



Bow River Trout's Presentation to Calgary's Community & Protective Services Committee in Support of the River Access Strategy, 01 February 2017

Bow River Trout was formed in the spring of 2016 to act as a communication link between the Bow River fishing community and government agencies with the primary objective to improve recreational boat access within Calgary. Peter Crowe-Swords as the principal for Bow River Trout (BRT) has over 30 years' experience fly fishing southern Alberta and Montana rivers as a recreational angler and commercial guide. A deep rooted commitment to improve the Bow River's boat access guided the decision to become a founding member of **Calgary River Users' Alliance** (CRUA). Peter has taken the lead role for trailered- boat access ramps in the stakeholder consultation with Calgary's **River Access Strategy** and in general strongly support the proposals within the **Strategy**.

The Economic Importance of Recreational River Use.

The Bow River is recognized as a world class trout fishery that has played an important economic role in Calgary. A part of my role within CRUA was to present two papers ^(1,2) to City Councillors in support of the **River Access Strategy**. The documents present the case for support of river access to the fishing community as well other recreational activities:

- In excess of 12,000 anglers fish the Bow River a year contributing more than \$25 million annually to the local economy.
- South-west of Alberta, including Calgary, supports more than 56,000 anglers spending a total \$114 million annually. A considerable amount of this money will be spent in Calgary as the pinnacle for the southern Alberta fishing industry.
- The number of drift boats used to float and fish local rivers is estimated to exceed 200 (and may be as many as 500) within the watershed and local outfitting services. This number will continue to grow as the popularity for this means of fishing increases.
- Fishing is just one of a variety of river recreational activities that include kayaking, canoeing and rafts. All of which, when combined, contribute in excess of \$50 million annually to the local economy.

The River Access Strategy

The significance of Councillors Shane Keating and Gian-Carlo Carra action to introduce the Notice of Motion to City Council and the entire City Council to unanimously approve the development of the River Access Strategy is recognized as a very important step taken to improve river access within the Calgary. From the perspective of Bow River Trout, the consultation process has been exemplary. Calgary City Parks Department has been open to dialogue on all aspects of the River Access Strategy.

The River Access Strategy is an all-encompassing document that details a roadmap for development of new and improved river access boat ramps and hand launch locations. The strategy addresses the environmental, safety and river access infrastructure concerns together with Provincial and Federal regulatory requirements.

Bow River Trout is very pleased to support the River Access Strategy (RAS) in principal. But there is a concern that short-term capital funding to expedite infrastructure development may not be available. The current timeline for **Priority 1 River Access Sites and Initiatives** (see page 28, in the River Access Strategy) would indicate that new public access boat ramps will be seen later this year. We believe anything less than this is unacceptable.

Boat Ramp Priorities

From a fishing viewpoint there is a need to appreciate that a single boat ramp location by itself has little value for the drift boat angler. There is a need for a launch site AND a take-out site downstream to allow each stretch of the Bow River to be fished from a drift boat. To allow all of the Bow River within the city limits to be fished this way the following boat ramps are needed:

Above Harvie Passage – With modest improvements, the existing **Stoney Trail** boat ramp can be used as a launch site and a new boat ramp at **12 Street. SE** as a take-out.

Below Harvie Passage – A new boat ramp at **Old Refinery Park** as a launch site with the existing boat ramp at **Fish Creek Park** as a take-out. In addition, **Graves Bridge** will be used as a launch site, taking out at either Fish Creek Park or Policeman's Flats until a new boat ramp can be installed on opposite bank south of **Seton**.

Additional boat ramps access above Harvie Passage at **Shouldice Park** and in the general vicinity of the **Pumphouse Theater** would allow for a shorter city float. Similarly, boat ramps at **Douglasdale** and **Pine Creek** will add to the mix of access points below Harvie Passage.

When Harvie Passage is opened in 2018, safe passage through the redesigned low flow channel will enhance recreation river use. But there are times in the spring and fall when low Bow River flows will make this channel challenging, even for skilled oarsmen. Clearly new boat ramps at 12 Street SE and Old Refinery Park are important for safe egress and recreational river use.

Budget Estimates

The River Access Strategy **High Level, Class 5, Budget Estimates** (page one in Attachment 2 of the report) for completion of Ogden Bridge/Old Refinery Park and Inglewood/12 Street SE full service boat ramps are \$450,000 and \$520,000 respectively.

Bow River Trout and our sister organizations would be highly supportive of a low cost approach to new boat ramps and ask that the Community and Protective Services Committee to support our funding request to meet the immediate, short-term needs for safe public trailered boat access to the Bow River. Until we are incorporated as a non-profit organization we would be willing to assist with grant or sponsorship initiatives where possible.

These sites, and the opening of West Baker Park/Stony Trail ramp to the public, would provide drift boat access to all reaches of the Bow River within the City. In subsequent years, long-term, permanent ramps could be built at these locations.

References:

1. The Economic Importance of Recreational River Use to the City of Calgary. Prepared by: Calgary River Users Alliance, May 2016
2. The Need for a River Recreation Management Plan - A Supplement to Calgary River Users Alliance Economic Position Statement to the City of Calgary, May 2016

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