and the impacts that poor land management decisions have made on a this small tributary. Coordinating work with Pete Spencer and George Powell from the Environmental Farm Plan, a drainage management plan is being developed to

resolve the present conflict and put the focus on restoring natural function to the creek.

Whitevalley Community Resource Center

Tom Minor has completed extensive flow monitoring on the Bessette Watershed Creek systems over the past 10 years. Tom is working with individual landowners to establish water use protocols to increase efficiency and overall cooperation in maintaining ecological flows in these valuable tributaries without regulatory involvement.

Minor and Hesketh have also been engaged with both the Okanagan and Shuswap Nations in completing watershed planning and restoration upgrades in support of BC Hydro's Bridge Coastal Restoration Program in the Upper and Middle Shuswap Watershed. Three projects have been identified in the local watersheds that have potential of being completed as habitat restoration through partnering with Environmental Farm Plan, North Okanagan Regional District, local community interests and the landowners.

Minor and Lee have been engaging landowners on the local tributaries in order to prepare them for possible changes with the Water Act and enforcement of the Fisheries Act this summer if dry conditions persist. Each tributary is over allocated for irrigation withdrawals making compliance even more complicated as the demand for water continues to increase.

Flow monitoring studies completed by Tom Minor over the past 2 summers show that despite improved irrigation management on the tributaries by water rights holders, conditions continue to challenge salmon survival.

Lower Shuswap Stewardship Society

Minor has been working with Lower Shuswap Watershed Society on behalf of FRISP in completing some major projects in the lower watershed. In a meeting with the society, it was felt that a field day would be encouraged in early spring to hopefully engage the stewardship behaviour of some individuals and change their current management practices.

Kamloops and Area

Two projects are currently in development in Kamloops to protect 250 meters of foreshore and enhance the riparian corridor, and to upgrade an 800 meter long site on the North Thompson River.

Sinmax Creek

FRISP has completed one project and initiated another project on the higher end of Sinmax Creek through a partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Environmental Farm Plan.

Cherry Ridge Management Society

The Society is working to complete upgrades to the tributaries on the Upper Shuswap River. FRISP assisted in completing a restoration along a major cutback on Cherry Creek and the Upper Shuswap River

Salmon River Watershed Society and Bonaparte Watershed Society

Mike Wallis has been supported by FRISP funding for public and landowner engagement as well as technical support for project development and implementation for both Watershed Societies. Current efforts are to complete monitoring and evaluation of these projects as well as dialogue with landowners and community.

Slocan Streamkeeper

Minor completed two habitat restoration projects in the Slocan Valley involving the Columbia Basin Trust, Environmental Farm Plan, and local landowners. FRISP's engagement in assisting a small watershed organization to work with the agriculture and forest industry sector has resulted in dramatic changes in local attitudes and beliefs.

Coldstream Creek Water Quality Study

A water quality study conducted by the Ministry of Environment has shown high levels of bacteria and nitrates in Coldstream Creek. Hesketh was requested to participate in finding solutions as it was perceived that the contamination was from agricultural sources. Follow up studies showed that 50% was from wildlife sources, with another 20% coming from domestic dogs. 30% was identified as livestock (over half from equine and the rest from other types of livestock). FRISP rehabilitated sections of Coldstream Creek in the spring of 2010, as well as looked at opportunities to reduce runoff from feedgrounds.

Program Coordinator: Lee Hesketh

Phone: (250) 547-6586

Email: silverhillsranch@aol.com