Constructed Ditch
FACTSHEET

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Drainage Management Guide - No. 4 in series

Order No. 543.000-2
March 2005

FISHERY TIMING WINDOWS
For Maintenance Work in Constructed Ditches

An instream work Timing Window is a time when salmonids and other fish species are at a stage in their life cycle when they are least sensitive to disturbances. Watercourse maintenance works should be planned to coincide with the appropriate Timing Window.

Timing Windows can vary from region to region as well as between watersheds within a region. Table 1 provides a guide to timing windows in various regions of the province. The timing windows shown for constructed ditches can be used with a farm drainage management plan as outlined in this guide.

Provided the guidelines in this factsheet series are followed, the timing windows for constructed ditches indicate the most appropriate time of year to do works to minimize potential impacts to fish and fish habitat.

WLAP, LWBC and DFO may need to be contacted prior to doing work in natural or channelized streams.

For additional information on timing windows contact the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP) or Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). See *Agency Contacts,* Factsheet No. 19 in this series for contact information.

Table 1 Timing Windows for Constructed Ditch Watercourse Work in British Columbia

Constructed Ditch Condition	Timing Window		
	Vancouver Island	Lower Mainland	BC Interior
Dry ditch	Any time of year while dry	Any time of year while dry	Any time of year while dry
Ditch has been blocked in summer to prevent fish from entering channel. See dry ditch maintenance in Factsheet no. 4 in this series.	Prior to November 1st	Prior to November 1st	Prior to November 1st
Wet ditch	June 15th – September 30th	June 15th – September 30th	*June 1st – September 30th

* For the BC Interior there is also a general species work window that provides more detail for specific species. See Table 2.

Extensions

Every effort should be made to conduct works during the appropriate timing windows. However if works cannot be conducted during the specified Timing Window, an extension to the Timing Window may be granted by DFO. Extensions will be considered on the basis of weather conditions, habitat type or function and fish use, including migration timing of adult salmonids.

Table 2 General Species Work Windows for Constructed Ditches in the BC Central Interior and Kootenays

Species	Openings
Kokanee Salmon stream spawners	June 1 – August 31
Kokanee Salmon shore spawners	June 1 – September 30
Rainbow, steelhead, cutthroat trout early spawners	July 22 – October 31
Rainbow, steelhead, cutthroat trout late spawners	August 7 – October 15
Eastern Brook Trout	June 1 – September 15
Bull trout	June 1 – August 15
Burbot shallow	Jul 1 – October 31
Burbot deep	June 1 – December 31
Lake Whitefish	June 1 – October 31
Mountain Whitefish	May 1 – September 30
Salmon	July 15 – August 15

Timing Windows for Constructed Ditches

A constructed ditch can be cleaned at any time if it does not contain water, when it is a "dry ditch". If a ditch has been temporarily blocked while dry to prevent fish access and remains blocked until maintenance works are completed, the ditch may be treated as a dry ditch until November 1st when the fish barrier must be removed. Wet ditches must follow the Timing Windows shown in the table.

Refer to *Agency Contact Requirements for Constructed Ditch Maintenance*, Factsheet No. 3 in this series to determine the contact requirements for works in a wet constructed ditch. All works must be conducted in accordance with the conditions outlined in this series of factsheets and in the references and BMPs listed in the reference section of the Drainage Management Guide.

Timing Windows for Streams

The timing windows provided in the table are to be used for works as outlined in Table 1 of Factsheet 3 (*Agency Contact Requirements for Constructed Ditch Maintenance*) and Table 1 of Factsheet 20 (*Agency Contact Requirements for Channelized and Natural Stream Maintenance*) and should serve as a guide for the best time to propose to do works requiring agency approval.

The stream timing windows are used for work under the *Water Act's* Part 7 Regulation or as a guide to when the best time for conducting works in a stream is expected to be. The Timing Windows for streams in the BC Central Interior, Kootenays, Vancouver Island and the Lower Fraser Valley will differ due to timing of fish life cycles and the fish species present in the stream systems.

See Factsheet 19 for agency contact information.

Prior to any work on a stream, notification or approval is likely required under Section 9 of the B.C. *Water Act* and an Authorization from DFO may be required under the Federal *Fisheries Act*.

Protocol Agreements

Protocol Agreements established between the municipalities and the environmental agencies may permit area-specific drainage and maintenance works outside of the regular Timing Windows.

In the Lower Fraser Valley, producers located within a municipality that have a Protocol Agreement for watercourse maintenance, may have the agreement extended to their on farm drainage maintenance work. The municipality must agree to incur the responsibility for ensuring that works are carried out in accordance with the Protocol Agreement. Contact your local municipality to determine if they have a Protocol Agreement which allows for on farm works outside the general Timing Windows, and to determine when municipal drainage maintenance works are scheduled for your area.

If a Protocol Agreement has not been established with the municipality and work must be done on a wet ditch outside the Timing Window, an application must be made to DFO by the proponent.

The timing window information in this factsheet is meant as a guide for planning purposes only and does not constitute any approval or authorization. Please ensure you contact WLAP and DFO prior to conducting works outside the timing windows on constructed ditches.