

Lots of today's impressive things started out small or insignificant. Such is the history of Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancements' charming little Wilfred Creek Hatchery.

Wilfred Creek, to start from the beginning, is often better known as Coal Creek around here, but has been officially Wilfred since 1923 when it was named after Wilfred E Lawson of the Geological Survey of Canada. In 1989 the DFO dug a water supply channel near the creek, built a pond as a reservoir, four more for rearing areas, and a small square "upwelling" incubation box, only eight feet to a side and about knee height, to hold trays of pink salmon eggs in a constant flow of stream water until they hatched and swam out. All of this was done by accident, because the land along the creek was owned by the Weyerhaeuser Company, who granted a licence to allow the whole thing to continue, as it has to this day. This star-crossed beginning, to steal a phrase, has led to the Wilfred Creek Hatchery that is the smaller one of the pair Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society operates.

In the 30 years since, a small box that could hold a million pink eggs is now a building holding incubation trays and tanks for not only pinks but also chum and coho salmon. Around it is a storage container box, some outdoor fish raising troughs and an old-fashioned toilet, because the only running water is what hatches those salmon eggs, and there is no power. Wilfred Creek is also the site of years and years of enhancement projects; more ponds and side channels, stream improvements, bank restorations, tree plantings, spawning gravel and a variety of other ideas to make things better for growing salmon. There is a lot of bureaucratic background to every environmental project, but we will save our fascination with it for another day.

Much of FBSES' early efforts were spent at Wilfred, even before there was an FBSES. The difficulties of organizing, fundraising, and dealing with government led to the realization that we needed some bureaucracy of our own and the society was incorporated in 1995. By then there was a simple frame building over an improved upwelling box, on poured footings and some improvements to the habitat and water flow.



Fast forward to our Wilfred Creek Boys. They were boys once but that's their crew name now, and they are all from Tozer Road in Fanny Bay. Keith Thibault is the crew's leader and the whole gang consists of Keith, Larry McDonald, Rudi Spatzl, Helmuth Geiger and Bill French, with Frank Lines providing sage advice from his years of responsibility for Wilfred. They meet to do the endless maintenance every hatchery needs, as well as checking water quality , temperature and flow, fish health and wellbeing, and growth. In season there's fry salvage, brood capture of both Wilfred chum and coho, clipping and releases.

The numbers change from year to year. Fewer pinks and more chum and coho will be produced in future, because they are more successful in returning to spawn on their own. In the meantime, the work goes on, toward the great day when this year's broods follow their predecessors and parents out of the hatchery, into the creek and down Wilfred to the sea.

In last month's Flyer our picture of the FBI presentation , two names listed were wrong. Roxanne Milligan presented the cheque and John Milligan was at the left of the back row in the photo. Wrong names were the fault of the writer, not the Flyer.

Our work party days are Wednesday and Saturday, and you're welcome to visit, or bring up [www.fbses.ca](http://www.fbses.ca)