



Jill Hudgins, project co-ordinator for the Nashwaak Watershed Association, examines a site near Penniac where a 30-metre section of eroding riverbank is being repaired. PHOTO: MICHAEL STAPLES/THE DAILY GLEANER

River repair aims to keep it natural

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The key to repairing flood-damaged riverbanks is to keep it natural, say workers with the Nashwaak Watershed Association.

The group was repairing a 30-metre section of riverbank at Nashwaak Valley Farms near Penniac this week, recently eroded by spring flooding.

Jill Hudgins, project co-ordinator for the Nashwaak Watershed Association, the organization overseeing the work, said instead of using just hard rock or building a barrier wall out of concrete, the bank is being gently groomed toward the water.

Some rocks are being placed at the base along with a biodegradable fabric, all designed to prevent further erosion and encourage vegetation growth.

“The goal is to improve the water

quality [by] putting that vegetation back on the bank,” Hudgins said. “The vegetation will absorb the rainfall and it will help cool down the river as well.”

The project is funded through the federal and provincial governments as well as through the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation, Hudgins said, and costs between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

In an email, Marieka Chaplin, executive director for the association, said scientists have recognized that one of the most effective ways to limit the negative impacts of climate change on freshwater resources is through maintaining naturalized and well-vegetated shorelines with native plants that are resistant to the impacts of a changing climate.

Mike Sorenson, who owns the stretch of property along the river, said the work will improve his land, which he plans to make into an agro-tourism and

outdoor adventure destination.

“To me, the biggest issue was it was putting silt into the river every spring when the flood comes through, which is bad for the fish habitat,” Sorenson said. “That’s the biggest advantage for me. It makes the bank better and more stable.”

Sorenson said he’s lost about 10 feet (3.05 metres) of property due to erosion from recent flooding.

Hudgins said it’s the association’s third bank restoration project.

Two were done in 2017 - one in Marysville and another on private land in Stanley.

Hudgins said such work is part of the organization’s mandate.

“Clean water is really important to us,” she said. “Eroding riverbanks contribute to pollution by putting sediment into the water and that irritates fish gills, it covers fish eggs.”