

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Nov. 21, 2006

The Editor
The Province

Your newspaper recently carried a story about fish stocks in the Cheakamus River that was based on old information and left a false impression about the status of the river.

Following last year's CN Railway chemical spill into the Cheakamus River, the Ministry of Environment completed an in-depth impact assessment on fish and invertebrates in the river. The river was declared safe for recreational activity and fish in the river were safe to eat within days of the spill.

Fortunately, some fish and many organisms that live among the rocks and wood in the river were protected and survived. There were also adult salmon and trout in the ocean at the time that were not affected by the spill – those stocks are now returning to spawn and restock the river. However, it's true many fish were killed in the first few hours after the spill.

Ministry staff have been working closely with CN Railway, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Squamish Nation and the District of Squamish to plan and implement recovery of the river and conduct fishery recovery actions. All activities to-date, including impact assessments, are available online at www.certc.ca.

We are restoring habitat to make the river healthier in the long term and increasing hatchery activities for salmon species. A temporary steelhead hatchery program is also part of the recovery plan to restore wild steelhead populations, while providing recreational angling opportunities for the public.

Today, the river is open for angling and other recreational pursuits, and is well on the way to recovery.

Barry Penner
Minister of Environment