

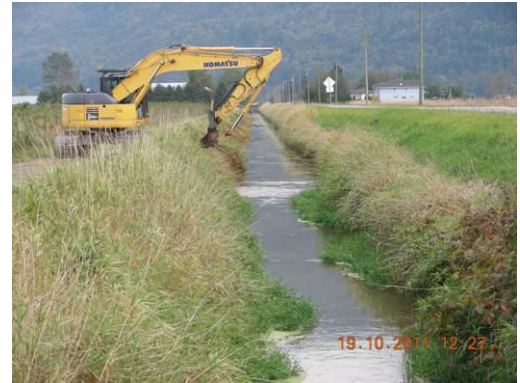
# Abbotsford Floodplain Ditch Maintenance Program

## Fact Sheet



- What is in the Ditch Maintenance Program?

The Ditch Maintenance Program is a service provided by the City of Abbotsford to the agricultural and rural areas of Matsqui and Sumas Prairies. Matsqui Prairie encompasses an area of approximately 11,500 acres while the area encompassed by the Sumas Prairie is approximately 23,500 acres. Within these two prairies are approximately 296 km of constructed ditches, of which approximately 280 km are cleaned by the City every year.



- What are the benefits of the Ditch Maintenance Program?

Agriculture is the economic backbone of the City and the Ditch Maintenance Program is essential to ensure proper drainage of the agricultural land. It reduces potential flooding in the prairies and the required emergency works associated with high rainfall and or snowmelt events. It also provides benefits to fish and their habitat by removing the grass and vegetation that would otherwise reduce the oxygen levels from these ditches and creeks.

- What is the timing for the Ditch Maintenance Program?

The ditches are cleaned from September 15 to November 30 to avoid conflict with the irrigation season (May 15<sup>th</sup> to Sept 15<sup>th</sup>) and the salmon run. The window for cleaning was developed in 2012 by a committee made up of farmers representatives, City staff and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

- What measures are put in place to protect the environment?

The ditches are categorized as dry or wet in both Sumas and Matsqui Prairies and the dry ditches are cleaned during the summer in the dry season. The wet ditches are further classified as low, medium and high risk (to fish) depending on their proximity to the fish bearing water courses and fresh water sources and using the historical fish presence data. All ditch cleaning work is monitored by a qualified environmental consultant who takes regular samples of Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and turbidity to ensure maintenance is not harming any downstream habitat. Further mitigation measures, such as fish salvage, sediment curtain, etc., are implemented as required per the direction of the qualified environmental consultant.

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- What challenges are faced during the Ditch Maintenance Program?

Access to some of the ditches was restricted due to crops, equipment or machinery. All property owners in in Sumas and Matsqui are reminded to leave at least 12 feet of maintenance access next to the drainage ditches on their property. City staff contacts the individual property owners about maintenance works two weeks prior to the excavator reaching their property.