

Heritage Rivers Bulletin

Vol. 1 No. 2, Summer, 1996

New Schedule for River Suggestions!

Do you have any new suggestions of potential Heritage Rivers? Please submit them to the BCHRS Board prior to October 31, 1996. Public involvement and grassroots action are critical and this new schedule strengthens that process.

The suggestion date has been advanced in order to extend the subsequent periods of public consultation on candidate rivers. Suggestions made this fall will be subject to Board review and public consultation through the winter and spring, and will form the basis for the Board's annual report in September, 1997.

The Board's first report in September, 1995 contained the nomination of eight rivers: the Adams, Babine, Blackwater, Cowichan, Fraser, Similkameen, Skagit, and Stikine. The Similkameen nomination was subsequently withdrawn to allow for further public consultation and review. The remaining seven rivers were accepted by Government in May, 1996 as the inaugural rivers of the provincial system.

The Board is currently preparing for the release of its second report in September, 1996. Rivers which were suggested by the public, and are now in the final stage of consideration are: the Atnarko, Bella Coola, Elk, Granby, Horsefly, Kechika, Kettle, Quesnel and Turnagain. Other rivers which were deferred at the previous stage of the process will be reviewed during the 1996/1997 period for possible nomination in September, 1997. Those rivers are: the Columbia, Peace, Squamish, Shuswap, and Tatshenshini.

To ensure that the BCHRS represents a broad selection of provincial river systems, the Board encourages suggestions from all over B.C. In particular, the Board would like to hear from the public in the Kootenay region, which presently seems to be under-represented by the list of designated Heritage Rivers.

Nomination Process:

- October 31 - Identification: Public submits river suggestions to be considered for the BCHRS.
- Oct. 31 -p; Dec. 15 - Preliminary Review: Public consultation and review by the Board leads to the identification of a list of candidate rivers.
- Dec. 15 -p; March 31 - Secondary Review: Further public consultation and review of the candidate rivers lead the Board to identify nominees.

- September - Government Recognition: A report is released which outlines the rivers nominated for the BCHRS. The report is followed by Government recognition of the appropriate rivers, which are then monitored on a continuing basis as part of the provincial system.

What is ITAC?

ITAC is the Inter-agency Technical Advisory Committee which administers the BC Heritage Rivers Program on behalf of the government, and supports and advises the BC Heritage Rivers Board. The ITAC is an important part of the Heritage Rivers program, and helps to coordinate BCHRS goals and guidelines with other interests.

Who is on the Committee? It is composed of representatives from various government agencies, including: the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP); the Ministry of Forests (MoF); the Ministry of Employment and Investment; the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture; and, the Land Use Coordination Office. The ITAC is jointly chaired by Colin Campbell of MELP, and Tom Hall of MoF.

Because government agencies have greater access to information and regional experts than the Board, the Committee can keep the Board informed of technical data in relevant areas. The ITAC also serves to coordinate the activities and objectives of the Board with other interests, such as land use planning processes.

The ITAC assists the Board at each stage of the river nomination process.

Selection: At the request of the Board, ITAC conducts inventories of specified rivers, identifies links with land use plans, and offers assessments and recommendations on Heritage River status.

Nomination: ITAC advises the Board on forming vision statements and management guidelines for each river.

Monitoring: ITAC helps to ensure that the identified visions and management guidelines for each river are implemented in current and future land use planning processes.

Identification Criteria

What makes a river suitable for designation as a BC Heritage River? Selection criteria focus on a combination of natural, cultural, and recreational values. A river does not have to meet all the criteria in order to be named a Heritage River.

Natural Values

- displays physical examples of evolutionary processes, and/or supports ecosystems or species of particular interest

Cultural Values

- influenced the historical development of B.C.
- has been of significance in traditional territories or lifestyles of First Nations people
- is associated with people, events, movements, ideas or beliefs of significance to the cultural heritage of people today

Recreational Values

- supports recreational activity, and is accessible to a large and diverse group of recreationists
- The river is conducive to high quality recreational experience

Selection Guidelines

In addition to the identification criteria, the Board also evaluates candidate rivers according to the following selection guidelines.

- public support from a variety of interest groups
- First Nations relation to the river
- the integration of resource management around the river
- the river's contribution to a balanced representation of the provincial rivers system
- the balance of regional representation in the provincial system
- the diversity of physical types of selected rivers

River Profile: The Cowichan

The Cowichan River was one of the inaugural rivers named to the BC Heritage Rivers System. Not only does the Cowichan integrate many of the cultural, First Nations, industrial, natural, and recreational characteristics of a Heritage River, but it is also monitored by a model organization, the Cowichan Watershed Council (see below).

Situated on Vancouver Island, the Cowichan River System runs approximately 75 km from the west end of Cowichan Lake to drain into the Strait of Georgia. The system drains a mountain basin of some 900 square km, and passes through a variety of land covers. Much of the Cowichan basin is heavily forested with second growth douglas fir, hemlock, and lodgepole pine. The river also passes through agricultural and settled areas including the community of Cowichan Lake at the upper end and Duncan in its lower reaches. Fish commonly found in the Cowichan include brown, cutthroat, and rainbow trout, steelhead, and salmon.

