



**For Immediate Release:  
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## **Fraser River returns to top spot on BC's Endangered Rivers List**

Vancouver – After nine years, the Fraser River has returned to head the list of BC's Most Endangered Rivers. The issues that have brought the Fraser back to top the list include missing sockeye salmon, low summer flows, unchecked agricultural impacts, reduced protection for many urban stream tributaries, and gravel extraction beyond what is required for flood control purposes.

Mark Angelo, Rivers Committees Chair for the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC, said, "There are increasing concerns about the Fraser's long term health and our commitment to sustainability. While progress has been made on some fronts over the past decade, other long-standing issues confronting the river have worsened while new threats have emerged. This year's list also reflects a growing belief that many of the most pressing issues facing the Fraser are not being adequately addressed."

Moving up the list to second place is the Taku River. Located 100 km south of Atlin, BC's most threatened wilderness river faces the prospect of a proposed mine and access road. Earlier mining activity in the area has left a legacy of acid drainage, and wilderness advocates are concerned about the potential impacts of future mine development.

Georgia Basin Steelhead Streams occupy third place on the list. Decades of industrial development, combined with the cumulative impacts of urbanization, have had a profound impact on many steelhead streams. Steelhead stocks on many Vancouver Island and lower mainland streams are at risk. Below average snow packs, which could result in low summer flows and high water temperatures, could further worsen the situation.

Dropping to fourth position on this year's list is the Nicola River and one of its major tributaries, the Coldwater River. These rivers held the number one spot last year due to problems associated with excessive water extraction. While many problems remain, local stakeholders have been participating in the development of a water management plan that could improve flow conditions for these rivers. The participants in this process are to be commended.

After several years absence from the list, the Chilliwack- Vedder river returns in fifth place. Despite being one of BC's most loved and heavily used recreational rivers, there is an array of threats facing the river. Most immediate is the threat of conversion of agricultural land to high-density housing development in close proximity to the river. In light of development pressures, there is also a clear need for corridor plan aimed at protecting the river's significant environmental and recreational values.

For 13 consecutive years, the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC has released BC's Most Endangered Rivers List. "This initiative highlights today's most critical river-related issues as identified by grassroots fisheries stewards, our members, and many of BC's river managers." said Mark Angelo, ORC's Rivers Committees chair.

Said Angelo, "The Fraser is the heart and soul of our province, and the fact that it's topping this year's Endangered Rivers List reflects the broader need for better management BC's rivers. We must also strike a more appropriate balance between development and the protection of our waterways while ensuring we protect the needs of fish."

The Endangered Rivers List also includes suggestions for corrective actions that could be taken to deal with many of these issues.

Added Angelo, "The problems we've outlined illustrate that you cannot separate the health of our fish stocks from the health of our rivers. They are completely inter-dependent. Within any given watershed, if river habitat is destroyed or significantly damaged, we'll lose any chance we may have to protect or rebuild fish stocks."

BC's Most Endangered Rivers List represents the views of river enthusiasts across BC as well as the 120,000 members of the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC and many of BC's river management professionals. ORC's Endangered Rivers Committee oversees this process. For more information, please visit <http://www.orcbc.ca/>.

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**Note to media:** BC'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS OF 2005 are listed below. Threats to each river are provided in brackets. For detailed information on specific rivers, please see the backgrounder posted on ORC's website at <http://www.orcbc.ca/>.

1. **Fraser River** (excessive gravel extraction with adverse impacts on fish spawning, missing sockeye salmon, low summer flows, sewage, agricultural impacts)
2. **Taku River** (habitat loss through road and mine construction, acid mine drainage)
3. **Greater Georgia Basin Steelhead Streams** (low summer flows, increasing water temperatures, riparian habitat loss, water extraction, destabilization of steep banks)
4. **Nicola and Coldwater rivers** (excessive water extraction, low summer flows, increasing water temperatures)
5. **Chillwack / Vedder rivers** (urban development on agricultural land without adequate riparian protection, gravel removal, lack of corridor planning)
6. **Coquitlam River** (sediment loads from gravel mining, rapid urbanization and urban run-off)
7. **Okanagan River** (channelization, water extraction, urban encroachment, habitat loss, dams and weirs altering river flows)
8. **Kettle River** (independent power project threatening species at risk)
9. **Salmon River, Langley** (manure contamination, falling water tables, excessive water extraction, urban development, proposed dredging)
10. **(tied) Goat River** (extensive logging, road-building close to river)  
**(tied) Iskut River** (proposed independent power project, road development)

**Top River Management and Policy Issues** based on submissions from grassroots river stewards and ORC members:

- The need for an extensive and meaningful provincial "Living Rivers Strategy" focused on protecting and restoring BC's waterways.
- The need for improved water management, especially in light of excessive water extraction from many waterways.
- The need for the better management of independent power projects.
- The need to increase funding for provincial and federal agencies charged with caring for our waterways, particularly in areas such as monitoring and enforcement.

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**For more information, media can contact:**

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