

## Fraser ranks third on endangered rivers list

**Janaya Fuller-Evans**

Burnaby Now

*Saturday, May 22, 2010*

The Fraser River came in third on this year's endangered rivers of B.C. list, moving up one spot from last year's place as the fourth most endangered river in the province.

The Fraser has ranked in the top five of B.C.'s most endangered rivers for 17 of the 18 years that the list has been compiled by the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia.

The river earned the dubious distinction due to pollution, industrial development and urbanization affecting the river.

Two B.C. rivers tied for first place, making the Fraser fourth in the number of most endangered rivers, though third in the rankings.

The most worrying issue with the river this year was the dismal sockeye salmon return, according to Mark Angelo, chair of the Rivers Institute at BCIT.

Angelo, who is also chair of the Outdoor Recreation Council's B.C. Rivers program and a Burnaby resident, said it was the lowest sockeye return recorded in 52 years.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada forecasted that 10.6 million sockeye salmon would return to the Fraser, but only 1.37 million made it back last July.

The prime minister called a judicial inquiry into the salmon stock depletion last November. The commission is investigating the causes for the decline of Fraser River sockeye salmon and the current state of salmon stocks and will develop recommendations to sustain the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery.

According to Angelo, the depletion of the salmon stocks highlights the need to research the marine environment more thoroughly.

Another issue affecting the Fraser River fishery is the Iona Island wastewater treatment plant, he added.

The plant is in Richmond and releases treated effluent into the Georgia Strait, which the sockeye salmon enter from the Fraser, Angelo explained.

"Young fish have to move through that," he said.

Metro Vancouver has been ordered to upgrade Iona to a secondary treatment facility by 2020 by the provincial government, but Angelo hopes to see it happen sooner.

"We have indications that they would be willing to do that," Angelo said.

Urbanization and agriculture are also adversely affecting the river, but Angelo said he thinks the Fraser could be restored and protected, with the right help.

"There are certainly things we can change," said Angelo, mentioning groups like the Fraser Basin Council, which works to protect the Fraser River environment, and the Fraser River Discovery Centre in New Westminster, which educates the public about the river.

The 2010 list ranks the Kettle River and Sacred Headwaters of the Skeena, Nass and Stikine rivers in the number 1 at-risk spot.

© Burnaby Now 2010

CLOSE WINDOW

---

Copyright © 2010 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.  
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.