**FANNY BAY SALMONID ENHANCEMENT SOCIETY (FBSES)**

**April 2018**

By Dave Sands

In November of most years, the chum salmon spawning runs start in mid-island streams like Rosewall Creek. Fanny Bay’s fish-friendly geography creates a lot of streams and chum will return to the lower reaches of estuarial streams like Cowie, Cherry and Wilfred Creeks as well as Bob Springs and Waterloo. Chum are the fish who make the TV news on a regular basis after rains lead them to fin their way across flooded roads and into ditches and farm fields, not to mention oral history stories of streams once so full of thrashing spawners that they could keep you awake at night, as Warren Cook of Bowser who lived beside Chef Creek would tell you.

Once it was thought that chum were so plentiful and even common that no one needed to worry about their welfare, they would take care of themselves, and besides, they weren’t worth any money. Chum are a lean fish, pale in flesh colour, but great for smoking; you don’t want to smoke fat, and if you’ve ever bought any barbecued salmon, you’ve eaten chum. And the price of that meat or jerky probably made you wonder how it could be called a cheap fish.

Fish experts don’t dismiss chum; they do a job cleaning up streams for later arriving coho and Chinook, and their carcasses, so plentiful and easy to access by everything with talons and claws, are carried hundreds of meters into the surrounding trees to add to the nitrogen that everything green needs to grow. (But fish experts aren’t trying to sell you dressed sockeye filets.)

At the FBSES, our volunteers and workers from Biq Qualicum Hatchery went out on a crisp but bright day into Rosewall and in a few short, but intense, hours returned with enough eggs, milt and brood stock to amount to the 67,727 fertilized chum eggs that are now squirming masses of alevins (fish fry which still have some egg yolk attached) in our incubation trays. At an average 0.35 gram weight — it would take 90 of them to make an ounce — they have nowhere to go but up. In April they’ll be about half a gram, bright silver on their sides, dark on top and an impressive 25 to 30 millimeters long. These little guys and girls will leave us in their multitudes and return as large as 4.5 kilos (10 pounds) and a meter (3 feet) long in three years or so.

And in just a month, Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society will hold its 11th annual The River Never Sleeps festival Sunday May 6 at the site on Berray Road where you can bring your neighbors, grandkids (and their parents) and enjoy our hospitality, educational booths and family friendly prices on oysters and hot dogs. Sorry, but no smoked salmon.

FBSES welcomes visitors at its Wednesday and Saturday morning work parties at the hatchery on Berray Road. Website is [**www.fbses.ca**](http://www.fbses.ca).