



Trout Unlimited Canada – Bow River Chapter

Calgary, Alberta

Office of the City Clerk
City Council
The City of Calgary
700 Macleod Trail SE
PO Box 2100 Postal Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5



Re: Bow River Access Strategy

Dear members of Calgary City Council,

This letter offers the official position of the Bow River Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada regarding the Bow River Access Strategy being considered by members of Calgary City Council.

Fluvial environments and riparian habitats are relatively resilient to human influences over geologic time spans as natural processes continuously renew them.

When artificial bank or in-channel construction occurs, this ability can be constrained, thus considerable care must be taken when these activities are considered.

The Bow River Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada conducted a survey of brown trout spawning sites, also known as redds, in the fall of 2015. Data from this study was used in the preparation of the River Access Strategy draft that we had available to review.

The 2015 survey was the first conducted on the urban reaches of the river in over a decade and is intended to be the first in a series of annual studies to monitor fish populations, breeding success, and river health. The redd count was repeated in November 2016 but the data has not yet been fully assessed. What is apparent from the initial evaluation is that redd

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locations and numbers are highly variable from one breeding season to the next. Numerous factors, some not currently understood, contribute to the process that determines why a spawning fish chooses one potential site over another. A copy of our 2015 Bow River Brown Trout Redd Report has been attached to this letter.

Rather than focusing on previously used spawning sites, attention should be paid to protection of areas with suitable habitat since it isn't possible to say that a spawning site not used in 2015 wouldn't be used in subsequent years. Trout require loose, unconsolidated gravels with a low proportion of fine sediment for redd building; additional factors such as in-stream cover, slower and deeper pools, and high dissolved oxygen content are not only important for spawning but for rearing and overwintering as well.

The Bow River Chapter also recommends that educational signage be installed at river access points so that river users can identify spawning nests, avoid walking through them, and *understand why it is important to do so*. (Similar signage is already in place on the Elbow River at Sandy Beach.)

We don't believe that an increase in activity on the river created by enhanced access is automatically negative. Most spawning activity by brown trout in the Bow occurs late in the season after most of the summer season activity on the river has tapered off. The other primary sportfish in the Bow, rainbow trout, spawns very early in the spring in the tributaries (ie: Fish Creek) and is not believed to spawn in the Bow in significant numbers.

Education for river users is an important component of any access strategy, encouraging responsible behaviour with signage and appropriate enforcement is strongly recommended.

Signed

Rick Moses

President, Bow River Chapter – TUC

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