

Lagoon bridge repair underway



Ross Myles and Bob Angelius with Colwood public works scrape away dirt from the Esquimalt Lagoon bridge pilings Tuesday in preparation for the installation of lock-blocks.

Edward Hill/News staff

By [Edward Hill - Goldstream News Gazette](#)

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Possible reopening Wednesday night

With as much delicacy as a backhoe can muster, its clawed bucket scraped away narrow layers of earth near Colwood's newest archeological site.

Rebuilding the north abutment to the Esquimalt Lagoon bridge kicked off Monday, now surpassing five months closed to vehicle traffic. Workers found a shell midden during the initial excavation, but were able to avoid disturbing what is protected under provincial law.

Shovels in hand Tuesday, Millennia Research archeologist Lenore Thompson and Esquimalt First Nation

member Steve Thomas inspected earth next to the bridge wood pilings — no shells or artifacts, free and clear.

Thompson suspects the archeological material was dumped into the abutment as fill 80 years ago, when the bridge was built. They plan to place geotextile fabric over the midden for protection and for reference for future construction.

“We’re doing our best not to disturb the site anymore,” Thompson said.

Michael Baxter, Colwood’s city engineer, said the work to protect the midden site while installing rip-rap boulders is slow but progressing smoothly.

“(The midden) was found in the middle. It was no problem to dig the edges down and still achieve the same level of protection,” Baxter said. “It has reduced the work we can do. The ironic thing is that it may end up saving us a bit of money.”

Colwood has scheduled paving for next Wednesday, making reopening of the bridge possible that evening.

“It’s going well considering the scary part is digging. You never know what you might find. We are happy they way it is going,” Baxter said.

For the abutment, the plan is to place massive concrete lock-blocks against the pilings, then large stones and earth fill wrapped in geotextile fabric. Colwood engineer Helen Lockhart said the fabric will keep fill from leeching out from wave and tidal action, a problem that opened at least two sinkholes in the first place.

“The problem is that the fine gravel came out,” Lockhart said. “We want to protect the area from eroding. As long as we have room to build up the sides, we’ll be OK.”

The abutment rebuild is being underwritten by a \$20,000 donation from Essencia, donated equipment and work-in-kind from a number of excavating and trucking companies, largely due to Colwood’s tight budget.

“It’s been a real positive project. A lot of people in the community have stepped up to the plate,” said Mayor Dave Saunders. “People have even been bringing coffee and doughnuts to the guys at the site.”

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