

## R. E. Taylor Conservation Property

Operation & Maintenance Activities / 2020

---



In 2020, the Southern Interior Land Trust (SILT) undertook management and maintenance activities at its R.E. Taylor Conservation property. Abandoned concrete debris and water main fittings encased in concrete were removed and used to create an artificial winter den for snakes; the driveway and parking area was improved to increase public safety; and top and bottom safety-rails were added to the boundary fence at several known wildlife crossings.

Works were scheduled in late fall to avoid harm to reptiles and nesting birds. The R.E. Taylor Conservation Property is Water Birch woodland located on Keremeos Creek near Olalla, BC.

*Funding for this project was provided by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) and the hunters, anglers, trappers, and guides that contribute to the HCTF through their licence fees. Home Depot, West Kelowna, donated materials for the den. SILT volunteers gave their time and energy to ensure success of the project.*

Lindsay Lalach, BSc, Assistant Biologist  
Al Peatt, RPBio, FAPB, SILT Executive Director  
Southern Interior Land Trust / [www.siltrust.ca](http://www.siltrust.ca)  
Email: [office@siltrust.ca](mailto:office@siltrust.ca)  
November, 2020



## Constructing an artificial snake den

---



*Debris piles prior to maintenance work.*

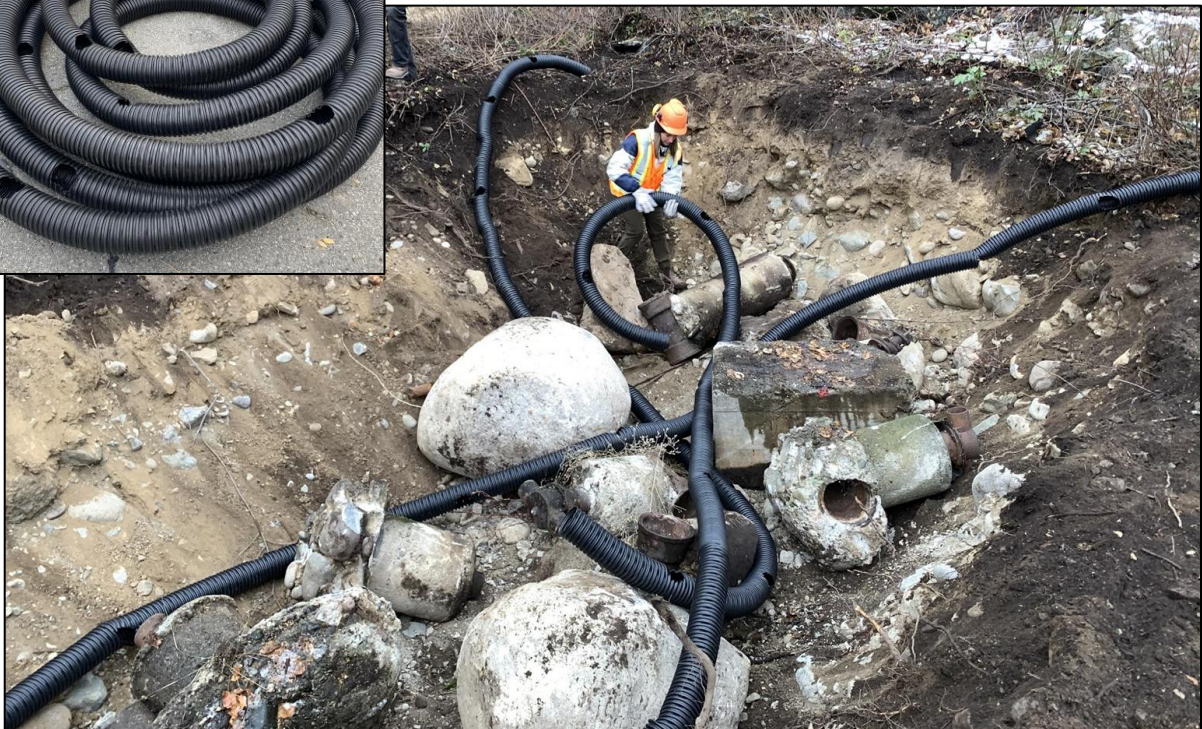


*Digging a pit to build the snake den and dispose of the debris.*



*This location contained optimal sandy soils and a good slope which allows for drainage, preventing flooding from heavy rain or snow melt.*

*We placed large boulders, water main fittings and woody debris at the bottom of the pit to create a series of chambers to replicate natural underground cavities.*



*Perforated drainage pipe was drilled with additional large access holes so snakes can easily move throughout all levels of the den. We laid the pipe through the bottom of the den and up the sides to reach ground level at each corner, to create assured den entry and exit points.*





*Pallets of wood, natural brush, concrete debris, and smaller rocks were placed on top of the larger boulders and pipes, creating more cavities and a cover for the deeper cavities. We added large woody debris for moisture retention within the den. It will generate some heat as it decays.*







*We covered the woody debris and brush with the topsoil removed earlier to create a mound to cap the underlying den, leaving small cavities and access points around the site. We placed large, flat rocks to provide basking areas for snakes and other reptiles on sunny days.*



*SILT will monitor the den area for several years to assess wildlife use.*





*Brush piles remain from unused materials. These piles provide enhanced security and feeding habitat for birds, insects, and small mammals.*



*SILT volunteers grass seeded and planted native shrubs around the new den site to restore the disturbed area. Shrubs included wildlife-friendly Snowberry, Oregon Grape and Woodsia Rose.*



## Driveway Improvements

---

*The driveway changes address public safety concerns by providing a safe spot for vehicle parking and turn around, with as minimal disturbance as possible to the surrounding natural area.*









## Fencing Improvements

---

*We installed PVC-pipe top and bottom rails at several locations along the existing barbed-wire fence that borders the property, to allow safer access for wildlife passing through. More rails will be installed this winter as wildlife crossing locations become more apparent. The inset shows black bear hair caught on a fence barb.*



---

Conclusion: SILT will continue operational and maintenance activities at its R.E. Taylor property in 2021. Fence maintenance will be ongoing, a “bio-blitz” community event is planned (dependent on public health orders), and a preliminary management plan will be written.

Southern Interior Land Trust / [www.siltrust.ca](http://www.siltrust.ca)

References: D.W, B., K, K., D, S. and R, Z., (2012). *2012 Pine Snake Radio-Telemetry And Monitoring Report At The Stafford Business Park*. [online] New Jersey. Available at: [https://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/pdf/literature/2012\\_pinesnake\\_rep\\_stafford.pdf](https://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/pdf/literature/2012_pinesnake_rep_stafford.pdf).

Long Point Basin Land Trust. (2017). *Building a Snake Hibernaculum*. Available at: <http://longpointlandtrust.ca/building-a-snake-hibernaculum/>