

Project to restore fish habitat gets \$19,000 federal boost

Government invests in Recreational Fisheries Conversation projects in Lundar

By Jeff Ward

Selkirk-Interlake MP James Bezan was in Lundar July 15 to announce that, under the second round of the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program, the Government of Canada will provide up to \$19,000 to the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District to conserve fish habitat

Bezan was presenting on behalf Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The money will be used to construct a fish ladder north of Lundar, east of Highway 6, which will enable fish to continue their journey through the Interlake to spawning locations. According to the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District (WIWCD), there are approximately 20 different species of fish that travel this route. This fish ladder will be a key part of keeping game fish active and plentiful in the Interlake.

"It's important that these fish have access to the tributaries," explained

Bezan as he went over the purpose of the funding and how important it is to his constituents.

"I understand that Swan Creek and the hatchery drain, the Burnt Lake drain and Burnt Lake itself are all important in feeding that aquatic life and ensuring that we have this on-going fishery."

Tuesday's announcement was made at a press conference at the West Interlake Watershed Conservation Office before representatives involved in the project.

Attendees later toured the area for the Burnt Lake Drain Enhancement Project.

The program was so successful that the federal government has added another \$15 million in funding, bringing the total amount towards the conservation program to \$25 million.

This funding is important to the WIWCD because it enables them to make more improvements to the area without having to use as much of their own budget.

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EXPRESS PHOTO BY LINDA MILLER

Conservative MP for Selkirk-Interlake James Bezan (middle) looks at the Burnt Lake drain with WIWCD board members Henry Rosing (left) and Neil Brandstrom (right).

projects, that's always a feather in our cap," said Linda Miller, manager of the WIWCD.

Miller adds that Lundar is an active fishing community, and this ladder and additional spawning shoals (a spawning shoal is a placing of rocks and gravel that give the fish a place the lay their eggs) will contribute to a healthy fishing community.

"There are a lot of fishermen in the

area, so any time we can help get more fish in the lake, that's a big plus for the community."

The WIWCD plans to build the fish ladder in October of this year, with construction being completed in roughly a month.

If you would like more information on the WIWCD, you can contact their head office in Lundar at 204-762-5950.