

Part Five: Our Values and Principles

Summary of Values

We embrace and believe in the following values and principles:

- ✓ Clean water
- ✓ Historic numbers of wild steelhead and salmon
- ✓ Uncrowded wilderness
- ✓ Grizzly Bears
- ✓ Unique Reputation of The Babine
- ✓ Harmony among interested parties
- ✓ Environmental integrity of the entire watershed
- ✓ Opportunity for future generations to enjoy the watershed and wilderness park.
- ✓ Human involvement and economic enterprise as part of a system of “natural capital.”
- ✓ Human responsibility and accountability for well being of the watershed.

Explanation of Values

1. We support the concept of Clean Waters.

This includes the Babine itself and tributaries of the Babine such as the Nilkitkwa, Nichyeskwa, Hannewald Creek, the Shelagyote River, and Boucher Creek etc. These provide food for young salmon and steelhead and spawning for adult salmon and steelhead.

Without clean water in the Babine and its tributaries, there will be no habitat for young fish to live in. Their food supply of aquatic insects will disappear. Spawning habitat for adult fish will be lost. Without clean water the three lodges cannot operate on the river and the essential character of the wilderness park will disappear. Future plans must guarantee permanently clean water in the Babine watershed through appropriately sensitive and strategic logging and road building and a buffer around the Babine itself.

2. We embrace the preservation of historic numbers of returning fish

We must maintain the historic numbers of returning wild steelhead and salmon because we see these wild fish as essential components of the Babine and it's tributaries and its forests. Without historical numbers of returning salmon and steelhead the value of the watershed is diminished drastically. These numbers must be protected through policies which give them every possible chance to live as they

have for tens of thousands of years. They are the lifeblood of the rivers, the forest, the economy and the spirit of northern British Columbia.

Studies have shown that when returning migratory fish are lost, the forests lose irreplaceable nourishment and nutrition. Trees wither and die. When sufficient numbers of fish do not return, commercial fishing is at risk; sport fishing is at risk. The Babine Watershed needs a sufficient escapement of salmon and steelhead if it is going to continue to make its contribution to the economy of this area, to the image and reputation of British Columbia and in the end to the world as a whole.

And our steelhead populations must be wild fish using historically intact watersheds as nursery habitat. Artificial spawning channels and artificial propagation have disastrous potential. Hatcheries produce weak and inferior stocks, which cannot sufficiently resist disease. Our wild runs are small in comparison to other rivers. The Bulkley River is estimated to have as many as 30,000 steelhead in it's run. Other rivers in the area also have relatively high numbers. Government estimates of Babine steelhead number them between 4,000 to 11,000. These relatively small numbers cannot sustain the same level or kind of environmental pressure and fishing pressure that steelhead can in other rivers.

As we understand it, the current situation does not guarantee sufficient insulation and protection of nursery habitat for young fish across the entire watershed, or for spawning adults in the tributaries or the main Babine, because road building and logging are permitted to penetrate and intersect spawning tributaries and because these same activities will also come to within one kilometer of the river. Government plans have not been fully implemented. We must have greater insulation and protection.

3. Relatively un-crowded wilderness

The Babine represents an ever-diminishing kind of opportunity and value. As rivers in other parts of the world and the northern areas of British Columbia become lost to roads, excessive access, poor logging practices, dams and pollution the Babine retains its value and in fact becomes more so as time goes by. This uncrowded wilderness will only increase in value and continue to make a contribution way out of proportion to its relative size.

For example, in 1978 visitors to the Babine spent \$800 Canadian for a weeks fishing. Today that same week of fishing is worth from \$3,000 to \$5,500 US. This is not due entirely to inflation. The real hard dollar value continues to rise, because the kind of wilderness experience represented by the Babine wilderness is becoming more rare year by year.

At present time there are at least seven northern BC Rivers in the Smithers-Terrace-Houston area which provide sport fishing opportunities for the public. Opportunities for true wilderness angling are becoming rare. The Babine is the finest example of wilderness angling left on the entire Skeena watershed. If the wilderness character of the Babine Park is lost the Smithers, Houston, Terrace and Hazelton areas will lose almost half of its wilderness steelhead fishing- one which is famous the world over, one which contributes 4.5 million to the area in Gross Domestic product and one which has come to be an essential component of the mystique found in Super Natural British Columbia.