The diverse natural areas within the Cowichan drainage basin accommodate a number of land use interests, including: First Nations reserves, parks, provincial forest land, and private land. The River supports numerous recreational activities, such as boating, tubing, hiking, camping, and fishing.

Although all of the BC Heritage Rivers selection criteria are relevant to the Cowichan River System, its recreational values are most prominent. The Cowichan provides opportunities for recreation experiences that are compatible with an appreciation of its other natural and cultural heritage values. The river system has also played an

important part in the history and development of First Nations and European cultures. Despite its importance to a wide variety of user groups, the Cowichan retains some excellent examples of natural features and scenery.

Cowichan Watershed Council

The Cowichan Watershed Council (CWC) was created in September, 1995 with a clear purpose: "To ensure a healthy Cowichan River from source to sea." The role of this umbrella organisation is to facilitate and coordinate community and government projects related to the Cowichan watershed. Additionally, it provides a forum for community involvement and information exchanges, and finds solutions to problems concerning the river.

The CWC's membership reflects its commitment to representation from a broad cross-section of interests in the river. In addition to a substantial number of individual, resident members, represented interests include: agriculture, labour, local business, forest industry, environmental groups, First Nations, and the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

Based on the issues identified at the Cowichan River Sustainability Conference in June, 1995, the CWC has created specific teams to deal with each of the six main areas of action for the Cowichan River:

- education and awareness
- stewardship, stream protection and fish management
- water quality and waste management
- growth management
- water flow and extraction
- legislation.

The Cowichan Watershed Council has been busy organizing educational seminars, workshops and public meetings, coordinating research efforts and information campaigns, and cooperating with a youth involvement program in activities such as producing a video and marking storm drains. However, these activities are only the beginning of an agenda full of initiatives to address issues such as project planning by government and corporate interests, sewage and septic treatment, fish habitat restoration, and groundwater legislation.

The Cowichan Watershed Council serves as a model for the BC Heritage Rivers System as a localized, grass roots organisation, which represents diverse interests in its work towards ensuring the health of the Cowichan Watershed. Other citizen groups associated with rivers throughout the province might benefit from learning more about the experience of this active local group. If you are interested in the CWC and its experience, and would like more information, please write to:

Cowichan Watershed Council
c/o Community Futures Development Centre
750 b Jubilee
Duncan, B.C., V9L 1X8

Board Member Profile: Bill Bourgeois

The ongoing process of public consultation brings Board members into communities throughout the province. These short profiles aim to introduce each member to the public as a supplement to that personal contact. The featured member in this issue of the Heritage Rivers Bulletin is Bill Bourgeois.

Bill completed his B.S.A. in Soil Science and his M.Sc. in Forest Soils right here in the province at the University of British Columbia. Following those first two local degrees, he completed a Ph.D, also in Forest Soils, at the University of Washington.

Bill began his career with the federal government as a research scientist for the Department of Forestry and Fisheries. His research focused on the impacts of forest harvesting on soil productivity.

After his work with the federal government, Bill spent a number of years with MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. He worked his way from being a terrain specialist, to land use planning supervisor, to the position of General Manager, where he provided advice, information, and services related to all aspects of forest land management.

In the early 1990s, Bill was an Associate with the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE). He is now Vice-President of Forest Policy at Lignum Ltd., where he advises on land use, First Nations issues and forest management policy.

Bill joined the BC Heritage Rivers Board at its inception in 1995. In the past he was a member of the Whistler Council for Sustainability, and is currently a member of the Vancouver Foundation Environmental Committee. He has received several awards for his contributions to integrated resource management.

As a member of the BCHRS Board, Bill is valued for his experience in land use and forestry, and for his commitment to integrating various interests in the management and stewardship of B.C. Rivers.

Fraser Nominated for CHRS

Based on the recommendation of the BC Heritage Rivers Board, the BC Provincial Government intends to nominate the Fraser River to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). The CHRS is a nation-wide heritage rivers program, which aims to commemorate Canadian rivers that possess outstanding heritage qualities. The general objective of this national program is to foster awareness and conservation of rivers across Canada which possess outstanding heritage values.

The physical, historical, and economic significance of the Fraser river to British Columbia make it an obvious choice as the first candidate to be nominated by the provincial government for the national system.

Public consultation and support are an important consideration of the CHR Board when evaluating candidates. The support of local communities, interest groups, and the general public indicate province-wide acceptance of the Fraser River's nomination to the CHRS. If you are interested in this recognition, or would like more information, please contact the B.C. Parks office or the BC Heritage Rivers Board.

BC Rivers Day! - Sept. 29th, 1996

Get involved with the 16th annual Rivers Day, and host an event in your community. For information, contact the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC at (604) 737-3058.

Contact Us:

Videos

The BCHRS video, "Rivers for the Future," is now available for use and distribution. It can be borrowed free for a period of three weeks, or purchased at a cost of \$13.00 plus shipping and handling. If you are interested, please contact the Secretariat to the Board.

Display

The BCHRS Display has already been to a number of festivals and events in B.C. If you are interested in having the display at an upcoming event in your area, please contact the Secretariat to the Board.

Suggestions

Send in your river suggestions for the BCHRS this summer, so that they can be considered with the next group of river nominations! Don't wait!

Contact Us At:

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