

# **Board Report, 1997**

## **Candidate Heritage Rivers:**

### **A Report of the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board 1997**

Prepared for:  
the Hon. Cathy McGregor  
Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks

Prepared by:  
the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board

September 22, 1997

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The Honourable Cathy McGregor  
Minister of Environment, Lands & Parks  
Legislative Buildings  
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Ms. McGregor,

We are pleased to submit this third annual report for your government's consideration and action. The report outlines our recommendations regarding both our 1997 nominations for the British Columbia Heritage Rivers System and our suggestions for additional candidates for the Canadian Heritage River System. In addition, it summarizes our activities over the past year. As usual we have put a major emphasis on gathering public support and comment for the program and are pleased with the response.

It is difficult to select candidate rivers with so many rivers put forward by the public with such convincing concern and commitment. In choosing these rivers to nominate, we strongly support the public's concern for the future of all the rivers they have suggested and the importance of better stewardship for all rivers in the province. We hope that your government will continue to work diligently to improve planning and management processes with respect to river integrity throughout the province.

We hope your government will respond to this report as soon as possible.  
Respectfully submitted,

The British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board  
BC Heritage Rivers Board

## Preamble

The health of the land and all its inhabitants is compromised without healthy rivers. Rivers are the veins and arteries of the earth carrying lifegiving waters from their origins in glaciers, snowfields, lakes and wetlands down to the sea. They provide habitat for aquatic and land species, influence geography and climate, and from earliest times have been of central importance in human existence and cultural development. Among many peoples, the place of rivers in earthly existence gives them a powerful spiritual significance.

In British Columbia, clearly "Rivers tie the mountains to the sea" (Hume). Besides the critical importance to the non-human world, this province's rivers have shaped its people's destinies. First Nations' cultures have been shaped by their associations with these great waterways, from dependence on the salmon to their use as inter-tribal trading routes. This continues to be the case. For more recent immigrants, rivers were the means of exploring and settling the land that is now British Columbia, and the main urban centres and routes of commerce were along rivers such as the Fraser, the Columbia, and the Okanagan.

With increasing demand for water in modern society, the significance of rivers is becoming ever more obvious and the preservation of their health ever more critical. What has been taken for granted for centuries must now be restated: the natural, cultural, and recreational place of rivers lies at the heart of our lives as human inhabitants and stewards of the land.

All rivers are important and deserve recognition for their character and contribution. Stewardship of our rivers needs to be more widely promoted and accepted. Some rivers require special recognition and management because of their outstanding qualities. They can receive such recognition in the BC Heritage Rivers System.

# 1. Background

Rivers are a vital part of British Columbia - its landscape and its culture. Rivers help define who we are and the lifestyle choices available to us. Healthy rivers mean a healthy environment and abundant, pure water for plants, animals, human consumption, industry, and recreation. With such plentiful water resources in British Columbia, we have an obligation to be a model of river stewardship for Canada and the world. We must make every effort to integrate all uses and management of rivers, to support a common goal of maintaining healthy natural water systems for generations to come.

As a contribution to this common goal, the Government of British Columbia announced the creation of the BC Heritage Rivers System (BCHRS) in May, 1995. To head the program, a public Board was appointed which endeavours to draw public attention to rivers throughout the province and to recognize those rivers which serve as outstanding examples of a variety of heritage values. The specific goals of the BCHRS are:

- to identify and recognize provincially significant rivers for their natural, cultural heritage, and recreational values;
- to encourage a greater focus on provincially significant rivers in the appropriate land use planning processes; and,
- to promote greater public awareness and improved stewardship of all rivers throughout the province.

To achieve its mandate for the BCHRS, the Board established a public consultative process, identification criteria and selection guidelines for the identification and assessment of candidate rivers (see Appendix 1). The role of the public and public opinion are fundamental to this process. Consideration of any river requires that the suggestion be brought forward from the public, demonstrating public interest in the river as a possible part of the BCHRS. The Board then seeks to gauge the breadth and depth of that support through a variety of means including soliciting written submissions and participating in meetings in the local area. This effort is influenced by the circumstances in the local area and the extent of the Board's resources.

Widespread support for the program has come from communities, local governments, industry, First Nations and individuals in areas associated with existing and potential BC Heritage Rivers. The Board has been very pleased with this support and believes that the recognition the system provides is rightfully something local interests should be proud of.

The BC Heritage Rivers Board issued its first report in September, 1995, nominating eight rivers as the inaugural candidates for the BCHRS. One river was subsequently withdrawn from the list of nominees pending further public discussion. The Government responded in May, 1996, accepting the other seven rivers nominated, thereby establishing the foundations of the system. In September of 1996 the Board's second report nominated five more rivers to the system. Four of those rivers were accepted in the Government's response in June of 1997. A decision on the fifth river was deferred until a land use planning report affecting the area is

finalized . Thus the system now contains 11 rivers with one nomination pending. These rivers present a variety of special values, for the most part outside of protected areas, and are hence worthy of special stewardship efforts. It is the Board's hope that in the future these rivers will be viewed as models of integrated resource planning and management that are developed and utilized within the context of existing planning processes.

The Board has continued to work with the public and the government to expand and improve the BC Heritage Rivers System and to promote responsible stewardship of all rivers. This report outlines the third set of rivers nominated by the Board for heritage river status and is submitted to Government for review and action. With the submission of these nominations, the Board will have reached the general target for the size of the system identified at the announcement of the program. This does not mean that further nominations are not possible, but rather that the Board views this report as its last major group of nominations.

This report also draws attention to those rivers which, although not nominated for recognition within the BC Heritage Rivers System, are nonetheless valuable components of our provincial river heritage. Better stewardship of all rivers throughout the province is something the Board strongly encourages. Local action and wider support for responsible land and water use practices are essential ingredients for maintaining the future integrity of our rivers. It is up to us all to recognize and act on this responsibility.

In keeping with the mandate of the Board, this report also identifies further river candidates recommended for inclusion in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). One river, the Fraser, was previously recommended by the Board for such status and has since been nominated by the British Columbia Government and accepted by the CHRS Board.

## **2. Rivers Nominated for Recognition in the B.C. Heritage Rivers System (BCHRS)**

### **The BC Heritage Rivers System**

The BC Heritage Rivers Board recommends that the following rivers be recognized for their natural, cultural and recreation values and be added to the BC Heritage Rivers System:

● ***the Alouette, Columbia, Middle, Mission, Peace, Prophet, Stuart, and, Yakoun.***

The selection of these rivers reflects the importance of adequately representing within the system the diversity of values encompassed by British Columbia's rivers. If accepted, the system would contain some of the largest, most complex, and significant rivers in the province from the perspective of historical and industrial development - the Fraser, the Peace and the Columbia.

