

# Constructed Ditch FACTSHEET

## FILLING IN CONSTRUCTED DITCHES

Constructed ditches are used to provide farms with drainage and irrigation. While ditches provide water management functions for a farm, they may also be important fish habitat. This factsheet provides helpful points to be considered prior to filling in a constructed ditch on your farm.

There are many reasons why a farmer may chose to fill in a ditch that was constructed years ago.

- Constructed ditches take up valuable land. Arable land may be increased if a drain collector pipe can be used as an alternative to a ditch.
- Today's larger farm equipment requires more room to move around. Smaller fields make it difficult to use large equipment effectively. Consolidating a number of smaller fields into one larger field increases production and machinery efficiency.
- Fewer constructed ditches provide additional land for manure application and reduces the opportunity for manure to enter ditches and adjoining watercourses.
- Fewer constructed ditches reduces the area that is affected by setbacks for buildings and some farm activities.



### Points to Consider Prior to Filling in a Ditch

- Ensure that the channel to be filled in is a constructed ditch. If it is a channelized stream or natural watercourse, approval will be required from Land and Water BC (LWBC) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). For further information see *Agricultural Watercourse Classification*, Factsheet No. 2 in this series.
- Constructed ditches may contain valuable fish habitat. An Authorization from DFO may be required if fish are present in the ditch at any time of year. If the ditch is a valuable source of fish food or nutrients, approval may also be required.
- Do the work during the driest time of the year, generally from early August to late September.
- Prevent sedimentation of downstream watercourses. This can be done by blocking the constructed ditch at the outlet prior to filling in the rest of the ditch. See Factsheet No. 8 – *Sediment Control*.
- In most cases, a drainage collector pipe will need to be installed to maintain adequate drainage. The drainage collector must be sized correctly to accommodate the peak flow that may occur. See the *BC Agricultural Drainage Manual*, available from Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, for information on pipe sizing.
- Ensure that drainage patterns for neighboring properties have not been affected. In some cases, blind inlets to the collector pipe may be required if small side ditches require an outlet.

### Contact Information

*Agency Contacts*, Factsheet No. 19 in this series contains a list of local agency contacts and other organizations that may be able to provide some assistance.