

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Jan. 28, 2009

The Editor
Victoria Times-Colonist

I'm writing in response to your Jan. 26th editorial about the Forest Practices Board's recent report on fish passage. While not an easy problem to fix, government has been taking action.

Through the multi-agency Fish Passage Technical Working Group – the provincial government, federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans – and through partnerships with forest licensees – we're identifying and prioritizing crossings for remediation and providing guidance to practitioners to help them identify problem crossings and ensure new crossings do not impede passage.

From 2002 to 2007, government has spent over \$7 million to identify and remediate problem crossings – and has allocated another \$5 million this year. We estimate that fixing the top 10 per cent of problem crossings may restore 50 per cent of the fish habitat at risk in problem areas.

Ministry of Forests and Range compliance and enforcement staff routinely inspect new culvert installations. The data from the Board's study show that many of the fish passage problems develop over time, even at crossings where fish passage was functioning at the time of installation. The Ministry of Forests and Range has developed a strategic compliance and enforcement approach in collaboration with other natural resource agencies to ensure that the future will see a reduction in the number of problem crossings.

British Columbia is world-renowned for its commitment to sustainable forest management and high environmental standards and this government is committed to keeping that reputation.

Pat Bell
Minister of Forests and Range