

# Illegal slope work causes landslide

## Slide dumps sediment into West Vancouver's Rodgers Creek

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS    MARCH 27, 2013



A landslide at 2785 Chelsea Close, West Vancouver, Thursday dropped sediment into fish-bearing Rodgers Creek.

**Photograph by:** NEWS photo, Kevin Hill

**ILLEGAL construction and landscaping work done in defiance of a stop-work order triggered a landslide and dump of sediment into fish-bearing Rodgers Creek last week, according to the District of West Vancouver.**

The slide happened Thursday afternoon at 2785 Chelsea Close west of Panorama Village, just above the Trans-Canada Highway.

"We know that the owners carried on work despite the stop-work order and deposited and moved some fill around on the property, and we know that last week on March 21, the excavating contractors on the property caused a mudslide or landslide on a fairly steep-grade part of the property which flowed into the tributary of the creek," said Jeff McDonald, the district's director of communications.

District staff issued a stop-work order on the site on Feb. 4 when a neighbour noticed more sediment in the stream and called district staff. The owner had apparently been trying to build up a portion of the property and install a retaining wall without any permits. Geotechnical engineers have been to the site to come up with both short-and long-term solutions for slope stability of the site.

"We're extremely concerned about this. We take this very seriously. We're working with the owner to correct the problem and we're taking steps to protect the creek from further sediment getting into the creek," McDonald said. "We have preliminary information from engineers and a consultant that indicates that it is loose and there is possibility of that material moving downstream and downhill in the event of a heavy rain."

The district is getting a legal opinion on its options for going after the homeowner for the costs the district is taking on as well as potential damages.

"I think there's precedent when this sort of incident happens in the past, that the owners pick up the tab and there is also, I believe, precedent if there's noncompliance with the instructions the owners receive, that the district could potentially do the work and bill the owner in an attempt to recover costs from the owner," he said.

As of Tuesday, the stream was running clear and work crews were installing some temporary measures to keep rain from triggering another slide. The district is not anticipating long-term environmental damage but West Vancouver Streamkeepers, who are monitoring the creek closely, say the fish aren't out of the woods yet.

"This is the time of year when cutthroat trout spawn in the creeks and nearly all of our West Vancouver streams have cutthroat trout," said John Barker, Streamkeepers co-ordinator. "It's glacial till. It comes down and that gets in the gravel and that can suffocate the eggs. That's a very real threat to the stream."

Coho salmon are also spawning in the gravel and it won't be known what damage they sustained until the group conducts its emerging fry surveys this spring, Barker added.

The situation is particularly frustrating for the stewardship group as it was a foreseeable problem. "It's just a total disregard for the environment. . . ." said Barker.

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