

More gravel removal on Fraser near Chilliwack

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CHILLIWACK - The provincial government has begun another round of controversial gravel removal on the Fraser River.

Chilliwack-based Jake's Construction has the contract to install a temporary bridge to get access to 186,000 cubic metres of gravel from the Tranmer Bar, an area of approximately four square kilometres on the north bank of the Fraser River, approximately five kilometers upstream from the Agassiz-Rosedale Bridge, according to a press release issued Wednesday.

The release states that the work is part of the "ongoing efforts to protect public safety and reduce the risk of flooding in the Fraser Valley by removing some of the sediment and gravel that continues to build up in this part of the Fraser River."

Each year, the equivalent of between 15,000 and 63,000 dump-truck loads of sediment and gravel washes down the river and comes to rest between Hope and Mission.

Fishermen from the Cheam band confirm that fishing spots used for years increasingly are filled with gravel, and the Seabird Island band has lost hundreds of acres to erosion because of rising river levels.

However, some activists and sports fishers have complained that the gravel removal effects salmon spawning grounds.

Other opponents say the project is nothing but a gravel grab for the development industry that wants the aggregate.

The project will employ up to 20 people and is expected to be completed by March 15. The release states that all work at the site must meet strict environmental guidelines to ensure fish habitat is protected.

The government will spend approximately \$225,000 for biological and hydraulic studies at the site before, during and after sediment and gravel removal.

An independent environmental monitor will be onsite throughout the project to ensure environmental protection measures are in place.

The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has also approved the project.

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