The BCHRS is not a system of undisturbed wilderness rivers only; it also promotes and celebrates the wise use of our rivers for the benefit of society. It has been an objective of British Columbia in its participation in the CHRS to ensure recognition of some of these major rivers right across the country, and British Columbia would show leadership in recognizing these rivers within its own heritage rivers system.

Another important selection criterion was the presence of proposed rivers in an urban area. The Cowichan River, the Alouette River and Mission Creek are examples the Board trusts will serve as models of urban stream stewardship, where community involvement and responsibility for management direction can be held up as examples for other communities throughout the province. This is also an important policy direction of the new Fish Protection Act where local governments are encouraged to improve and protect fish and riparian habitats along urban streams. In selecting these rivers, the Board is urging local governments to embrace the spirit of that policy and provide examples for other communities to follow. In conjunction with such efforts, the Board encourages communities to take advantage of the Heritage River recognition as a way of promoting their own community - the quality of its environment, the strength of its economy, and the quality of life for its residents.

The Board is also very pleased with the involvement and interest in the system from First Nations. There is a strong link between Heritage Rivers in British Columbia and the culture and traditions of First Nations people. Interest and support has been evident with respect to many of the rivers within the system and those proposed for addition such as the Cowichan, the Columbia, and the Stuart. Especially significant in this regard is the nomination of the Middle River where the Carrier Sekani First Nation was the proponent. Making the system more representative of and sensitive to First Nations interests is also an important objective of the Heritage Rivers System and the Board.

## **The Rivers**

In its third year, the Board reviewed an extensive list of rivers suggested by the public as candidates for the BC Heritage Rivers System. In its review the Board solicited and responded to input from proponents of many of the proposed rivers. The nominated rivers discussed in this report met the established criteria and were considered most suitable under the selection guidelines. The Board considers these to be key rivers that could be river management models and thus contribute to the BC Heritage Rivers System. Although not included in the current list, the Board recognizes the special circumstances surrounding the Tatshenshini River (see 4. Status Reports) and awaits the conclusion of negotiations with the affected First Nations.

The nominations are presented alphabetically and no priority is implied. An overview of the character of each river and its significance is provided followed by the selection criteria that were most important in the Board's assessment. A vision statement for each river follows accompanied by the supporting management directions formulated by the Board. They are presented as guidelines for the future of a BCHRS river consistent with the land use planning directions for the area.

Recognition within the BCHRS is intended to draw attention to the special qualities of the rivers. It should also reinforce the need to maintain these qualities for generations to come. While the emphasis in the BCHRS is on maintaining a diversity of uses within the watershed, a few special circumstances have led the Board to envision certain rivers to be 'free-flowing'; meaning 'undammed'. This does not apply to all BCHRS candidates but is intended to maintain the special character of some of the rivers whose values are dependent on this condition. Even where such a vision is stated, it is not intended to restrict other industrial uses or bank modifications. Such a vision does not undervalue the use of water for energy production, but does say that some of our province's outstanding rivers have overriding values.

## **Alouette River**

The Alouette River flows from Alouette Lake to its junction with the Fraser River. Typical of tributaries of the lower Fraser river it drains a mountain watershed in the Coast Mountains especially important for its timber and fish values. The hydro power potential of the river and its proximity to major urban populations was recognized early on and flows within the river have been controlled with the operation of BC Hydro's Alouette Dam.

The river has a significant place in the cultural heritage of the area. The Katzie First Nation have historically depended on the salmon of the river and have maintained spiritual, cultural and economic ties to the river. The valley was part of a travel corridor for First Nations people between the lower Fraser River area and the Lillooet area.

In the late 1800's the economic activities of newcomers to the area along the river began to change the face of the valley. Farming and logging were significant activities in the area and sawmills were developed in conjunction with the upstream logging activity, since the river was used to float logs downstream to New Westminster. The headquarters of the Abernethy

and Loughheed Logging Company was located on the river in the 1920's at the site of Allco Park which is now the site of a fish hatchery and the future site of an Alouette River interpretive centre.

The river has been an important recreational focus for residents of the area throughout the years. Acquired from the Burrard Power Company in 1927, the site of Maple Ridge Park was developed by the municipality and has been a popular recreation site for generations. Other popular parks such as Davidson's Pool and Horseman's Park are also located along the river.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Alouette River is an important salmon habitat in the process of recovery as a result of commitments for improved water management for the river. BC Hydro has increased water flows in the river according to its new water use planning efforts with the spin off being restoration of salmon populations in the river. The Alouette River could now become a model of stewardship in a semi-urban setting and its proximity to major urban populations also provides exceptional opportunities to educate people on the importance of habitat quality and sustainability. Realizing this potential would be consistent with the emphasis on urban stream enhancement within the new Fish Protection Act and will depend on support from local governments in ensuring effective restoration and management measures are undertaken.

The Alouette River provides an opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- important natural heritage values including salmon habitats; and
- opportunities for recreation and educational experiences and activities that are compatible with an appreciation for the natural heritage values.

### **Vision**

- a model of restorative management that recaptures the breadth of natural, cultural and recreational values of the river and sustains them into the future

### **Management Objectives**

.c.to manage water flows and water quality to enhance and sustain healthy native fish populations

to encourage the development and use of a wide variety of recreational opportunities and facilities

to build a greater understanding of the relationship between industrial activity and the quality of river environments and to show how the two can be integrated to maintain both industrial opportunities and a healthy river ecosystem



## Columbia River

The Columbia River, the fourth largest watershed in North America, is truly one of British Columbia's great rivers. Because of its size and location it has been the focus of extensive development activity and has taken on a high profile nationally and internationally. It meanders over a 800 km course through the Rocky Mountain Trench and the Arrow Lakes system before crossing over into the United States.

The upper Columbia drainage is known for the internationally significant wetlands that extend for 180 km from the communities of Canal Flats to Donald. This large continuous wetland has developed a system of sedge meadows, bulrush swamps and shallow lakes (that flood annually) surrounded by white spruce, cottonwood, aspen and willow. A major staging area for thousands of waterfowl on the Pacific flyway, the area is also used by rare trumpeter swans and an abundance of loons, gulls, terns, bitterns, herons, hawks, bald eagles, osprey and 100 species of song birds. The wetlands also provide important wintering habitat for ungulates and important habitat for a variety of other species including mink, weasels, bats, amphibians and reptiles.

