

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does the **Babine River Foundation (BRF)** want to exclude the public from accessing the Babine River corridor?

No. Our vision is to maintain the provincially significant quality wilderness angling values of the Babine River Corridor. We want to share the river with BC residents in a way that does not compromise the quality wilderness angling values. We respect the Resident/Guide agreement and believe that access is a shared user responsibility. We recognize the need for an Angling Management Plan. Angling access is a shared opportunity and is open to resident, non-resident and alien anglers. BC residents by law are given priority.

2. Is the BRF against logging in the Babine Watershed?

No. We want to ensure that logging practices do not harm the wilderness character of the river corridor. It is possible for logging and wilderness to co-exist, but more and better information is needed to identify causes and sources of threats to river based resource values. Technical fish and wildlife habitat vulnerability (i.e. hazard) assessment is needed to reveal the causes and sources of these risks.

3. Does the BRF want the West Babine Sustainable Resource Management Plan to be expanded to include the entire Babine River?

We are seeking the best way to protect the watershed. One option is to expand the West Babine Sustainable Resource Management Plan. Another might be to amend the Bulkley Land Resource Management Plan. We recognize the interdependence of resource values upstream and downstream in the river. We do not want to see the river corridor arbitrarily split into two planning jurisdictions.

4. Why amend the Bulkley LRMP, a community-based consensus decision?

The BRF respects the community-based decision-making process that led to the Bulkley LRMP that covers approximately 1/3 of the upstream portion of the Babine River. Updates and amendments of [the](#) LRMP were anticipated in the original plans. Scheduled amendments were anticipated within 8 years of the plan adoption to accommodate new issues and significant amendments that are not adequately addressed in the original plans. Unscheduled amendments are significant changes to the plan that may be identified in the annual report or at the annual public meeting. The Bulkley LRMP indicates that when issues arise that require a major amendment (major revisions to objectives or management statements set out in the plan, or changes to Resource Management Zone boundaries of 500 hectares or more, not including SM1 zones or Protected areas)

the Inter Agency Management Committee of government will establish a schedule and Terms of Reference for the amendment process.¹

5. Is the BRF willing to meet and listen to comments from other segments of the community and other stakeholders?

Yes. We have initiated meetings with government representatives, First Nations, the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board, and worked with the N.W. Institute on a community forum to discuss long-term sustainability on the Babine. We will continue to meet with local groups and organizations.

6. Is the BRF concerned with species of fish other than steelhead, and other forms of wildlife?

Yes. The high quality wilderness angling experience depends upon the health of the entire watershed. The experience depends upon clear water, historical number of returning wild fish, wildlife viewing (bear, moose, and deer) and relatively un-crowded fishing in a wilderness setting.

7. Why was the Babine Corridor Park created in the first place?

The Babine River watershed is fragile. The BC government created a wilderness Park corridor in which no roads could be built. This was seen as way to help protect the wilderness character of the river, the population of grizzly bears, and the relatively small numbers (compared to other Skeena rivers) of wild steelhead, and the endangered populations of wild bull trout, Coho, Chinook and sockeye salmon which still remain.

8. Doesn't the Babine River Corridor Park already adequately protect wilderness values?

No. The Park corridor is long and narrow (approximately one kilometer wide) and follows the Babine River for 85 kilometers and covers 14, 543 hectares in the heart of the Babine Watershed. No vulnerability assessments were used to help decision makers anticipate the risks of escalating logging and logging road access in the initial decision to establish the park width. The Park corridor establishes some protection but additional protection is required to ensure the sustainability of the wilderness values.

With the exception of tourism, all resource values are in decline, including forestry values. Trend lines are down for forestry, commercial fisheries and it is

¹ B.C. Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board. Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan. March 1998. (page 118).

anticipated that grizzly bear populations on the Babine will decline by 30-50%. The Babine watershed is home to bull trout, fisher and grizzly bears: all blue listed and classified as vulnerable in Canada. According to the Ministry of Forests the historical rate of cut in the timber supply area and the special management zone is not sustainable and therefore a reduction of 54% will occur over time.

9. Is the forestry economics study biased?

No. The forestry economics study compares “like with like” in the analysis of the estimated net benefits from logging and commercial tourism for the years 2000 and 2001. The study also identifies the stumpage value that may be foregone if there were no logging within the existing Babine Special Management Zone (SMZ) and its priority was to sustain the commercial tourism values in the Babine River Corridor.

