

Heritage Rivers Bulletin

Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall, 1997

1997 Heritage River Nominations Announced

Celebrations during BC Rivers week in September were bolstered by the BC Heritage Rivers Board announcement of the nomination of eight more rivers to the BC Heritage Rivers System. This major step forward was the result of considerable work by the Board over the previous year to ensure that the over 30 rivers suggested by the public were evaluated carefully for their suitability for the system. While all rivers warrant effective stewardship of their natural, cultural and recreational values, the Board has been charged with recommending a representative system of BC's river heritage for special recognition and choosing among such worthy suggestions is difficult.

The rivers nominated in this year's report represent some major components of the kind of heritage river system that was envisioned at the outset of the Board's mandate. As Chair Mark Angelo stated in the release of the Board's report, "This group of rivers is extremely important for the reflection it provides on the major policy issues affecting water use within the province of British Columbia." Each of the rivers has received considerable public support and the Board appreciates the concern and dedicated efforts of many individuals and groups that have gone into these nominations.

The nominated rivers:

Alouette: important recovering salmon habitat resulting from changes in BC Hydro management and the release of more water into the system; and, exceptionally strong interest by public groups in developing the river as a model of semi-urban stream stewardship including extensive public education.

Columbia: important representative of the Kootenay region of the province; exceptional natural values of the extensive wetlands in the upper reaches of the river dedicated to conservation; important fishery in the lower reaches; and, cultural history values throughout the drainage including First Nations interests, and the history of hydro-electric and industrial utilization of the river.

Middle: internationally significant salmon fishery; and, direct and enduring relationship with the First Nations of the area.

Mission Creek: important representative within the Okanagan of natural values and fish habitat; and, an important example of restorative, managed urban stream enhancement.

Peace: one of BC's major river systems recognized for its extremely significant contribution to the development of the province; major agricultural, hydro and industrial contributions; culturally significant to First Nations; and, important natural and recreational values requiring conservation.

Prophet: exceptional ecological values requiring protection; and, significant wilderness recreation values.

Stuart: internationally significant salmon fishery; direct and enduring relationship with the First Nations of the area; and, important historical values associated with non-aboriginal exploration.

Yakoun: important representative on the Queen Charlotte Islands of natural values and fish habitat; culturally significant to First Nations; and, an important recreational values.

Cowichan and Stikine Recommended for CHRS Status

The Board's fall report included the recommendation that the BC Government expand its participation in the Canadian Heritage River System by putting forward two more British Columbia rivers: the Cowichan and the Stikine. "They are rivers that reflect a diversity of values including their exceptional natural qualities and their valuable role in the economy of their respective regions," said Mark Angelo. "Like the Fraser which was put forward for national recognition last year, the Stikine and the Cowichan should be viewed as national treasures."

Local support for this recommendation has been strongly expressed and there are effective local interest organizations already active in these areas that provide an important focus for such an initiative.

The BC Heritage Rivers Board has been charged with the responsibility to recommend a few of the rivers within the BCHRS as candidates for further national recognition. To date, three rivers have been recommended and the Board will continue to review the expanding BC system to identify other possible candidates. It is expected that 5 or 6 BC rivers could eventually become part of the national system.

Anything Missing?

With the nomination of eight more rivers the BC Heritage River System is approaching the level that was anticipated at the outset of the program. The Board's original mandate was to identify approximately 20 rivers from throughout the province that would reflect BC's river heritage. As a result of earlier nominations 11 rivers have been accepted by the Government and recognized within the system. They are the Adams, Atnarko, Babine, Bella Coola, Blackwater, Cowichan, Fraser, Kechika, Kettle, Skagit and Stikine.

The eight new river nominations combine with the Board's previous nomination of the Horsefly River (which still awaits current land use planning considerations) would bring the system to 20 rivers if all nominations were accepted. However, there are still a number of rivers that the public are anxious to see added to the system and there is still some question concerning the adequacy of representation of the breadth of BC's river heritage within the system. The Board will continue to consider these concerns and will put forward some additional nominations as considered appropriate.

Public opinion on the suitability of other rivers for inclusion in the BCHRS will be very influential, as always, in the finalization of the system. If you have comments on rivers that you feel are being missed, or regions or types of rivers that are inadequately represented, please contact us. NOW is the time to express your views!

Government Supports Work of the Board

With the receipt of the Board's fall report, Minister Cathy McGregor responded with a strong vote of confidence by extending the mandate of the Board for an additional two years. McGregor stressed that the mandate of the Board will continue to address educational and community stewardship while increasingly address implementation and monitoring aspects of the program for the rivers in the system. McGregor said, "We will work to bring other levels and areas of government into this process, providing a broader base of support for the system."

Originally, in May of 1995, when the program was announced the Board was given a three year time horizon. With this recent announcement, the Board will be able to continue its work and ensure local awareness and implementation of the system in communities throughout the province.

Rivers Conference 98

Conserving and Restoring Our River Heritage

The second national conference on Canada's river heritage will be held in British Columbia this spring. Don't miss this opportunity to join with river enthusiasts from across the North America to consider the achievements, issues and challenges in river stewardship. The conference is being organized by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC in conjunction with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and will be held at the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel on May 3 - 5, 1998.

The purpose of Rivers Conference 98 is to bring researchers and river activists together with land managers to discuss real problems and generate real solutions. Keynote speakers, panel discussions, workshops and field workshops will all be used as ways of sharing experiences and ideas and discovering new conservation approaches. The BC Heritage Rivers Board will be hosting a workshop on BC Heritage River Stewardship, considering the future of the BC Heritage Rivers System and seeking to broaden stewardship of all rivers at the local level. Members of the public, industry, First Nations and government representatives from throughout the province, especially those actively involved in stewardship of rivers within our provincial system are encouraged to participate.

Pre and post conference activities will include workshops for heritage river planners, capacity building for volunteer groups and field trips to other BC locations. For more information contact the Outdoor Recreation Council at: #334 - 1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6H 4A9 Tel (604) 737-3058 Fax (604) 737-3666

Publication Notice!

BC Fisheries is initiating a newsletter relating to fisheries issues in British Columbia. The newsletter is available to all interested British Columbians and you can subscribe free of charge by calling 1-888-606-3474.

Please Contact Us

The Heritage Rivers Board is always interested in hearing from the public. Please let us know your ideas, concerns and suggestions about how we can help improve river stewardship throughout British Columbia.

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