

Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee
to Pass Bylaw to Protect Streams, Lakes and Wetlands

In March of 2005, the Province of BC passed the Riparian Area Regulations (RAR). These regulations were passed to protect current and potential salmon and game fish bearing streams and water bodies in Southern BC. Rather than enforce the regulations themselves, the Province directed local governments to enact enforcement bylaws by March 31, 2006. Most local governments in the target area have complied. But not Salt Spring Island.

If responsibly implemented, RAR could increase protection for Salt Spring Island's troubled drinking water lakes. Silt harms fish habitat but also carries phosphorus (a major cause of algal blooms) into our lakes. Therefore, the same actions that protect fish habitat by reducing silt going into streams, also protect lakes.

RAR protects fish by defining an "assessment area" within which, if certain development activities are planned, an assessment is to be conducted by a Qualified Environmental Professional who certifies that there will be no harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of natural features, functions and conditions that support fish life processes in the riparian assessment area or identify measures to provide such protection. Those protection measures then must be followed.

The assessment area is a 30 metre strip on both sides of a "stream", measured from the high water mark. Different standards apply to streams in ravines. A "stream" is defined to include a variety of watercourses (even seasonal) that are connected by surface flow to a water body that provides or could provide fish habitat.

RAR provides us with a powerful opportunity, because it allows local governments to pass **stronger** protections if they wish. But it also gives wide latitude to local government who must provide a level of protection that is comparable to or exceeds the RAR. The Water Preservation Society will be urging our trustees to pass RAR in a way that provides strong and enforceable protection for our streams and lakes. If you want more information, please call Maxine Leichter at 537-1577.