The area also has major significance to the First Nations. Recorded use of the area by the Ktunaxa people dates back 5,000 - 7,000 years, as indicated by the settlements and artifacts discovered all along the edges of the marshes. More recent use of the river by native people for salmon fishing prior to the damming of the river for hydro development is also well documented.

In contrast to the upper reaches of the river, the middle and lower reaches of the river (in Canada) have been extensively modified by human activity. The topography of this segment of the river through the southern Monashees and Selkirk Mountains is more subdued with few rugged peaks and moderately sloped forested hillsides. Forests reflect the variability of climate over the area from dry to moist and contain the full range of species typical of the region. Drainage systems are complex and many community watersheds are found connected to the Columbia system. The valley bottoms are heavily modified by industrial development, hydro reservoirs, rural settlement, farms, transportation and communication systems and communities. The middle segment of the river now generates a significant portion of British Columbia's hydroelectric power supply and further expansion of this production is being considered. The Keenlyside Dam has been identified for upgrading to increase hydro production. However, dam proposals downstream from Castlegar to the US border have for the time being been shelved in favour of ensuring the integrity of other social and economic values. Some of the major communities are Revelstoke, Castlegar, Trail, and Rossland. Much of the land in the valley bottom is held privately.

In spite of the extent of development and the modification of the riverine environment, the corridor remains an important area of wildlife habitat. It serves as a travel corridor for wide ranging species within the West Kootenays, as well as containing critical habitat for caribou, grizzly bear, elk and moose. The lower section of the river, downstream from Trail before crossing over into the United States, has maintained a remarkable rainbow trout fishery, possibly the most productive in British Columbia, and continues to be a cornerstone of an active local angling culture. There is also potential for further enhancement of this stretch of the river particularly in its tributaries that could make this section of the river one of the most productive trout fisheries in Canada if not the world. Sturgeon are also an important part of

the river's fishery. In addition, with effective water management upstream and fish ladders downstream the river could at least partially return to its place as one of, if not the, major salmon river on the continent. The river's fish habitat is a crucial component of the extensive river recreation potential.

Land use and resource management within much of the Columbia River corridor within Canada is addressed in the Kootenay/Boundary Land Use Plan. Generally a balanced approach to on-going industrial activity combined with conservation of special ecological characteristics and functions is the approach reflected in the plan. Critical ecosystems along the upper Columbia are being designated by the BC Government as Wildlife Management Areas as part of the regional land use plan implementation. Special efforts have also been made to improve the contribution this area can make to maintaining large mammal populations through habitat and corridor identification while recognizing opportunities for responsible further industrial activity.

Canadian and American interests in the Columbia watershed have been the focus of a special international body and international treaty. The Columbia Basin Trust is the Canadian organization which receives its mandate from the international agreement with respect to the river and the assets which accrue from the treaty. The Trust seeks to monitor and advise on basin management issues and is a logical link for cooperation on environmental and development initiatives within the watershed between the two countries. In the United States similar concerns have resulted in a major initiative being launched in 1994 called the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management project. The purpose of the project was "to develop and then adopt a scientifically sound, ecosystem based strategy for managing all Forest Service or BLM administered lands within the Basin". Its comprehensive assessment included analysis of: the socio-economic setting; First Nations interests; the biophysical setting and landscape dynamics; terrestrial ecology; aquatic species and habitats; and ecosystem integrity. The results of the analysis provided an analysis of management options and recommendations for the future of the basin.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Columbia River is a critical part of the cultural and natural heritage of the province. Exceptional natural values are present in the wetlands of the upper reaches, and the importance of the wildlife corridor habitat and the associated recreational opportunities are significant aspects of the present value of the river corridor. The Columbia River has also been critical in the culture of local First Nations and in more recent history has been the focus of major hydro and industrial development. The river ranks high in all the heritage river criteria categories and all contribute to its suitability for BCHRS status. Recognition of the special character and contribution of each major segment of the river is particularly important. The ecological values of the upper section of the river from its headwaters to the upper end of Kinbasket Lake created by the Mica Dam, the exceptional rainbow trout habitat, free flowing character and recreational value of the lower segment (from Castlegar to the US border), and the history of hydro electric generation and utilization of the middle section of the river are the primary attributes on which the nomination focuses.

The Columbia River represents a unique opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- outstanding examples of natural environments and critical habitats;
- major examples of the cultural heritage values of the province including those of First Nations, hydro power development, settlement, mining and forestry;
- important opportunities for recreation experiences and activities that are compatible with an appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage values; and
- opportunities for improvement and maintenance of a wide variety of economic activities carried out in an environmentally sound fashion.

### **Vision**

- a model of natural, cultural, recreational and economic diversity managed for sustainability

### **Management Objectives**

- to manage the upper Columbia River, in a manner that emphasizes its natural characteristics and the importance of protection of critical wildlife habitat and wetland areas
- to manage the middle reaches of the river for its industrial productivity, ensuring that use of the water and the development along the river is consistent with the long term sustainability and the quality of the river environment for other concurrent uses
- to manage the lower reaches of the river within Canada primarily for its important fishery (both existing and potential) and recreational value, ensuring that it remains a free flowing section of river and that other uses such as settlement and industry are sensitively integrated
- to ensure that cooperative management involves the full spectrum of participating interests and coordinates management approaches throughout the length of the river
- to promote a cooperative effort with the United States' Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management project

## **Middle River**

The Middle River flows between Takla Lake and Trembler Lake in central British Columbia northwest of Prince George. The river is a critical link in the salmon habitat and production of the Stuart/Takla watershed and thus has been central to the culture and activities of the Carrier Sekani people for centuries.

Both the Early and Late Stuart sockeye depend on the quality of the environment in the Middle River for successful spawning and rearing. The Early Stuart sockeye's most important spawning grounds are tributaries of the Middle River, and the entire run migrates through the river. Spawning for the Late Stuart sockeye occurs in gravel fans at the outlets of the west bank of Middle River tributaries. The Middle River also provides critical habitat for

both Early and Late Stuart sockeye during their rearing year. White sturgeon are also found here.

Numerous First Nations communities surround Takla Lake on both traditional and reserve lands. Below the lake, the Middle River areas is important to Carrier people not only for the salmon runs but also for hunting, travel and settlement. Some trails lead off the river to traditional upland hunting, fishing, trapping, and berry picking areas such as Baptiste Lake where there is a traditional summer camp on the north shore. Long periods of traditional use have resulted in documented high archaeological values all along the Middle River.

