

Airport captures environmental award

» B.C. Aviation Council recognizes special work done in preparation for new runway extension project

ROBERT BARRON DAILY NEWS

The B.C. Aviation Council recognized the Nanaimo Airport recently with the council's annual Environmental Award for its work in preparation for the airport's runway extension project.

Jerry Pink, chairman of the Nanaimo Airport Commission, said the airport was recognized by the council for its work in the last few years to restore fish habitat on Haslam Creek, creating more habitat for the endangered Vesper Sparrows on airport property and diverting waste water away from the Cassidy aquifer in its work to prepare for the long-anticipated expansion.

The B.C. Aviation Council is a non-profit society whose primary aim is to stimulate and encourage the safe, orderly development of



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aviation and aviation services in the province and Pink said the airport commission's dedication to environmental awareness and protection in its \$16.4-million phase

one of its expansion plans caught the council's attention this year.

Phase one of the airport expansion project includes a 480-metre expansion of the runway, scheduled to be officially open in mid-December and that will allow larger planes and more airlines to land in Nanaimo.

Phase one also includes the addition of high-intensity lighting, landing instrumentation and other improvements to increase reliability at the often undependable airport.

"It means a lot to us to be recognized by the council for the work we've done and we're more than happy to receive this prestigious environmental award for our efforts," Pink said.

Working with the department of fisheries and oceans, the airport commission worked to slow erosion and restore fish habitat in the

Haslam Creek as it cut back trees in the area to accommodate the expansion project.

The Nanaimo Airport and the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team also joined forces to help preserve the habitat of the last remaining Coastal Vesper Sparrows on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands on 25-acres of airport land, and established ponds on the property to collect drainage water from airport ditches to clean it before being released into the Cassidy aquifer.

"When the expansion project began, we wanted to ensure that we assumed some responsibility for Haslam Creek and to be as environmentally friendly as possible with all aspects of the expansion plans," Pink said.

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