



*By Larry Milian*

It took almost eight years to get the final plans and the approval of many levels of government, and only 26 days to build, but the Sturgeon Creek Fishway is now operational.

On February 1st a big backhoe was on site ready to begin digging. A cold morning was what the doctor ordered, or in this case, what the engineers hoped for. Weather was an important part of the formula, as we needed at least 30 days of cold, dry weather.

Cofferdams had to be built above and below the main dam before any work could start. The pilings were the first part of the construction, and our first problem occurred when water appeared in the holes. The problem was quickly solved and cement poured into the three piling holes.

A major "disaster" came along during the piling process. The set-in place concrete structure could not be ready in time for the deadline. Our consultant, Denis Andrews, went to the engineers and in two days, plans were in place to have the structure poured on site. This meant reinforcing steel had to be ordered and additional people were needed to build the forms for the cement. Insulated tarps were used to cover the construction area. It took two separate pours of cement to construct the channel portion of the fish ladder. The baffles were then inserted into the channel area. These are made of wood and steel, which in later years can be removed and replaced with not too much trouble. The main dam was then cut to the size of the channel opening, which allowed the protective screen and top logs to be put in place. The backhoe then had to take down the lower cofferdam, and place field rock around the fish ladder to prevent erosion and for landscaping. The upper cofferdam was to open up the creek to the dam. At this time, welders were on site to put up the grating on top of the structure along with a protective rail on all four sides.



Pilings being installed for the Sturgeon Creek Fish Ladder



Building of the cofferdam below the main dam at Sturgeon Creek.

We allowed 30 days from start to finish, and despite a complete turn around in construction method, finished with 4 days to spare.

The first bit of activity on the ladder was on April 5th. The stop logs were removed from the top end to permit the flow of water.



Once again, a huge thank you to Duncan Wain for his untiring efforts in seeing this project to completion. Thank you also to the consulting, engineering and construction firms who gave the Federation every consideration. A major portion of the funding was through the Fisheries Enhancement Initiative Fund, and the staff at Manitoba Fisheries have been very supportive. Thank you also to members of Assiniboia Wildlife Association and Agassiz Outdoorsmen who have volunteered to help with the care and maintenance of the structure.