Timber values are high throughout the area with lodgepole pine as the leading tree species. Others include balsam, spruce, deciduous species, and Douglas fir. Mountain pine beetle is endemic throughout the area. Good wildlife habitat abounds in the watershed. Alpine areas provide habitat for caribou, mountain goat, and grizzly bear. Good wetland habitats provide overwintering sites for trumpeter swans and other waterfowl, and nesting locations and migration stopovers for various bird species. Extensive riparian areas along the Middle River, provide habitat for a wide diversity of species. The diversity of habitats has led to a variety of recreation and tourism activities including hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, canoeing, wildlife and landscape viewing, and back-country skiing.

Land use and management in the watershed will be directed by the Ft. St. James LRMP, currently in progress. At present there is an emphasis on the development of resources such as mineral extraction and timber harvesting while minimizing impacts on other resources. Special consideration is recognized as important to those sites requiring special management.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Middle River is a critical environment contributing to the sustainability of internationally significant salmon populations and makes a significant contribution to the provincial commercial fishing industry. It equally represents important elements of the cultural heritage of the province.

The presence and activities of First Nations over centuries of occupation are dominant in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status. The initiative for this nomination and the strong support for it being added to the system come from the Carrier Sekani First Nation. This is an important contribution by First Nations people to the BC Heritage Rivers System and reflects the breadth and significance of the system as a means of improving public awareness of a diversity of river values, especially those related to First Nations culture.

The Middle River provides an opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- outstanding natural heritage values including critical fish and wildlife habitats; and
- outstanding cultural heritage values of significance to local First Nations

### **Vision**

- a river corridor managed to protect the integrity of its natural resources in particular the salmon fishery and cultural resources in recognition of its continued importance to First Nations

## **Management Objectives**

- to identify and protect sites of cultural significance along the river corridor
- to encourage effective management of the natural resources by First Nations people in the area which will ensure the long term viability of the river, its water quality, and healthy fish populations
- to link conservation objectives and management strategies with those of the Stuart River to ensure consistency and to maintain the integrity of the same watershed system

## **Mission Creek**

Mission Creek rises at Mission Lake in the Greystoke Mountain Range east of Kelowna and runs about 43 km before emptying into Okanagan Lake. Its watershed covers about 200,000 square km. The creek runs through a wide range of ecosystems from Englemann spruce/subalpine fir/interior Douglas fir in the upper reaches to the black cottonwood/water birch/dogwood riparian areas typical of the low elevations in the Valley. There are a number of geologic features of note along the creek including the rugged Gallagher Canyon and Layercake Mountain.

It is of particular ecological significance as the last remaining place for creek-spawning kokanee salmon, a species in the Interior which is in serious trouble. Diking and channeling of Mission Creek in the 1950's within City limits played a large part in this decline, from about 700,000 to 1.2 million spawning per year in the creek to only about 30,000 in 1996. Shore spawning is now about 51% of the total kokanee produced each year. Measures are underway in the channeled part of the creek to improve the habitat for spawning salmon.

The creek was a major source of fish for the Okanagan First Nations people and there are many archeological sites remaining along its shores. They also made use of various plant materials found along the creek for food, building materials, and medicines.

European history in the area has also been closely tied to Mission Creek, from the 1859 building of Father Pandosy's mission where the first fruit trees in the Valley were planted to early 20th century irrigation works remains of which can still be found. The first settlers built along the creek which was an important transportation route. The waters provided power for a grist mill and gold was found along its banks in the 1800's. Mission Creek has been very significant in the economic development of the area. It has a long history of use for irrigation and domestic water, resulting in its being highly regulated and managed within the City's boundaries.

There are two Regional parks and one community park along Mission Creek and the Regional District Central Okanagan has plans for a trail to the Three Forks (where two other main tributaries join Mission Creek). The Friends of Mission Creek is a private organization set up to raise money for the purchase of lands along the Creek and thus to provide public access. Their main project now is to build a trail along particularly the Kelowna section of the creek.

## **Selection Criteria**

Although drawing on all heritage river criteria, the natural heritage and recreational values of Mission Creek are dominant in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status. The Creek's critical role in the survival of the Okanagan Kokanee salmon population is of primary importance with regard to its natural values. Action towards this end would be consistent with the emphasis on urban stream enhancement within the new Fish Protection Act and will depend on support from local governments in ensuring effective restoration and management measures are undertaken.

The current major effort to restore and manage the natural qualities of the waterway through a model process of stewardship within an urban environment is particularly significant. The potential of Mission Creek as a model of stewardship in an interior urban setting also provides exceptional opportunities to educate people on the importance of habitat quality and sustainability.

Mission Creek represents an important opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- representative examples of natural features and scenery typical of the Okanagan region of the province; and,
- outstanding opportunities for recreation experiences and activities especially within an urban environment that are compatible with an appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage values.

## **Vision**

- a model of community involvement in the management of an urban stream environment

## **Management Objectives**

- to encourage effective growth and activity of its broadly based, grassroots river management organization that can direct the long term development and management of the watershed
- to monitor the development of an integrated management plan for the area that recognizes the natural, cultural and recreational values of the river
- to manage the river to protect and enhance its capability as critical habitat for the endangered Kokanee salmon of the Southern Interior within the context of the Fish Protection Act

## **Peace River**

The Peace River is a dominant landscape feature in the northeastern part of British Columbia and a river which physically and in importance extends well beyond this province. The upper reaches of the drainage in the Rocky Mountains have been developed for hydro power. The WAC Bennett and Peace Canyon hydro-electric dams produce 31% of British Columbia's hydro-electric power. A third dam, called Site C, was proposed for the Peace River. However, plans for the new mega-project are currently on hold.

Below the hydro development the river valley is comprised of broad terraces and steep slopes. Forest cover is mainly mixed deciduous with conifers more prevalent along the north-facing slopes. Climatic conditions, along with the fertile soils of the valley, are favourable for a strong agriculture industry primarily consisting of forage, cereal, and oilseed crops and some commercial vegetable production.

Twelve species of sport fish live in the mainstem Peace River downstream of the Peace Canyon dam between Hudson's Hope and Fort St. John. The most abundant are mountain whitefish, Arctic grayling, rainbow trout, lake whitefish and walleye. Bull trout, kokanee and northern pike are present in lower numbers. Marshes along the river provide excellent habitat for nesting and migratory waterfowl. Some of the songbirds that regularly migrate through the area are rare in the rest of British Columbia. Mule and white-tailed deer are quite common, and there are extensive areas of critical ungulate wintering habitat along the south-facing banks of the Peace River and its major tributaries.

