

Board Report, 1999

A Report of the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board 1999

***Prepared for:
the Hon. Joan Sawicki
Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks***

***Prepared by:
the British Columbia Heritage Rivers Board***

September, 1999

September 21, 1999

The Honourable Joan Sawicki
Minister of Environment, Lands & Parks
Legislative Buildings
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Ms. Sawicki,

We are pleased to submit this report for your government's consideration and action. The report identifies our current nomination for the British Columbia Heritage Rivers System and reviews our activities over the past two years. Although constrained by budget and Board participation, we expect that a new vision and direction for the Board will emerge in the near future that will enable the BC Heritage Rivers System to be a vital part of community based stewardship in the next century.

We are very conscious of the number of selected candidate rivers but with so many excellent rivers put forward by the public with such convincing concern and commitment, it is difficult to turn down some suggestions. This is especially true where valuable contributions can be made to the existing system that are not already in place. We are still considering other additions, but you can be sure that these suggestions will be very few and of particular importance to the system. Of course, those rivers which the Board has nominated but which have yet to be recognized, remain as candidates awaiting government response.

Beyond the limits of the system, we strongly support the public's concern for the future of all the rivers they have suggested and better stewardship for all rivers in the province. We hope that your government will continue to work diligently to improve planning and management processes that will respect river integrity throughout the province.

Respectfully submitted,

The British Columbia 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 life-giving 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 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 is 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. The annual report of 1997 nominated eight more rivers. The government response was to accept all but one which was deferred until the land use planning process in the area progressed to a point where the nomination could more effectively be discussed.

Thus the system now contains 18 rivers with three nominations deferred, including the current nomination (see Status Reports). 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 fourth set of rivers nominated by the Board for heritage river status and is submitted to Government for review and action.

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.

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 Campbell River be recognized for its natural, cultural and recreation values and be added to the BC Heritage Rivers System:

The selection of this river reflects the importance of adequately representing within the system rivers that 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. In selecting this river, as was the case with the Alouette River and Mission Creek, the Board is urging local governments to embrace the spirit of this principle 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 Rivers

Given the current size of the system and the previous commitment to review suggested rivers that had been earlier rejected, the Board considered a limited number of these rivers during the course of this year's review. The public had demonstrated such a strong and continuing interest in the following rivers that the Board included in their current review and nomination process: the Campbell, the Puntledge, the Similkameen, the Skeena, the Tahsis, and the Thompson. While all of these rivers meet the criteria for heritage river status, the Board's decision was based on a careful assessment of the Selection Guidelines (see Appendix #1) and the extent to which the individual rivers would contribute to a balanced system.

In its review the Board was overwhelmed with contributions from the proponents of the Campbell River and by widespread public support for its nomination. The river meets the established criteria, but it was the public support and commitment to local stewardship under the selection guidelines that was the deciding reason for its selection as a second representative from Vancouver Island. The Board considers this a river that could be among some significant river management models.

Although not included in the current list, the Board continues to receive suggestions from the public such as the Salmo River and has yet to consider the appropriateness of these rivers for the system. The Board further recognizes the special circumstances surrounding the Tatshenshini River (see 4. Status Reports) and awaits the conclusion of negotiations with the Champagne-Aishihik First Nation.

The nomination is presented in the standard format including an overview of the character of the river and its significance and the selection criteria that were most important in the Board's assessment. A vision statement for the river follows accompanied by the supporting management directions formulated by the Board. They are presented as guidelines for the future of the Campbell as 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 river. It should also reinforce the need to maintain these qualities for generations to come.

Campbell River

Located in central Vancouver Island, the Campbell River drains an area of 1460 km sq. including a considerable area at elevations of greater than 2,220 metres amidst rugged mountains in the heart of the island. The river registers flows that are the third largest on Vancouver Island.

The area is the homeland of the Kwatiutl First Nation. Based on the productivity of the Campbell River and estuary for the harvest of migrating salmon, the Kwatiutl people established and sustained a rich cultural tradition. Permanent settlements were common in the area and many important traditional sites have been identified, especially on the estuary.

Three dams have influenced flow on the Campbell River since 1947 and have created major impoundments within the watershed. In addition, diversions from the Heber, Salmon and Quinsam rivers have added to the flow within the lower Campbell River.

The Campbell River estuary is particularly significant to the biological and cultural history of the river. Tidal influences create a rich environment that supports an abundance of wild and hatchery-raised fish species, including many freshwater, marine and anadromous species. All five species of salmon (chinook, coho, pink, chum and sockeye) as well as sea-run trout (steelhead and cutthroat) use the estuary during their life cycle. While tidal action is strong, the gradient of the estuary is relatively steep limiting the tidal influence to a distance of about 2.5 km and resulting in a prevalence of gravel in bottom sedimentation compared to the sand and mud sediments of lower gradient coastal rivers such as the Fraser.

The estuary was a prime site for industrial activities, especially logging. A much greater mix of land uses has emerged in recent times. Over the years recreational activity has expanded both in the estuary and along the length of the river as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching, hiking and nature study have become major activities in the area.

