



Calgary's River Access Strategy and The Bow River Fishery

The Bow River is considered a “*Blue Ribbon Trout Stream*” and is recognized around the world as one of the best destinations for providing an opportunity to catch a “Once in a Lifetime” Brown or Rainbow Trout. The Bow River is home to three native sports fish, the endangered Bull Trout and West-Slope Cutthroat Trout and Rocky Mountain White Fish as well as self-sustaining populations of Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout introduced into the river in the last century.

Within and downstream of Calgary the sports fishery consists of predominately Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout and Rocky Mountain White Fish.

Fishing Regulation:

A sustainable sports fishery is controlled by seasonal closures, fishing gear restrictions and daily harvest limits. Within Calgary the following restrictions currently apply:

From Bearspaw Dam downstream to Harvie Passage -including the Elbow River below Glenmore Reservoir. Closed Apr. 1 to May 31 and Oct. 1 to Nov. 30. When open to fishing, 1 trout-under 35 cm and 5 Mountain 5 over 30 cm can be harvested daily. Maggots are the only bait allowed and only in the river from Aug. 16 to Sept. 30.

From Harvie downstream to the Carseland Weir but excluding all waters in the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Open all year. Apr. 1 to Mar. 31 - Trout under 35 cm can be harvested daily. Trout over 35 cm must be released; Mountain Whitefish limit 5 over 30 cm; a complete bait ban on this stretch of the river.

Albert Environment & Parks is proposing a single regulation for the Bow River from Banff National Park down to the Bassano Dam with only “Catch & Release” year round fishing with some tackle restriction. If put in place the Calgary reach of the Bow River will be fishable year round.

River Access:

Although the entire Bow River can be accessed by foot, river boat use is restricted by boat ramp access. The **Calgary River Access Strategy** has addressed the public access boat ramp issue with the high priority site development initiative. The addition of boat ramps at **Inglewood** will allow boat access to the stretch of the river between **West Baker Park** and just north of Harvie Passage. A new boat ramp at **Ogden Bridge** will expand drift boat fishing below Harvie Passage. Anglers will not be the only users of boat ramps. The paddle community will also represent a very large user of boat ramps.

It is important to recognize that the **Calgary River Access Strategy** has identified 12 boat and hand launch sites with designated parking, garbage containers, park benches and washrooms. These developments will concentrate river users into controlled areas on the river bank, reducing environmental damage and protecting sensitive fish habitat. The end result being a sustainable river access environment.



The Contribution of Recreational Fishing to the City of Calgary:

The report, **The Economic Importance of Recreational River Use to the City of Calgary** ⁽¹⁾ prepared for Calgary’s River Access Strategy documents the economic importance of recreational fishing to the City of Calgary. This report will expand on the details.

A 2005 survey ⁽²⁾ conducted by AEP and the Alberta Conservation Association sheds light on just how many anglers use the Bow River. An estimated 24,675 angling trips were made over the entire survey area of Bears paw Dam to Carseland Dam during the months of May to September 2005. Of these 17.6% of the angler’s time was spent within the City of Calgary. Anglers fishing the Bow River were primarily from the City of Calgary (74%) with the second largest number of anglers from out of province, including other provinces, the U.S.A. and outside North America (13%).

A 2010 survey conducted by AEP ⁽³⁾ reported a total of 56,519 (23.5%) of licensed anglers lived in the Eastern Slopes Zone 1(ES1) that encompasses Calgary and the south-west portion of the province. **Table 1** shows the overall amount of expenditure by each licensed angler group.

Table 1: **Estimated economic value of sport fishing in Alberta in 2010**

	Alberta Residents	Non-resident Canadians	Non-resident foreigners	Total
Average/ active angler (\$)	2018	925	1311	1967
Average / angling day (\$)	137	156	273	138
Average days fished / active angler	14.8	5.9	4.8	14.3

Since the completion of these surveys the number of fishing enthusiasts using the Bow River has increased substantially. A survey conducted by Ipsos Reid for Alberta Environment & Parks in 2014 ⁽⁴⁾ shows that 16% of Albertans surveyed were active licensed anglers of which 73% fished for 4 or more days a year. In the South Saskatchewan Region, 49% prefer to fish rivers or streams and 30% prefer to wade fish. Extrapolating from this survey, Calgary with a population of 1,200,000 could well have 69,000 anglers who are passionate about fishing streams and rivers and 42,000 who enjoy wading them in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

These data support our belief that each year more than of 12,000 anglers fish the Bow River on average 14.8 days and \$24,500,000 to the local economy.

The Impact of Calgary’s River Access Strategy on the Economy.

In 1986 there were 10 fishing guides ⁽⁵⁾ operating on the Bow River taking 1480 guided trips of which 83% were U.S. or overseas clients and 12% were from other parts of Canada. At a cost of \$350 per trip \$518,000 was generated by the guiding industry. When transportation, food and accommodation is included, a total of \$1.9M was added to the local economy.