The scenic qualities of the river valley are also noteworthy. The changing vegetation patterns, terraces and steep valley slopes provide interesting views for people on the upland areas or from the river. The river is heavily used by local residents for boating, swimming, rafting and fishing. The Peace River has significant cultural and historic values associated with First Nations settlement. In addition, exploration and the fur trade associated with the travels of people such as Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser, David Thompson, John Finlay, and John Stuart are part of the river's history. Remnants of a fort built by the Northwest Company in 1806 can be found at the mouth of the Beatton River.

Gas reserves are being developed in the region, and there is a high potential for future gas discoveries throughout the valley corridor. This is a significant long term interest that has major economic benefits for the region. The Fort St. John LRMP (in progress) recognizes this broad mix of important land values and seeks to articulate strategies to integrate the desired land use and development activities. Downstream in Alberta, the river is also under consideration for CHRS status.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Peace River, as one of the most notable and large river systems in British Columbia, is a significant part of the cultural and natural heritage of the province. Recreational opportunities are also prominent in the present use of the river corridor. Although drawing on all heritage river criteria, the cultural heritage values of this major British Columbia river are dominant in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status.

The Peace River represents a unique opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- played, and continues to play, a unique role in the cultural heritage of the province with outstanding examples of historical themes such as First Nations cultures, non-aboriginal settlement and agricultural development;
- interesting examples of natural features and scenery, with significant wildlife habitat; and
- opportunities for recreation experiences and activities that are compatible with an appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage values.

### **Vision**

- a river managed so as to accommodate a balanced variety of resource-based uses while maintaining representative natural qualities and recognizing the strong cultural importance of the river corridor to First Nations and non-aboriginal people

### **Management Objectives**

- to establish ecological benchmarks that serve as the measure for sustainable river management
- to promote a balanced approach to managing the river for its multiple values: industrial use, recreation activity and the ecological importance of the valley
- to contribute to the recognition of the downstream portion of the river beyond the boundaries of British Columbia's jurisdiction

## **Prophet River**

The upper section of the Prophet River is an integral part of new conservation initiatives to protect a major area in the northeastern Rockies. The river flows from high on the east side of the watershed divide between the Muskwa, Kwadacha and Akie rivers. Its entire course spans over 250 km before joining the waters of the Muskwa River just west of Fort Nelson.

The Prophet demonstrates characteristics similar to many of the major wilderness rivers of this northern region. Glacial meltwater tumbles through high alpine valleys collecting in a fast and seasonally variable flow before breaking out into the foothills country and changing to a more meandering course.

Within the Rocky Mountains, the Prophet River contributes to a large and complex ecosystem, rich in biodiversity and supporting extensive wildlife populations of caribou, elk and moose along with their predators, wolves and grizzlies. Other major species in this system include: Stone sheep, mountain goat, deer, coyote, fox, black bear, lynx and wolverine. This diversity of wildlife and the scenic qualities of the area form the basis for the area's outstanding wilderness recreation opportunities.

Beyond the mountains, the character of the river valley and the focus of human activity changes. The riparian areas in the valley bottoms are one of the most highly productive sites for growing timber. The potential for forest management activities in the zone is high and



forest companies have a number of operating units identified in the area. The forests in these areas are generally dense and moist with areas of large, mature stands with understories dominated by shrubs and forbs. This makes them excellent habitat for migratory songbirds. Coarse, woody debris from large fallen trees and snags and seasonal flooding provide areas for fur bearers and bats, stabilized stream banks and protective cover for fish. The riparian habitat also provides high capability winter habitat and corridors for wildlife migration and daily travel.

Oil and gas exploration and development also occur within the valley including on tenured parcels of land. The area has proven medium to high potential for oil and gas reserves. There is also high potential for sand, gravel, and industrial mineral extraction.

The Prophet River is used as a major recreation corridor for all types of boating activities as well as hiking, fishing, camping, picnicking, and hunting. Home of the Prophet River First Nation, many camps and trails from decades past provide a cultural perspective for visitors who are coming in increasing numbers.

Land use planning in the area has been important for developing an effective approach that takes advantage of the economic opportunities provided by the resources of the region. At the same time the plan recognizes and protects the outstanding ecological values. The Fort Nelson LRMP has addressed this balance and provides direction for integrated resource use of the watershed.

Control of access is an important objective of the plan. This recognizes the importance of avoiding road construction and activities that would negatively impact valuable riparian areas. Maintaining good water quality is also very important as many of these rivers are water sources for communities, such as Fort Nelson.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Prophet River is most significant from a natural heritage perspective. Exceptional ecological values, particularly those of wildlife habitat, as well as the associated wilderness recreation qualities are prominent values.

The Prophet represents an important opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- outstanding examples of important wildlife habitat, ecosystems, and scenery; and
- opportunities for recreation experiences and activities that are compatible with an appreciation for the natural heritage values.

### **Vision**

- a river managed to retain the outstanding natural qualities and wilderness character

### **Management Objectives**

- to contribute to the conservation of wildlife habitat of the important Northern Rockies ecosystem

- to recognize and support the continued relationship of the Prophet River First Nation to the river and its environment
- to emphasize wilderness and wilderness recreation opportunities as a focus of public education on the values of the watershed

## **Stuart River**

Located in central British Columbia west of Prince George, the Stuart River flows over 110 km from Stuart Lake to its junction with the Nechako River. The river drains a portion of the Nechako Plateau - a gently rolling region characterized by small lakes and tributaries. Low but impressive ridges interact with the river creating high bluffs and hoodoos.

The Stuart River drainage has typical riparian and upland forests associated with the major river systems on the central interior plateau, with lodgepole pine, spruce, cottonwood, aspen, Douglas fir and some birch. Typical understory includes willow, dogwood and alder. Open grass sidehills with dwarf juniper and park-like stands of aspen and spruce are also common.

The area is high value wildlife habitat, providing deer, moose and elk with winter ranges and riparian feeding areas. A small elk herd lives in the area and trumpeter swans winter in the upper Stuart. The Stuart River itself is home to sturgeon and one of the highest quality wild sockeye salmon runs in the world. In some years, up to one million salmon migrate up the river system to the spawning grounds in tributary streams and rivers north of Stuart Lake.

The area is believed to have high potential for gold, zinc-copper-lead and molybdenum deposits. Placer gold mining has been intermittent along the tributaries of Dog Creek and Tsah Creek since the 1930's. The industrial mineral potential is also reportedly high for deposits such as limestone, talc and magnesite.

The corridor is rich in First Nations history and contains archaeological sites of the Carrier people, including a provincially significant site at Chinlac, an ancient village near the confluence of the Nechako and Stuart rivers. The entire area lies within the traditional territory of the Nak'azdli First Nation of Ft. St. James and the Sai' Kuz First Nation of Stoney Creek.