4. Grizzly Bears

Grizzly are one of the most important parts of the wilderness setting in the Babine Wilderness Park. Without them it cannot be called a wilderness park. Without them much of the attraction is lost and much of the value is lost. For example one study showed that each grizzly on the Babine is worth over \$800 annual hard dollars to the community of Smithers. People come here to see them, to photograph them, and to enjoy them. There are approximately 75-100 grizzlies, which utilize the Babine River during salmon season. It is estimated that 150 grizzly occupy the watershed at any one time. These grizzlies are also critical because of their symbolic value; not everyone who comes here actually gets to see such a bear, but the potential for such a sighting continues to attract visitors from all over the world and inspire their continued return to the area.

If the remaining Babine wilderness is penetrated by more roads and more logging the most conservative studies say the Park and watershed will lose one half of the grizzlies now in the area. Other studies say that it will be much more than this and the entire population will be at risk. Poaching will increase as bears are shot from the road. Len Vanderstar and others in a study done between 1998 and 2001 within the LRUP area reported that 18 grizzly have been reported killed with at least a third being females. The LRUP indicates that present populations of grizzly bears are to be maintained.

A second professional opinion of the merits of the draft West Babine Plan was provided in October 2002 by long time bear biologist Wayne McCrory of McCrory Wildlife Services Ltd, New Denver, BC, who suggests even worse outcomes: "the current West Babine Sustainable Resource Management Plan should be rejected as a valid, credible document for protection and conservation of grizzly bears... the entire land use process and decisions in the Babine need to be revamped to meet minimum conservation biology standards of 40-50 percent of the landscape protected in corridors and habitats for grizzly and other carnivores. This

improvement will require fully protected... stable core road-less security habitats, linkage corridors and generally larger protected key grizzly habitats. It will require reallocation of timberlands to protected grizzly bear habitats.”

The Babine Watershed is said to contain the second largest sustained community populations of grizzly in the province. Every grizzly now in the Babine watershed area was born after the three lodges were built. We have co-existed with them peacefully. We consider them our neighbors. They are too important to lose and The Babine River Foundation refuses to abandon these essential inhabitants of the corridor and watershed.

5. Unique Reputation of the Babine

The Skeena River system is the most significant and valuable steelhead fishery in the world because of number of rivers in the system, the numbers of wild, trophy steelhead in those rivers, and because of the variety of experiences the region offers. There is literally something here for everyone and it exists nowhere else. This one of a kind system is highly valued and is economically important for local communities; it also inspires international respect and has become one of the key elements in the worldwide image enjoyed by British Columbia as a “super-natural” place to live, to see and to visit.

Wilderness steelhead fishing is the rarest and smallest component of the Skeena system matrix of opportunities. Within this context, the Babine River Wilderness Park itself is small, one of the smallest parks in British Columbia and yet it is one of the most highly prized sport fisheries in the region and in the world. As such the thin corridor produces economic, social and political benefits to the community and province which far exceed the contributions of much larger, non-wilderness Steelhead Rivers and areas.

6. Harmony among interested parties

The Babine River Foundation is interested in ensuring that functional solutions are achieved on the Babine River Corridor. In order to address issues, we believe it is important to identify common concerns, share information and fully understand positions. We recognize that there are many public and private interests in the Babine and that any long-term solution will require harmony between interested parties.

7. Environmental integrity of the entire watershed

Our scope of concern goes beyond the Babine River and beyond the Babine Wilderness Corridor Park boundaries, and encompasses the entire Babine River

Watershed. In order to preserve the wilderness angling values of the river, we must protect the entire watershed from degradation. Concerns regarding the environmental integrity of the Babine watershed are shared by a wide variety of registered professionals, wilderness enthusiast and First Nations. The high quality wilderness values on the Babine River are vulnerable to cumulative impacts of adjacent logging and road access.

8. Opportunity for future generations to enjoy the watershed and wilderness park.

We are stewards of the Babine River. As stewards we are interested in the long-term well-being of the watershed. We have both an obligation and an opportunity to create an enduring legacy by ensuring that the wilderness values of the river are preserved in perpetuity. Our concerns and our efforts go beyond the vested interests of our individual lodges and encompass the interests of the entire watershed, its health and well-being.

9. Human involvement and economic enterprise as part of a system of “natural capital.”

We believe that all wealth flows from the natural environment. The natural environment cannot be separated from the economy. It is in fact the source of economic well-being. How we manage the precious natural resources of the Babine will be reflected in our long-term economic well-being.

10. Human responsibility and accountability for well being of the watershed.

We are responsible for the well being of the entire watershed. We must be accountable for the changes that are occurring in the watershed. We must ensure that our changes to the environment are not above and beyond “natural disturbance regimes”. New strategic direction is needed to ensure the high quality wilderness fishery is not degraded and its economic potential maintained. A clear land use strategy supported by effective operations is needed in the Babine to sustain all values.