Over the years the number of guides and clients has increased considerably to where in 2016 there were 50 guides operating on the Bow River taking 2000 guided trips per year. At a cost of \$600 per trip, \$1.2M was generated by the guiding industry. When all costs are included, the guiding industry generates in excess of \$4.0M to the local economy.

Major changes have taken place from 1986 to 2016 that have an impact on recreation fishing:

- Calgary's population increased from 636,000 to 1,200,000
- Fishing on the Bow River has gained in popularity now estimated to exceed 12,000 anglers fishing regularly.
- The 2013 flood not only devastated local infrastructure, but also removed boat ramps from important sections of the Bow River concentrating more drift boats into fewer floatable stretches.
- The number of recreational drift boat owners floating the Bow River has increased from just a few in 1996 to more than 200 in 2016 and will only increase in the future.
- The number of speciality fishing stores has increased from one in 1986 to seven in 2016. There has also been an increase in the recreation box stores from two to four in the same period.

The Impact of Calgary's River Access Strategy on Economic Improvements in 2017 and Beyond:

- The City's **High Priority Site Development Plan** will see new boat ramps at **Ogden Bridge** and **Inglewood** and improvement at **West Baker Park**. This will double the drift boat fishable water in the City. In addition, the Province is expected to make some short-term safety improvements to the downstream access at Policeman's Flats. These improvements may not make an immediate economic contribution to city businesses, but rather reduce the environmental footprint of random access across river banks, improve river user safety and reduce congestion on the Bow River.
- As the **Capital Infrastructure Budget rolls out** in 2019, new public boat ramps will be seen within the existing city limits and further downstream as the city expands. Working closely with the Province we should see a network of river access points that will accommodate short (half-day) and longer (full-day) float trips over a variety of different reaches of the river. This should increase the number of recreational and guided river trips and bring back the out of Province destination angler. Equally important, this should reduce the fishing pressure on all stretches of the river.
- The 2005 and 2010 survey data ^(2,3) indicates the local fishing community contributes in excess of \$24.5M to the local economy. The Calgary economy is governed by world oil economics and this unfortunately has had an enormous impact on the city's economy in recent years. The commercial guiding industry follows the same trends as the local economy, where guided float trips were at their highest in 2005 to 2010 and have dropped off in recent years. Nevertheless, we can expect to see an increase in the contribution made by the fishing community to Calgary's economy that should easily exceed the capital and maintenance costs to service river access within the city.

Table 2 present an economic forecast for the contribution the fishing community will make to the Calgary business sector. The forecast is based on modest growth in Calgary's oil business sector. The fishing guided trips



should show a slight increase of 5% over the next 2 years increasing to a 5% annual increase once the full impact of the River Access Strategy is seen. A 3% annual increase in the cost of a guided fishing trip is projected. By 2024 the guiding industry will generate an annual income of \$2.18M. The contribution to the local economy by way of additional hotel stays in the city and travelling to our local tourist spots could well contribute in excess of \$2-3M to the local economy.

Recreational angling activities will increase over the forecast period. A modest annual increase of 2.5% in the number of local anglers and 1.5% in expenses is expected. This should grow the local fishing communities' annual contribution to Calgary's economy from \$24.26M in 2016 to \$33.13 M in 2024. An increase of \$8.91M.

Table 2: An Economic Forecast of the Growth of Calgary and District Recreational Fishing Activities.

<u>Year</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2024</u>
Guided Trips	2,000	2,100	2,310	2,541	2,795
Float Trip/day	\$ 600	\$ 636	\$ 675	\$ 715	\$ 758
Guide Revenue	\$ 1,200,00	\$ 1,335,600	\$ 1,557,310	\$ 1,815,823	\$ 2,117,250
<u>Increase over 2016 (\$)</u>		<u>\$ 135,000</u>	<u>\$ 357,310</u>	<u>\$ 615,823</u>	<u>\$ 917,250</u>
Bow River Anglers	12,000	12,600	13,230	13,892	14,586
Expenses / Year	\$ 2,018	\$ 2,078.54	\$ 2,140.90	\$ 2,205.12	\$ 2,271.28
Rec. Fishing Revenue	\$ 24,216,000	\$ 26,189,604	\$ 28,324,057	\$ 30,632,467	\$ 33,129,013
<u>Increase over 2016 (\$)</u>		<u>\$ 1,973,604</u>	<u>\$ 4,108,057</u>	<u>\$ 6,416,467</u>	<u>\$ 8,913,013</u>

References:

1. The Economic Importance of Recreational River Use to the City of Calgary. Calgary river Users Alliance. Presented to the City of Calgary, June 2016
2. **Bow River Sport Fish Angler Survey, 2006.** Ripley, T.D., and T. Council. 2006. Data. Report, D-2007-003, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Lethbridge, Alberta & Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Calgary, Alberta,
3. **Sports Fishing in Alberta, 2010.** Zwickel, H. 2012. Summary Report from the Eighth Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fisheries Management Branch, Edmonton Alberta
4. **Fisheries Management in Alberta, 2014** Final Report Prepared for Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resources by Ipsos Reid, Calgary Alberta.
5. **Personal Communications**

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