The Stuart River was the exploration route of Simon Fraser and the travel route of the New Caledonia fur trade canoe brigades. Paddlewheelers plied the rivers (circa 1900) to supply Ft. St. James and other fur trading outposts. Today, guide outfitters use riverboats to guide hunters along the river and many resident hunters access the area by riverboat from the Sturgeon Point Road or from Ft. St. James.

### **Selection Criteria**

Like the Middle River, the Stuart River is a critical environment contributing to the sustainability of internationally significant salmon populations. It equally represents important elements of the cultural heritage of the province. The presence and activities of First Nations over centuries of occupation and the more recent role in white exploration,

settlement and development, are important in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status.

The Stuart River provides an opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- outstanding natural heritage values including critical fish and wildlife habitats; and
- outstanding cultural heritage values representing historical themes such as First Nations and early non-aboriginal exploration.

### **Vision**

- a river managed to sustain a diversity of conservation and integrated resource use activities

### **Management Objectives**

- to identify and protect sites of cultural significance along the river corridor
- to encourage effective management of the natural resources which will ensure the long term viability of the river, its water quality and healthy fish populations
- to link conservation objectives and management strategies with those of the Middle River to ensure consistency and integrity of the whole watershed system

## **Yakoun River**

The Yakoun River is the largest river on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands), extending approximately 54 km from Yakoun Lake to its mouth in Massett Inlet. The watershed is representative of the islands containing all of the tree species indigenous to the islands and most of the native birds and mammals. The river has important fish habitat for large numbers of salmon, rainbow and cutthroat trout, steelhead, and dolly varden. The estuary, river corridor and lake basin are important wetland habitats for a wide variety of waterfowl and an important wintering and breeding area for hawks, eagles and ducks.

The watershed continues to be a focus of Haida culture and activity. Several village and camp sites are located along the river based on the diversity of resources the people gleaned from the valley. The rich salmon populations of the river were a major resource. The trees of the valley were valued for canoes, carved poles, and house components, while bark was used for clothing, mats, and baskets. Other materials such as reeds, mosses, lichens, and certain stones were also valued resources.

Non-aboriginal settlement on the islands brought industrial activity to the valley in the form of coal mining camps and forestry. Logging continues to be the most extensive economic activity in the area. Exploration and feasibility studies are being conducted on a major gold deposit, Misty Mountain, and other gold prospects are being explored.

The valley has been an attractive destination for recreational activity for residents and tourists. Boating, camping, picnicking, fishing, and hiking are popular activities.

## **Selection Criteria**

The Yakoun River represents important elements of the natural and cultural heritage of the province. As the only nominated river on Haida Gwaii, it represents important natural environments, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities as well as protection of important fish populations. The presence and activities of the Haida people over centuries of occupation are also critical in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status.

The Yakoun River represents a unique opportunity to recognize a river that has:

- representative examples of important wildlife habitats, ecosystems and scenery; and
- outstanding heritage values representing First Nations culture; and,
- opportunities for recreation that are compatible with an appreciation for the cultural heritage values.

## **Vision**

- a carefully managed river sustaining a diversity of natural values and human activities

## **Management Objectives**

- to protect key natural and cultural resources along the river which are of particular significance to the ecology of the system and the life and history of the local people
- to manage forestry and other industrial uses to ensure water flows (volume, quality and timing) meet the needs for ecological sustainability, especially related to fish populations
- to promote an effective, multi-stakeholder management regime for the river
- to promote a cooperative management approach between First Nations and non-aboriginal agencies

### 3. Progress Report

The BC Heritage Rivers System is now well-established in its third year with eleven rivers recognized as part of the system. Another eight rivers nominated in this report now await review. One river remains deferred. With the BC Heritage Rivers System reaching the originally anticipated size, more emphasis must be placed on ensuring that the river visions are being achieved through appropriate management actions. Vigilance on the part of the Board and public supporters is necessary for the continuation and improvement of the management of all these rivers as models of stewardship for the province. The Board would like to hear from any member of the public with concerns about, or support for, rivers within the system.

The Board's first report in September 1995 introduced the initial nominees for the BC Heritage Rivers System. The seven nominated rivers were subsequently recognized by the provincial government as heritage rivers: the Adams, Babine, Blackwater, Cowichan, Fraser, Skagit, and Stikine. The Similkameen, listed in the report, was withdrawn to allow for further public consultation and review. The second report in September 1996 contained a further five nominations: the Atnarko, Bella Coola, Horsefly, Kechika, and Kettle. Four were subsequently recognized; a decision on recognition of the Horsefly was deferred until a land use planning integration report was completed.

The third set of rivers nominated by the Board is contained in this report: the Alouette, Columbia, Middle, Mission, Peace, Prophet, Stuart, and, Yakoun. These nominations are being presented to government through the release of this report and will await a Cabinet decision regarding recognition and their addition to the system.

Those rivers which were suggested for heritage river status, but have not been nominated, are: the Atlin, Brunette, Campbell, Cheakamus, Chilko, Chilcotin, Coquitlam, Elk, Finlay, Flathead, Granby, Harrison, Inklin, Kicking Horse, Kootenay, Lillooet, Nakina, Pitt, Quesnel, Sheslay, Similkameen, Skeena, Slokan, Squamish, Sushwap, Tahsis, Taku, Thompson, Tlell, Turnagain, White, and Wigwam. Reasons for these rivers not being nominated to the BC Heritage Rivers System vary, but a number of key factors influenced the Board's recommendations. These include: 1) the significance of the river's heritage values outlined in the Board's identification criteria; 2) the degree and breadth of support and commitment from local public groups, interests and individuals; and, 3) present and future land use commitments. In every case, however, members of the public were concerned about river values and strongly committed to ensuring better stewardship of the rivers in their locality. For this they are to be commended and the Board fully supports and encourages local stewardship action.

Although there was obvious support for all the rivers put forward, very few negative responses were received. For rivers where this occurred, opposition appeared to be based on misinterpretations of the BCHRS mandate and goals or on a general mistrust of systems and programs which focus on planning of land and water allocation and development. However, without widespread public support the Board could not nominate these rivers to the system. It is the feeling of the Board that this situation has left important areas of the province

underrepresented in the BCHRS. Such opposition demonstrates a need for greater public awareness of the BCHRS and its relationship with existing land use planning and management systems. The Board sees this as an important challenge for the future.

