

Heritage Rivers Bulletin

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Five More Rivers Nominated to BCHRS!

Rivers Week 1996 was kicked off with a very positive action by the BC Heritage Rivers Board. Mark Angelo, Chair, presented to Environment Minister Paul Ramsey the second annual report of the Board at a press conference in Victoria on September 23. In the report the Board nominated five additional rivers as candidates for the BC Heritage Rivers System. The nominated rivers are: the Atnarko, the Bella Coola, the Horsefly, the Kechika, and the Kettle. In making the presentation, Angelo stressed the contribution that Heritage Rivers status can make in conjunction with a variety of other government initiatives such as the Forest Practices Code, the Watershed Restoration Program and the Urban Salmon Habitat Enhancement Program which are occurring simultaneously throughout the province. However, he also noted, "There is still much work to do to ensure better stewardship for all rivers in the province and to recognize river values in on-going planning and management processes."

In responding to the Board's report, the Honourable Paul Ramsey thanked the Board for their continued leadership and agreed to review the new nominations in a timely fashion. He also noted that in May 1996 the full slate of seven rivers nominated by the Board in 1995 were accepted as the inaugural rivers in the system.

Ramsey went on to say, "I want to emphasize that preserving B.C.'s water as a sustainable and healthy natural resource is, increasingly, a top priority for our government and the environment ministry, and will continue to be top priority for the remainder of this decade. I personally place a high priority on clean water and will be introducing legislation to protect fish and fish habitats. This will provide the necessary base to ensure that water remains one of B.C.'s most valuable natural resources."

Looking beyond the specifics of the report, Angelo also reflected on the future role of the Board, which will be increasing its advocacy and monitoring functions for the system. "This coming year will be an important and challenging period for the Board where we will be working to identify perhaps the last major block of river nominations. We are excited by the quality of the rivers of the system as it is evolving and want to be sure that a strong provincial system will be in place to set the standard for river stewardship on all rivers throughout the province."

Report Correction

This is a special note to correct an omission in the Board's September, 1996 nomination report. In the report (see page #20) the list of rivers suggested by the public but not chosen for nomination by the Board was incomplete. The full list should have appeared as follows:

Alouette Ashnola Atlintoo
Campbell Cariboo Coquitlam
Englishman Mossom Muskwa
Nahatlatch Nechako Noons
Pitt Salmon Tahsis
Tlell Tuchodi

Although not all rivers can be named to the BC Heritage Rivers System public support for better stewardship of all rivers in the province is important. Thus the Board sincerely appreciates all the suggestions brought forward by the public and will support and encourage people to develop other ways of ensuring the appropriate level of stewardship of these rivers.

Last Call for Suggestions!

Deadline: January 31, 1997!

In response to considerable interest in the Heritage Rivers Program, the Board has extended its deadline for the public to suggest rivers as possible additions to the BC Heritage Rivers System. If you have a suggestion to make, please contact the Board Secretariat. We require some basic information about why you think the river should be considered for Heritage River status. The previous newsletter and the Board's annual report outline the identification criteria and selection guidelines used by the Board to assess candidate rivers.

The Board's mandate as announced in May, 1995, is to nominate approximately twenty rivers to the system. If the most recent nominations are accepted by the provincial government, the system will have 12 rivers. The accompanying map shows the original seven river nominations now established as the current BC Heritage River System. It also identifies the five most recent nominations presently under government review.

This is an important last call. The next group of nominations may fill the remaining places within the system as it was envisioned. Don't miss this important opportunity to suggest the river that you think should have Heritage River status.

River Profile: The Adams

"The Adams River sockeye run is one of the natural wonders of the world."

The physical characteristics of this watershed, tucked into the Monashee Mountains, have created ideal habitat for sockeye salmon production. The significance of these qualities has been well recognized in recent years and additional protection afforded to the part of the river corridor where protected area status was not already in place.