Two values were identified for both the forestry and commercial tourism sectors – the direct revenues to the provincial government; and the total contribution (direct, indirect and induced) of these two sectors to the Provincial GDP, employment and provincial government revenues. To ensure an objective analysis:

- (a) The stumpage data source was the Ministry of Forests Harvest Billing System - the public record of actual stumpage paid. Of this stumpage paid the sawlog component was about 60 percent, and the pulp log component (at \$0.25/cu.m.) was about 40 percent;
- (b) Six nearby Forest Licenses were used as the initial stumpage data sources (see (d) below);
- (c) Both 2000 and 2001 were used to represent the long run stumpage values, because 2001 was historically low;
- (d) FL A16831 was dropped from the analysis because of it’s high hemlock component and low value. The result was a higher and more accurate stumpage value because the analysis was more representative of the actual species grade distribution in the SMZ.

The average stumpage value for 2000 in the Babine was \$17.40/cu.m.; and for 2001 was \$6.50/cu.m.. The two year average value was \$11.95/cu.m. or 78 percent of the \$15.40/cu.m. average stumpage value for the same two years in the Prince Rupert Forest Region. This is reasonable because the Babine is relatively remote.

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To take into account the costs of low impact logging practices in the SMZ in the definition of net benefits from logging, the costs of temporary access control were estimated at \$1.00/cu.m., and partial cutting costs were estimated \$2.50/cu.m. In addition a conservative 25% (\$2.92/cu.m.) of the Ministry of Forests actual overhead costs was also included.

This was the best available information for estimating the net benefits of logging in the SMZ. If and when better information becomes available to refine these estimates, it is welcome.

In 2002 (and early 2003) there is little active logging in the Babine. Skeena Cellulose Inc. has not been operating, and West Fraser is using much of their Bulkley AAC to log beetle killed timber in eastern TSA's.

10. Where is the evidence that logging damages wilderness fisheries values in the Babine?

The consensus option in the 1991 Babine Options report was an agreement to maintain all resource values, not to expect and accept damage as it occurs. The angling community for many years has brought to the attention of forest managers what is necessary to protect and maintain wilderness fisheries values (see Babine Options Report, pages 17 and 18). The issues have not changed, and they include:

Inside Babine River Corridor:

The issues include habituated bears, increasing unguided rod day usage, poor camping practices by unguided rafters, depleted salmon runs and siltation in creeks. In September 2002, sediment caused by road construction in the Upper Nicheyskwa had a major impact on the Babine. A complaint to the Forest Practices Board will be filed.

Outside Babine River Corridor:

The issues include violations of the Land and Resource Management Plan's objectives to protect streams through proper buffering and sediment prevention during runoff; more and more easy access through the Corridor; slash burning, feller buncher, log hauling, blasting and related noise and smell factors from logging that are eroding the Class 1 River status and the Class A Park; and the grizzly bear movement and feeding patterns inside the corridor that are being altered by increased logging, thereby reducing bear viewing opportunities.

To help prevent further logging damage to the Class 1 River and the Class A wilderness Park in future decisions and plans in the Babine watershed, a technical hazard assessment method is necessary to identify the inherent threats and losses to the wilderness fishery. This new method will identify the limits crossed by an incompatible activity, and where predictable losses to a valuable resource would occur. Hazard assessments are now used to prevent losses to timber values from fire, insects and operations on unstable soil.

11. Are the sports fishing lodges on the Babine making huge profits?

No. GDP is a statistical measure that includes profits, wages and salaries, depreciation on buildings and equipment, and interest payments on borrowed money. In actual fact, the three fishing lodges on the Babine took an aggregate loss in the year 2001, including some \$200,000 to upgrade equipment and buildings to improve the environmental standards they feel are necessary.

12. Do the lodge owners take all of the money out of the community?

No. Wilderness tourism operators on the Babine purchased almost \$1.5 million in goods and services in Smithers, and clients themselves spent almost \$475,000 on accommodation, food and other sundry items. This, on top of \$1.2 million in salaries going to local residents clearly demonstrates that wilderness tourism is an important contributor to Smithers' economy.

13. How can you access the Babine River?

Most Skeena system steelhead rivers offer immediate and easy drive to access. The Babine offers drive to fishing on the upper river; access to the entire river by floating and camping anglers, and fly in access to one of the lodges.

14. Are any of the three lodges on the Babine private clubs?

No. All three lodges are open to the public through a system of reservations. Interested anglers may call at anytime for a reservation. These reservations are taken on a first come first served basis, and returning anglers who fished at the lodges one year have first choice at renewing their reservation for the next year.

15. Why are the lodges on the Babine so expensive?

There are two basic reasons. In the first place costs of operations are high because supplies have to be either flown in, or transported downriver by boats. Secondly, wilderness activities such as fishing, hunting and skiing have always