Considerable community cooperation has been focused on management of the Campbell River and its estuary. Extensive planning in support of a responsibly managed mix of land uses has been done and continues with the cooperation of a wide variety of agencies and interests.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The Campbell River draws strongly on its cultural and recreational values in the assessment of its suitability for BCHRS status. The salmon fishery is central to the First Nations history of the area and to modern day recreational activity. Industrial use and management of the river is an important part of its history as well and reflects an important part of the heritage of coastal British Columbia. Increasingly, recreational activity and public education of the values of the river and its watershed are opportunities being promoted.

A broadly based community effort encompassing all stakeholders in the ongoing development and management of the basin is a major factor in the river's nomination. The Campbell can justifiably serve as a model of community stewardship.

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

- * major examples of the cultural heritage values of Vancouver Island including those of First Nations settlement and culture and industrial development and activity;
- * important natural heritage values including fish habitats supporting an internationally renowned fishing area; and,
- * opportunities for recreation and educational experiences compatible with the river's heritage values.

Vision

- * *a model of community involvement in the management of a river for its recreation and industrial uses consistent with its well known natural and cultural heritage values*

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- * to foster the continued cooperative management of the watershed through involvement of the full range of stakeholders, including First Nations
- * to manage the river to protect and enhance its capability as important fish habitat
- * to encourage the expansion of river recreational opportunities in keeping with the diversity of river uses for the benefit of local residents and as part of the tourism appeal of the region

3. PROGRESS REPORT

The BC Heritage Rivers System currently represents a significant cross section of our provincial river heritage with 18 rivers recognized within the system. In addition to the current nomination two other rivers remain deferred and the Board is committed to nominating one further river when favourable results of negotiations with First Nations have been completed (see Status Reports).

With the progress towards a comprehensive BC Heritage Rivers System, more emphasis must now 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 rivers within the system, or suggestions for improving stewardship actions.

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's report of September, 1997 were: the Alouette, Columbia, Middle, Mission, Peace, Prophet, Stuart, and, Yakoun. Of these nominations seven were recognized in the spring of 1998 and the Yakoun was deferred in favour of initially dealing with the land use concerns of the area through the land use planning process which was just beginning.

One additional river, the Campbell, is being presented to government through the release of this report and will await a Cabinet decision regarding recognition and addition to the system.

Those rivers which were suggested for heritage river status, but have not been nominated, are: the Puntledge, the Similkameen, the Skeena, the Tahsis, and the Thompson. 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; 3) the regional distribution of rivers within the system; and, 3) the nature and extent of 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, while not nominating these rivers for inclusion in the BCHRS, fully supports and encourages local stewardship action.

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 and/or reconfirmed 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 completion of the Integration Report did not affect the content of the original Horsefly nomination and the Board contacted the Minister to reconfirm the nomination. The Government response on the Horsefly nomination has yet to be announced.

Yakoun River

While the Yakoun River, on the Queen Charlotte Islands, was nominated in the Board's 1997 report, the government deferred its decision, identifying a need for further community-based consultation and discussion - particularly with the Haida Nation - in the context of the land use planning process currently underway in the area. The BC Heritage Rivers Board will await a further government response to the nomination when land use planning is sufficiently advanced and the proposed vision and management objectives can be effectively evaluated.

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 BCHRS and the CHRS. The BC Government indicated an intent to nominate the Tatshenshini River at the time British Columbia joined the CHRS, prior to the establishment of the BC Heritage Rivers Board. The Yukon portion of the river was nominated to the CHRS by the Yukon Government in 1998. Special circumstances, however, have caused the BC Heritage Rivers Board to refrain from presenting formal nomination documentation for the Tatshenshini.

Negotiations with the Champagne-Aishihik people of the Yukon regarding park status in the area and the intent of CHRS nomination continue. The Board respects these negotiations. However, in view of the progress towards completion of the BCHRS, the Board felt it was important to make its intentions regarding the Tatshenshini known, even though the vision and management objectives will be developed later. This would enable expeditious action on the recognition of the river at the appropriate time.

It is the position of the Board that the Tatshenshini be nominated and recognized within the BCHRS and that upon such recognition that a further nomination to the CHRS be pursued. Both actions are subject to successful completion of negotiations between the Province and the Champagne-Aishihik First Nation which could include acceptance of such initiatives.

5. CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVER SYSTEM

No further CHRS candidates have been identified by the Board at this time.

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 has made to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The Fraser has been nominated and designated through the Canadian Heritage Rivers System designation process. This means that a nomination document and management plan have both been accepted by the CHRS Board and the Fraser is fully recognized within the system.

In 1998, the Government also acted on the Board's recommendation of the Cowichan River as the second CHRS candidate. A nomination document was prepared and presented to the CHRS Board and subsequently accepted. There is now a requirement to table a management plan for the river with the CHRS Board within a period of three years in order to have the Cowichan fully designated within the CHRS.

The Stikine, which was also recommended by the Board in the 1997 report as a possible candidate for CHRS status, remains a suitable candidate. However, land use

planning will need to be further advanced before the government acts on the Board's earlier recommendation.

