

COUGAR CREEK STREAMKEEPERS PRESS RELEASE
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BEAVER POND LEVELLER INSTALLED IN LOWER COUGAR CREEK

Delta Nature Reserve walkers and cyclists may notice a strange new contraption in Lower Cougar Creek, alongside the trail between the 2nd and 3rd Boardwalk entrances. It's called a *beaver pond leveller*, and it's a joint pilot project of Cougar Creek Streamkeepers, Burns Bog Conservation Society, City of Delta, EBB Consulting and Pacific Salmon Foundation.

Hopefully the beavers *won't* notice the contraption, but will happily continue building their dam, unaware that the leveller limits their pond to a safe height that doesn't flood the trail.



Volunteers and Delta staff install pond leveller through beaver dam in Lower Cougar Creek. Photo Carol Pan
More photos at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xZZIC_wL0xIQpKu1cZY-x05uyNU3dd5?usp=sharing

The pond leveller consists of a long flexible pipe through the beaver dam, with a cage at the upstream end to prevent beavers from blocking the pipe intake. The pipe invert (level of the bottom of the pipe) as it passes through the beaver dam sets a limit on how high the water level in the beaver's pond can become, before it overflows into the pipe and exits downstream of the dam. The corrugated pipe interior makes upstream swimming easier for adult salmon, as they head to Cougar Creek's best spawning grounds.

Though beavers are a nuisance, with their tree-cutting and dam-building, they are also a keystone species for healthy wetlands and salmon streams. A pond leveller is not maintenance-free, but we hope this one will reduce the amount of effort the City of Delta has to spend on dismantling beaver dams to prevent flooding. We'd all like to have our beavers, and our trail too!

This is not to say that trail flooding has been eliminated. The low level of the trail itself, combined with large volumes of stormwater runoff piped directly into the creek during rainy weather, guarantee that flooding will still occur. The good news is that, over the coming years, Metro Vancouver will be upgrading the trail to regional greenway standards. As well, the City of Delta continues its efforts to reduce stormwater runoff at its source, by diverting it into landscaping (rain gardens) instead of piping it into the creek.

Meanwhile, whenever we're faced with a slog through ankle-deep water, we can recall how fortunate we are to have this relatively natural floodplain. Not only is it a safety-valve for protecting built areas from floodwaters, it's also a vibrant and healthy wetland habitat that nurtures fish, amphibians, birds and – yes -- those industrious beaver engineers.