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MCRI dike realignment will expand channel width by almost 400 percent

Phase 1 of the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative (MCRI) is officially underway, meaning that the south dike between Casorso Road and Gordon Drive is closed, environmental and archaeological monitoring is underway, and trees and vegetation within the new dike alignment are being removed. Slated for completion next spring, dike relocation and floodplain enhancement will increase the creek's channel width from 40 to 150 metres, thereby reducing flood risks while expanding fish and wildlife habitat.

BUILDING THE NEW DIKE

To prepare for the dike realignment, the existing dike within the construction area will be scalped to an average elevation of 40cm above the creek's current water level. These scalped materials will be used to construct the new setback dike. Designed to accommodate a one-in-200-year flood, the 570-metre section of new dike will reflect government standards and design specifications outlined in the *MCRI Dike Setback Design Report*. Construction will take place during the low-water period between now and next spring, with no harmful impacts on creek water quality.

The site of the new dike will initially be stripped down to mineral soil, with the excess top soil being stored for future use. Many of the trees and shrubs removed along the new dike alignment will be used to re-vegetate the newly expanded floodplain. Construction will start from both upstream and downstream ends, allowing for faster removal of material from the existing dike. The new dike requires about 9,000 cubic metres of sand, clay, and gravel. To reduce material and hauling costs, the majority of the needed dike materials will come from the old dike.

MISSION CREEK FISH HABITAT RESTORATION

To increase benefits for fish, four 'meander' notches, equally spaced along the scalped section of old dike, will be carved into the south bank of Mission Creek. Pools will be excavated at each meander notch and large trees will be anchored into the bank and extend into the pool to provide overhead cover. This habitat restoration will help re-naturalize flow patterns and provide major rearing benefits for rainbow trout, kokanee and mountain whitefish. This work is scheduled for summer 2016 during the period of lowest risk to aquatic species.

Construction is being undertaken by City of Kelowna workers, which MCRI project coordinator Steve Matthews says ìs an ideal arrangement. "Being a key MCRI partner, the City has a strong vested interest in getting the job done right… on time and within budget. It`s also a project that provides extra work for the City`s seasonal crews. I`m looking forward to watching it all unfold over the next six months."

But watching it unfold in the short term may concern residents who don`t understand that MCRI is a project with huge long-term benefits. For example, a walk along the four-metre crest of the new dike “won`t be what people are used to, at least not for a few years,” says Matthews. “But as nature takes its course over time, and native trees and vegetation take hold, the view from the new dike across the naturalized creek will be stunning.”

For up-to-the-minute information about MCRI visit www.missioncreek.ca or contact one of the following:

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