Promoting river stewardship will include working with a broad and informed public to seek ways in which conflicts can be resolved for the good of the river through cooperative management. The sustainability of our provincial river heritage is at risk if we are unwilling to take precautions in order to ensure long term water quantity and quality. The BC Heritage Rivers Board wants to work with local interest to help achieve the goal of sustainability and will make special efforts to address the opposition it encountered in certain areas during the nomination process.

## **4. Status Reports**

During the course of the Board's work, special circumstances concerning a few rivers have emerged and should be identified specifically. In each case the Board has reviewed the current situation and has established the positions identified in the summary statements below.

### **Horsefly River**

In its report responding to the Board's 1996 nominations, the BC Government stated the following with respect to the Horsefly River:

"Until the completion of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan Integration Report, the management regime around the Horsefly River is not known in sufficient detail to determine if the management guidelines recommended by the Heritage Rivers Board are appropriate. The BC Heritage Rivers Board will be asked to review their Horsefly River nomination when the Integration Report is completed."

The Board expects to review the completed Integration Report, presumably later this fall and will contact the Minister of Environment, Lands & Parks by letter indicating any modifications that are considered desirable to the Horsefly nomination based on the contents of the report. Further Government response on the Horsefly nomination will be expected in response to the Board's review of the situation.

### **Kicking Horse River**

The segment of the Kicking Horse River within Yoho National Park was nominated by Parks Canada and designated to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System by its Board in 1989. This action was independent of any provincial initiative and predated British Columbia's participation in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System and the creation of the BC Heritage Rivers System. The Kicking Horse River was suggested to the Board for consideration within the BC Heritage River System primarily based on its current status within the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. In the Board's review of all the candidate rivers, the Kicking Horse was not selected because of the deemed greater significance of other proposed rivers. The decision to exclude the Kicking Horse from the BC Heritage Rivers System does

not affect the status of that segment of the river within the national park and its status under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System.

### **Tatshenshini River**

From the outset of the Board's work, considerable interest has been shown in the Tatshenshini River as a candidate for both the BC Heritage Rivers System and the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The Government indicated an intent to nominate the Tatshenshini River at the time British Columbia joined the Canadian Heritage River System, prior to the establishment of the Heritage Rivers Board. The Yukon portion of the river is also under consideration for Canadian Heritage Rivers System status by the Yukon Government. Special circumstances, however, have caused the BC Heritage Rivers Board to withhold any action with respect to the Tatshenshini.

Negotiations with the Champagne - Aishihik people of the Yukon regarding park status in the area and the intent of Canadian Heritage Rivers System nomination continue. The Board respects these negotiations. While no specific action by the Board is needed at this time, the Board will support the government's future action regarding Canadian Heritage Rivers System nomination at the appropriate time.

## 5. Canadian Heritage River System

It is the recommendation of the BC Heritage Rivers Board that:

- *the Cowichan and the Stikine rivers be put forward to the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board as British Columbia nominations to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System*

It is the intention of British Columbia and the BC Heritage Rivers Board to put forward a number of the province's most significant waterways as candidates for Canadian Heritage Rivers System status. British Columbia joined the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in 1994 on the recommendation of the Minister's Advisory Committee. At the same time, the Committee made recommendations on improvements to the current workings of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, a new approach to provincial membership on the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, and the development of a provincial heritage rivers system.

In its initial review of prominent rivers in this province, the Board considered the Fraser River to be British Columbia's prime candidate for Canadian Heritage Rivers System nomination and included a recommendation addressing this in its first report to the government. The Board believes the Fraser River represents a major contribution this province can make to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System and is pleased with the progress made in the Canadian Heritage Rivers System designation process.

Now that the Fraser is well advanced, the Board has taken steps to identify additional candidates worthy of such recognition. Public comment was solicited on suggestions identified from among the rivers within the existing system. The Cowichan and Stikine emerged as very suitable and well supported candidates.

The Cowichan River is a rich blend of resources and desirable management circumstances. Recognized as one of the world's best salmon and trout rivers, a central feature in the culture and traditions of the resident First Nations' people, crucial in the industrial and economic development of the region, and an outstanding recreation resource, readily accessible to major centres of population, the Cowichan symbolizes highly valuable river environments. This has been recognized by a wide range of local interests who have cooperatively formed the Cowichan Watershed Council in an effort to facilitate and coordinate community and government initiatives related to the management of the watershed.

Different but as remarkable is the Stikine River. Here too a grassroots organization, Friends of the Stikine, has generated keen interest and broad support from all over the province, and indeed Canada, for recognition of the river's remarkable natural and scenic qualities. It possesses some of the most dramatic river topography in British Columbia and supports fish populations and a wide range of other wildlife within the watershed. The Stikine has been, and continues to be, very significant to the Talhtan people of the area. It has enormous recreation value especially for its wilderness character and scenery. In the lower reaches the river is also a major support for regional development and economic activity.

In addition to these recommended rivers, the Board will continue to assess suitable candidates for further recognition under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. Public input will be sought on candidates from among the present nominations to the BC Heritage Rivers System so that the Board can make further recommendations to an appropriate number of Canadian Heritage Rivers System rivers.



## 6. Next Steps

The successful long-term maintenance of a provincial heritage rivers system requires an open, interactive and cooperative relationship among the public, the Board, and government. The BC Heritage Rivers Board will continue to keep in contact with the groups and individuals connected with all the recognized rivers, as well as provide effective liaison with appropriate government agencies in order to ensure a well established and publicly supported system. Public interest, support and involvement in the management of heritage rivers will be critical to achieve the vision established for each river and to improve river stewardship. The Board will seek to foster such involvement and promote effective local community-based groups.

The BC Heritage Rivers Board has accomplished a great deal during the first two and a half years of its mandate and is currently developing its future role through a formal review process and discussions with government.

## 7. Activities (1996/97)

### **Board Member Activities:**

Members of the Heritage Rivers Board have been active in a wide variety of events, meetings, and personal interviews in the interests of the Heritage Rivers program. While time and resources are understandably limited, the Board members are anxious to speak to interested groups about the program and would welcome invitations. The availability of the Board members for such events continues to be advertised in the regular newsletter.

### **Board Press Conference (May, 1997):**

Since being established, the Board has held and participated in a number of press conferences to release annual reports and announce special program related milestones and activities. In an effort to stimulate broad public interest, particularly within other areas of the province, the Board held its most recent press conference and open house in Prince George at the beginning of May. The announcement was related to the Board's public consultation process on the short list of river candidates for the 1997 nomination report.

