

Stream Health

Description

Located at the confluence of the Nechako and Fraser rivers, Prince George contains many tributaries and streams. They are important from a fishery and wildlife perspective, have an important role in storm water management, are useful for water storage, and provide natural drainage. Stream stewardship and the maintenance of natural habitat in “leave strips” along all watercourses ensure that these functions remain largely unimpaired.



Source: City of Prince George

Stream and river corridors have other benefits too. As wildlife corridors, leave strips support land-based wildlife and biodiversity. They also protect property from erosion and potential land slides, and support higher property values for lots next to them.

Status and Trends

While Prince George contains some quality fish habitat, studies have shown that much of it is degraded due to human impacts including land development, agriculture, forestry, and recreation, all of which have led to loss of riparian habitat and poor water quality. Erosion releases fine silt, which fills gravel beds needed by fish to spawn. Another important impact of development are roads and other stream crossings, which can prevent fish passage and literally close off streams to fish.

The City of Prince George has taken action to protect aquatic resources:

- Requiring developments within 50m of fish-bearing streams to include a buffer around the stream, minimize the flow of stormwater runoff into riparian areas and reduce the potential for contamination and erosion
- Working with the BC Ministry of Environment and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the City is ensuring developers adhere to local, Provincial and Federal regulations during planning and construction
- Developing watershed drainage plans that manage stormwater in ways that minimize pollution, erosion, and other disruptions to habitat, and other benefits
- Inventorying fish populations, habitat quality, and barriers to fish passage, to prioritize management efforts

Community stewardship groups and provincial and federal agencies also contribute significantly to maintain and enhance stream health, from mapping to restoration to fish counts and habitat assessments.

Performance Measurement

The following are ways Prince George could measure performance in this area:

- Quality and quantity of fish and riparian habitat
- Percentage of stream length that can be accessed by fish (i.e. is not blocked by a man-made barrier)
- Water quality levels in key watersheds

Questions for Consideration

- **Improving existing regulations:** How can existing regulations be improved to better protect fish and other aquatic species?
- **Identifying benefits** – how can Prince George derive significant benefits from stream protection efforts, from community and economic perspectives?
- **Land development sectors:** How can Prince George ensure more stream-friendly practices in this sector?

More Information

[2004 Fisheries Inventory within the City of Prince George](#)

[Review of the Aquatic Resource Values within the City of Prince George](#)

[Identification of Fisheries Values and Protection Strategies for Aquatic and Riparian Areas in the City of Prince George, B.C.](#) - provides guidance on the habitat values of different water body types found in Prince George, and planning practices and tools to optimize habitat value.

[Develop with Care: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia](#)