While the sockeye utilize small ponds, creeks and lake margins for spawning, rivers like the Adams, which flow from large lakes, are preferred for their reliable water flow. Specific spawning sites are chosen for their good flow of oxygenated water, for

without the right flow the eggs could die from lack of oxygen, freeze, or be crushed by drifting ice.

The salmon concentrate in the gravel spawning beds of the lower reaches of the river between the highway bridge and the lake. This is a section of river about two kilometers in length and considered to be the prime spawning area. During a big run there may be as many as 20,000 salmon per hectare in these prime gravel beds.

The Sushwap lakes are also extremely important in the development of the young sockeye. The fry stay in these nursery lakes for the first year, feeding initially on small insects and then relying on tiny plankton. The density of the plankton in the lake is the key for determining the survival rate of the sockeye fry. The level of plankton production is determined by the decomposing of salmon carcasses which slowly releases phosphorous and nitrogen in the fall and again in the spring.

The life story of the Adams River sockeye (as eggs in the Adams River bed, as fry in the nursery of Sushwap Lake, as juvenile fish making their way down the Thompson and Fraser Rivers to the sea, and as adult fish in the ocean) culminates in the most amazing return of the salmon to the same spawning grounds of their origin. The sockeye gather in vast numbers just beyond the Fraser River estuary in an area known as the Sand Heads, feeding heavily in preparation for the demanding and dangerous trip up to the Adams spawning grounds. Beginning in late August and building in numbers until mid-September, the run usually peaks in the Adams River in the second week of October.

Heritage River status is not limited to the 60 hectares of prime spawning beds in the lower river but to the river as a whole, in recognition that the character of the small critical area will be dramatically influenced by the entire watershed system and all that takes place within it. The success of the salmon is dependent upon the downstream environment, especially the character of the nursery lakes and the Fraser River access system to the sea. Realizing the goals of salmon conservation and the enhancement potential of the once much more productive upper Adams system, will require a concerted effort over a large and varied landscape. Heritage River status on the Fraser River also recognizes its significant contribution to the integrity of salmon populations like those of the Adams River.

Recognizing the Adams River in the BC Heritage Rivers System contributes to the celebration of the mystery and wonder of the Adams River sockeye and will help to ensure that this natural treasure will be sustained without interference by human activity.

Board Member Profile:

Eva Durance

In this issue of the Heritage Rivers Bulletin, Eva Durance is our featured Board member. Eva's excellent contribution to the Board has included a significant level of grassroots public contact. Her experience with and commitment to public advocacy, linked with her extensive involvement in the environmental community, are key areas of her background that brought her to the Board.

Eva has had a lifetime of experience in the outdoors - hiking, skiing and canoeing, as well as guiding and teaching backcountry skills in Canada's wilderness. As a professional, Eva studied and taught English Literature in Ontario and Nova Scotia. For ten years she was the editor and publisher for an international agricultural research magazine based in Ontario, and is now a self-employed writer and print publications administrator.

Since coming to BC from Ontario seven years ago, Eva has continued her involvement in environmental and wilderness conservation activities and at present is President of the South Okanagan Naturalists Club and is the Okanagan Regional Director for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. As Chair of the Residents' Association in her rural area and member of the citizens committee for Penticton's Waterfront 2000 project, she is very involved in community affairs.

Eva brings her environmental and wilderness conservation perspective to the Heritage Rivers Board, along with her interest in projects involving local communities.

Please Contact Us:

Conference and Meetings

The Board is seeking to contact a wide variety of public interest groups which are concerned about river stewardship. If your group would like to have a presentation by a representative of the Board and/or a display promoting river stewardship, please contact the Board. We will attempt to fulfill requests as our resources permit.

BCHRS Posters

The Board has recently produced a poster for free distribution as a way of increasing awareness of the BCHRS program and river stewardship in general. If you can help by ensuring posters get displayed in prominent public areas, please give us a call.

Videos

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

Display

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

How to Contact the Board

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