### **Minister's Announcement:**

In response to the Board's annual nomination reports, the Government makes a public announcement of its decision regarding the recommendations by the Board. In June, 1997, the Honourable Cathy McGregor, Minister of Environment, Lands & Parks, announced the addition of four more rivers to the BC Heritage Rivers System in response to the 1996 nominations of the Board. The announcement was made at a celebration along the Alouette River where a major salmon release marked the return of adequate water levels as a result of changes in BC Hydro's operation within the system.

## **Heritage Rivers Bulletin:**

The Board carried on with the production and distribution of the "Heritage Rivers Bulletin". Five issues have now been produced and distributed. There is a steadily increasing distribution list for the three issues (Spring, Summer and Fall) scheduled for production each year. The Bulletin is intended to reach as broad an audience as possible to report on progress and to promote the goals of the Board. Anyone interested in receiving regular issues of the newsletter can be placed on the mailing list by contacting the Secretariat to the Board.

## **Video:**

"Rivers for the Future" is a video production produced last year to promote the BC Heritage Rivers System and educate people about it. The video combines a comprehensive description of the program, its structure, and its goals with an illustrative assortment of slides and film footage from around the province. There continues to be considerable interest in the video from groups and individuals from around the province. Copies are available on loan or for purchase through the Secretariat to the Board.

## **Display:**

A display was also created for the BC Heritage Rivers System last year complete with a ten-foot-square background structure, and a short-loop video, "The Living River," to be viewed with the display. This display has been used at various events throughout British Columbia, again during the year and accompanied members of the Board to local presentations. The display is also available to organizations interested in borrowing it for local events.

## **Posters:**

Heritage Rivers posters were designed early in 1996. They have been a popular item, but a few copies are still available free of charge. The poster draws attention to the important qualities of rivers in our environment and creates a greater awareness of the BC Heritage Rivers System. Posters can be ordered through regional offices of the provincial government, the Heritage Rivers Board, or the Secretariat to the Board.

# Appendix #1

## Identification Criteria and Selection Guidelines

Criteria have been established to help the Board determine the suitability of an individual river for recognition within the BCHRS. These criteria are based on those of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). Rivers proposed for the BCHRS will be nominated on the strength of any one, or a combination of the following natural, cultural heritage, and recreation values:

### Natural Heritage Values

- displays along its course significant examples of physical landscape characteristics representing both past and present evolutionary processes
- supports along its course significant examples of representative ecosystems and/or special species of particular interest due to their concentration, vulnerability, rarity, uniqueness or exceptional characteristics

### Cultural Heritage Values

- influenced the historical and/or economic development of British Columbia
- displays along its course, significant examples of traditional territories and/or lifestyles of First Nations people
- is associated with people, events, movements, achievements, ideas or beliefs of significance to the cultural heritage of people today

### Recreation Values

- provides an environment able to support a significant level of recreational activity and is accessible to large numbers and a wide diversity of recreationists
- provides an environment conducive to a high quality recreational experience

The Board recognizes that many rivers within the province will meet these criteria since this province enjoys a rich river heritage. Thus, system guidelines have also been identified to help select from among the many candidates, those which should be highlighted within the BCHRS. In determining the list of nominated rivers and in adding to the system in the future, the Board considers:

- the importance of the river as a model of the benefits of integrated resource management rather than focusing on single purpose protection or use
- the role of First Nations in the cultural heritage of the province and their continuing role in its growth and development
- the level and nature of demand, constituency or public support that has developed for a river over recent years
- the importance of regional representation in creating a truly provincial system

- the diversity (eg. setting, size, environment, etc.) of physical types of the selected rivers
- the balance of natural history, human history and recreational values
- the ability to recognize a river in its entirety, from source to mouth, and to strive for a watershed approach to planning and management
- the potential of a river to achieve the Board's stated vision for the river
- Identification Criteria and Selection Guidelines

## **BC Heritage Rivers System Process**

The BCHRS will serve as a model of stewardship over our most treasured rivers. Thus, identifying rivers for the program and providing for the planning and management that affects their stewardship is an important process requiring many different contributions. It is a process that is cooperative and flexible - capturing the desires and values of the public and including them in the management responsibilities of government.

The Board, acting as a voice of the public, reports directly to the Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks and through her to Cabinet. In addition, it works in concert with an Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC) representing the various Ministries within the provincial government to ensure that all aspects of river planning and management are addressed with respect to any river that may become a heritage river.

Together the Board and the ITAC follow the process illustrated and described here.

### **Identification**

- the Board seeks widespread public input on what rivers should be considered for BCHRS status and assesses the suggested rivers against the identification criteria
- public contributions are the foundation of the program; rivers are suggested to the Board from public sources and are dependent upon public commitment and support to be carried through the process
- from their extensive knowledge, data and experience base, ITAC provides input to the Board regarding the qualities of the suggested rivers measured against the criteria

### **Nomination**

- the Board identifies candidates for the system from those rivers that meet the identification criteria and best satisfy the selection guidelines. For each river a vision statement and a set of broad management guidelines will be outlined as an indication of the values to be recognized by the river's nomination and what management guidelines will be necessary to ensure the integrity of those values
- the public has an important role to play in providing as much information as possible in support of their vision for the suggested rivers

- the ITAC reviews and comments on the information and issues relating to each of the rivers under consideration and provides feedback on the Board's assessment
- the Board documents and nominates the selected rivers to the BCHRS by reporting to Cabinet; this report is also distributed to the public

### **Recognition**

- Cabinet responds to the Board nominations by accepting, accepting with modifications, rejecting, or simply taking under advisement, the nominated rivers and the associated visions and management guidelines. In the event of acceptance, Cabinet acknowledges the importance of these rivers and the importance of managing them in accordance with an identified vision

### **Planning And Management**

- Cabinet acceptance of the vision for each river accepted into the BCHRS is communicated to the line agencies and existing planning processes that will establish the management regime for rivers of the system. Management of the rivers will be applied according to existing jurisdictional responsibilities as defined through the appropriate planning processes

### **Monitoring And Adjustment**

- the Board, in concert with the public, monitors the progress of planning and management as it moves toward the vision identified in the nomination of each of the rivers of the system. The Board reports regularly to Cabinet and to the public on the results of this monitoring - the successes, integrity and status of the system. It also identifies areas of weakness and actions that could reduce the inadequacies of river management
- all relevant government agencies, working in concert with the Board and public groups connected with each river in the system, also monitor the system and adjust their management and regulatory actions to ensure the achievement of the long term planning objectives established for heritage rivers

*The British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of British Columbia which entirely supports their work and enables the BC Heritage Rivers System to make an increasingly significant contribution to river stewardship both in British Columbia and across the country.*