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 rivers fully recognized within the BC Heritage Rivers System so that in time the Board may make further recommendations regarding the Canadian Heritage Rivers System in British Columbia.

6. NEXT STEPS

The successful long-term maintenance of a provincial heritage rivers system requires an open, interactive and cooperative relationship among all stakeholders including interest groups, industry, the Board, government and the public. The BC Heritage Rivers Board is anxious to develop a new basis for its operation - one that builds on important partnerships among the various stakeholders.

The Board is working earnestly to ensure a well established and publicly supported system. Public interest, support and involvement in the management of BC's 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 its existence and is currently turning its main attention to developing future scenarios for public advocacy for local river stewardship and monitoring and for maintaining the BCHRS into the 21st century.

7. ACTIVITIES (1997/98 & 1998/99)

BOARD CHANGES

At the close of the first three year mandate of the Board, members Bill Bourgeois and Linda Thorstad did not continue in their positions. Over his three year term, Bill made a major contribution to public awareness of the program, and he was a key representative at regional public consultation meetings concerning controversial river suggestions. Linda played an important role in the development and use of media, working to present the program and its objectives to the general public. Individuals have not yet been identified to fill these vacant positions. The initial three year mandate of the BC Heritage Rivers Board, completed in May 1998, was extended by the Minister of Environment Lands and Parks for two years.

RIVERS CONFERENCE '98

"Rivers Conference '98: Conserving and Restoring our River Heritage" was hosted by the Canadian Heritage Rivers System and the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia, at the Delta Airport Hotel in Richmond, B.C. from May 3-5. The event drew together researchers, land managers, and river activists from across North America and featured presentations on topics such as natural and altered river systems, the values associated with wilderness rivers, working rivers and urban streams, and progress in responsible waterways management.

In a wide variety of workshops offered over the course of the three-day conference, participants had the opportunity to discuss both the principles of river stewardship and strategies for their implementation in the context of small groups which drew together individuals with diverse interests and expertise. Field workshops gave delegates a first-hand look at key issues in waterways management, with expeditions focusing on wetland habitat, river-based industrial activity, watershed issues, urban stream restoration, and interpretive efforts.

Keynote speakers include: the Honourable Cathy McGregor, Minister of Environment, Lands & Parks; Andrew Mitchell, MP and Secretary of State for Parks; Mark Angelo, Chair, BC Heritage Rivers Board; Michael Quick, UBC; Donna Williams, Massachusetts Audubon Society; David Boyd, Sierra Legal Defense Fund; and, Stephen Gates and Jacques Houle, Rivers and Lakes Society.

The conference provided a marvelous opportunity to profile the BC Heritage Rivers System. The system, unique in Canada, is an approach to river conservation that many feel should be a model for other jurisdictions across the country. Members of the BC Heritage Rivers Board and ITAC made presentations at the event. There are also many individuals with strong links to rivers of the BCHRS who led workshops and gave presentations.

The conference wrapped up with a summary of the key points and suggested actions generated by the Conference Advisory Committee and workshop discussion leaders. These points became the Richmond Action Plan and are published in the conference proceedings. Conference proceedings are available from the Outdoor Recreation Council office by phone, fax or e-mail. BC Outdoor Recreation Council, #334 - 1367 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V6H 4A9. Tel: (604) 737-3058 Fax: (604) 737-3666. E-mail: orc@istar.ca

VIDEO

The Board has also produced an updated video concerning the BC Heritage Rivers System and the importance of river stewardship called "Our River Heritage". Like the earlier video, "Rivers for the Future" the video combines a comprehensive description of the current system and the role of the Board and the public in maintaining the quality of our rivers. The film features footage from around the province. Copies are available on loan by contacting the BC Heritage Rivers Board.

POSTERS

The first Heritage Rivers posters were produced early in 1996 and with their popularity have all been distributed. A second poster was recently produced as an update and this new poster is also a popular item. Copies are available free of charge. The poster recognizes the current status of the system and the qualities of rivers in our environment. Posters can be requested through regional offices of the provincial government, or by contacting the Heritage Rivers Board.

HERITAGE RIVERS BULLETIN

The series of newsletters which the Board had produced appeared three times a year beginning in 1996. Production was halted after the second issue of 1998 due to lack of funding. Inquiries concerning the newsletter continue to be received.

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 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. Contact the BC Heritage Rivers Board to arrange use of the display for your event.

BCHRS WEB SITE

The public can now access information about the BC Heritage Rivers System on the new web site at www.islandnet.com/bchrs. The Board created the site and made it operational in May of 1998. The purpose of the web site is to increase the profile of the Heritage Rivers program and the system, as well as to connect with other organizations and initiatives promoting river stewardship. The site includes background information on the program and the Board, and information on the status of the system, including profiles of both recognized and suggested rivers. All government and Board reports, press releases and newsletters are also posted on the site.

CONTACT US AT:

BC Heritage Rivers Board
2nd Floor, 800 Johnson St. Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Tel: (250) 387-5002 Fax: (250) 387-5757

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.

APPENDIX

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
- * 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 (e.g., 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

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