

# Water overflows at water-starved site

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In an area where many residents are complaining about the lack of water, David Whiffen is trying to deal with an excess.

Whiffen's Senanus Road neighbours received a shock right before Christmas when a torrent of water and silt came rushing down the slope into the ocean.

One neighbour contacted the Ministry of Water, Land and Air after making a videotape of the flooding creek

Central Saanich councillor and neighbour to the property, Christopher Graham said he was in his kitchen washing dishes when the dam gave way, "I heard this rumbling and ran down the beach, there was just this big wall of water, rocks and logs. It washed one of the neighbours kayaks into the sea," Graham said.

Whiffen purchased the waterfront property in 1998, he then bought the former Trader Vic's restaurant in 1999 and brought it to the Island on a barge. When Whiffen hauled the building up onto his property on the corner of Mount Newton X Road and Senanus Drive, situating the building too close to Parr Minor Creek, the District of Central Saanich and the Ministry of the Environment became involved, requesting that Whiffen move the building farther up the bank and not within 50 feet of the two creeks that run through his property.

Whiffen recently built a retaining pond on his property to deal with runoff. It was this pond that burst its

banks sending the flood of debris down into the ocean.

"It was a tremendous rainfall, it flooded, the water rose up over the top and broke one corner — about 20 yards of dirt washed down the slope," said Whiffen. "It was a mistake."

The creek is described as normally six to eight inches in depth and three feet wide.

"It was this surge of water that was about three feet deep and 10 feet across for about 15 minutes, then it ran heavy for a couple of hours," said one neighbour.

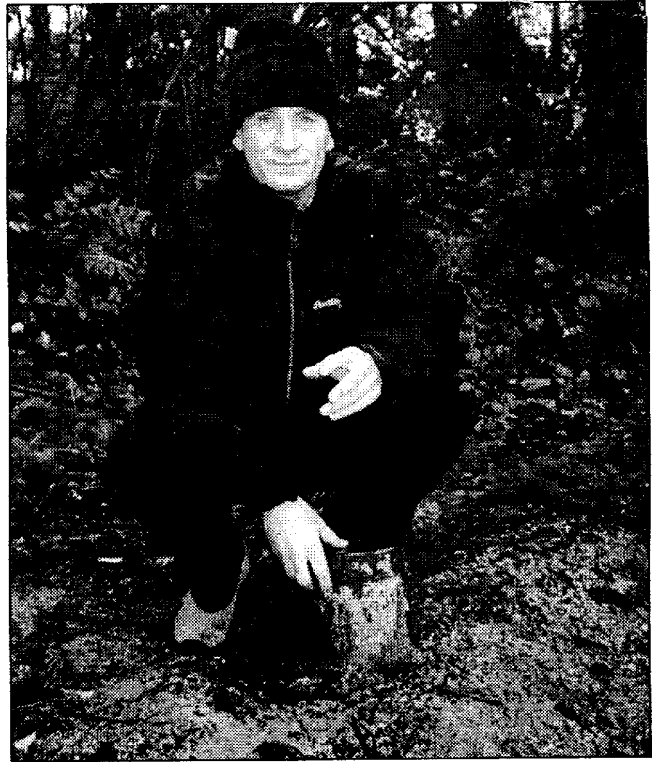
District Conservation Officer, Peter Pauwels said, "We referred the complaint to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to investigate possible damage to marine fish habitat." Pauwels added that "the pond was not connected to the creek in any way," and that Whiffen was advised to leave the pond as it is until he can reinforce it during dryer weather.

"We are continuing to monitor the site and try to work with him to make sure this doesn't happen again," said Pauwels.

Whiffen had planned to turn his 24 acre property into a vineyard and use the landmark building to showcase wines. He currently has three acres of grapes planted, but has found the District of Central Saanich to be less than enthusiastic about his venture. Whiffen has also come to realize that grapes may not be the best crop to grow on his property.

"We've had a lot of [crop] failure, we're losing about 30 per cent a year."

With only three acres growing at present, Whiffen will have lost his entire crop



LAURA LAVIN PHOTO

**David Whiffen points out one of the well-heads on his property that he hopes will provide a flood of profit along with a flood of water.**

within three years. Although he intends on continuing to grow wine grapes, he admits that Central Saanich council, "is not likely to go for a liquor license."

That is why Whiffen is turning to a crop of a different sort — water. Whiffen has tapped two underground springs on his land, one that produces 50 gallons a minute and the other 20 gallons a minute of pure spring water.

"It's called Rosanol Springs — in the future there's going to be a big demand for water and I'll have the capacity to fill it," said Whiffen.

He hopes to begin selling the water under the name Rachel Springs, for his daughter, by this spring.

Customers will be able to purchase it by the truckload or in three gallon containers. "It's high quality spring water, full of minerals, just what people are looking for," he said.

"I offered water free to some of the neighbours. I talked to one fellow who said he didn't want it because he didn't want to be beholden to me in any way," he said. Whiffen's Senanus neighbours have also voiced their concerns over his winery operation.

Whiffen said that the Trader Vics building is almost complete and he will be able to obtain his occupancy permit within weeks. His next step will be to obtain a business permit from the District of Central Saanich.