

NEWS

BV Research Center awards with top honours

Submitted
Smithers

Something was a little fishy at the Bulkley Valley Research Centre's recent annual general meeting.

Two awards presented by the BVRC at its Mar. 22 AGM reflected the centre's recent focus on salmon sustainability. With sockeye returns for the Skeena River at roughly half their projected numbers last fall, salmon habitat research is fast becoming an important part of this local not-for-profit's mandate.

"The BVRC, as part of our diversification efforts, has become more actively engaged in salmon research. This area presents an exciting new opportunity and we are receiving much positive recognition in this area and are expected to be a key agency in moving forward with Skeena salmon habitat research and management," BVRC research program manager Rick Budhwa told nearly 50 people who attended the AGM, held at Smithers' Trakside Cantina.

He then presented the Volunteer Distinction Award to local lawyer and BVRC member Richard Overstall, whose efforts made last September's Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference a reality. The



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Richard Overstall receives the Volunteer Distinction Award at the Cantina Mar. 22 for his outstanding contributions to making the Skeena Salmon Habitat Conference a reality.

conference brought some of the Northwest's top salmon experts to Smithers.

"Much of this recognition that the BVRC is receiving is based upon Richard's tireless volunteer efforts, helping to position the centre as one of those key agencies," Budhwa added.

The centre also presented its annual Jim Pojar Award to a group of northwestern B.C. fisheries biologists and University of Alberta researchers for their work, which examined the effects of sea lice on Pacific salmon numbers based on three years of data on juvenile pink salmon from the mouth of the Skeena River. The paper *Effects of Host Migration, Diversity and Aquaculture on Sea Lice Threats to Pacific Salmon*

Populations was co-authored by Martin Krkošek, Mark Lewis, Allen Gottesfeld, Bart Proctor, Dave Rolston and Charmaine Carr-Harris.

The Jim Pojar Award is awarded annually to the authors of a paper published within the past five years that improves the scientific understanding or public appreciation of the ecological, social or human dimensions of natural resource sustainability in northwest B.C.

In his nomination, local biologist Phil Burton noted the dangers associated with fish farms and sea lice.

"Not only does this paper reinforce the observable dangers of increased sea lice populations associated with salmon aquaculture, it also offers an explanation as to why the salmon

life cycle might have arisen, and how imperfect knowledge in manipulating this complex system can lead to unfortunate results."

The Bulkley Valley Research Centre is a Smithers-based not-for-profit that facilitates natural-resource research across British Columbia. For more information, please visit www.bvcentre.ca or contact BVRC communications coordinator Amanda Follett at amanda.follett@bvcentre.ca or 250-877-3758.

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