

**Phil Melnychuk - <http://www.mapleridgenews.com/por>
ARMS looks at pesticides Sun Feb 18, 2007 4:33AM 24.81.90.123**

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Jenny Ljunggren (left) and Rhonda Lochhead of ARMS on the edge of the Alouette River.

**By Phil Melnychuk
Staff Reporter
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The Alouette River Management Society isn't pushing the panic button about possible pesticide pollution. It just wants to get some facts and basic data in case anything is going into the South and North Alouette Rivers.

Recent grants from the Pacific Salmon Foundation and Westminster Savings, will allow ARMS to sample the sediment in both rivers to test for organic phosphates and organic chlorines.

It's the first time the group has tested for pesticides in the river, said Rhonda Lochhead, with the river society. Location and depth of the testing will be done in consultation with the Ministry of Environment. The increase in berry farming in the Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge has sparked public concern, says a release from ARMS.

"As far as we know, they're doing what they're supposed to be doing," Lochhead said Thursday.

"We want farming to take place, just in a stable way."

Pesticides, whether insecticides, herbicides or fungicides, can kill fish if the concentrations are high enough. The Alouette rivers sustain salmon, trout and bird and wildlife populations. The intent of the study is to get baseline information with which the society can compare future readings.

"We're concerned with the health of the river because salmon do spawn in it."

While there may not be a problem now, "our job is to conserve and enhance the river."

Lochhead said all farms spray, it's just whether spraying is being done properly. Another key question is how pesticides are being disposed of. Lochhead said the more serious contaminants to find would be the organic chlorines, which were supposed to be replaced by organic phosphates.

The goal of ARMS is to do 15 tests throughout the year.

A second part of the project will include educating the community about sustainable farming practices.

Westminster Savings and Credit Union provided a \$2,500 grant and the Pacific Salmon Foundation more than double that.

