



**CanoeKayak BC - Whitewater
DRAFT RIVER ACCESS POLICY – For Comment**

The approach of CanoeKayak BC – Whitewater (CKBC-WW) to River Access issues is driven by the organizational Mission Statement:

Provide structure and programs to support the pursuit of excellence in competitive whitewater paddlesport in the core disciplines at all levels of participation.

Adhere to an athlete-centered approach, applying the principles of fair play, ethical conduct, equal opportunity, and personal excellence.

Implement the Sport Canada / CanoeKayak Canada-Whitewater Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model:



Ensure that athlete development is comprehensive, leading to enhanced personal growth in all areas, and positive lifetime benefits.

Maximize opportunities for all British Columbians to participate in and benefit from whitewater paddlesports.

Promote the development and education of our members as qualified coaches, instructors, leaders, officials, and volunteers.

Focus on the process, and let results be a marker of success, such as; increased participation, excellent performances at all levels, athletes regularly qualifying for the National Team, and athletes winning medals in international competition.

Notes:

In order to fulfill this mission, Canoe Kayak BC shall act as the sole Provincial Sports Organization (PSO) for competitive whitewater paddlesports in the province of BC.

Recreational paddling is supported, as it is a key component of the long term athlete development model, primarily in the “Active Start” and “Active for Life” stages.

Athlete development programs will be multi-discipline wherever possible. CKBC-WW will work with all CKBC clubs (whitewater and flatwater) to encourage exposure to all types of paddling, including slalom, wildwater, canoe polo, freestyle, surf kayak, sprint, marathon, outrigger, surfski, dragonboat, etc. This will increase overall participation, and ensure that more participants stay engaged and derive the maximum benefit over their lifetime. This maximizes benefits to communities.

River Access Key Goals and Principles

Protect access to natural waterways by supporting conservation efforts, where there is a clear benefit to paddlers and to fulfilling the organizational mission.

Similarly, protect or negotiate access to man-made waterways.

By default all waterways are considered to be navigable by canoe/kayak, and potentially valuable in fulfilling the organizational mission.

Where possible initiate, participate in, or support environmentally sustainable projects to enhance natural and artificial waterways for the purposes of whitewater canoeing and kayaking.

Development of environmentally sustainable purpose-built paddling facilities strategically located throughout the province is recognized as a critical requirement for fulfilling the CKBC-WW mission. Opportunities for any such projects will be pursued whenever possible.

The primary driver for all river access activities is fulfillment of the organizational mission and key objectives. If members identify other interests with respect to a particular project or issue, these will be considered, but the organizational mission and objectives will take precedence. The interests of local members who will be most impacted will be prioritized over others.

Where threats to waterways and/or access to waterways exist, the goal is “no net loss of paddling opportunities”. Preferred approaches are, in order of priority:

1. Avoidance of impact
2. Reduction of impact, with mitigation
3. Acceptance of impact, with complete mitigation

CKBC-WW will use a positive, professional, collaborative, practical, realistic and pragmatic approach to all river access issues. Whenever possible we will work together with industry or organizations posing the threat to river access, and look for “win-win” solutions.

Where it makes sense, actions to address river access issues will be led by the BC Rivers Alliance. CKBC-WW will actively bring issues to the attention of the Alliance, as the Alliance is a much larger voice which has the potential for greater success.

When dealing with issues on its own, CKBC-WW will use a common voice, in accordance with this policy. Member clubs may take the lead in dealing with specific issues in their area, but this must be done in consultation with the River Access Coordinator, and in accordance with this policy. Successful outcomes are more likely when the influence of the entire organization is brought to bear, rather than just the local club.

CKBC-WW and member clubs will form partnerships, or work collaboratively with other potentially-impacted groups whenever possible (i.e. the Recreational Canoeing Association of BC), where there are common objectives.

All member clubs and individual members working on river access projects must comply with the letter and intent of this policy. It is critical that a unified and clear voice is used when interacting with any outside agencies, otherwise success for all is jeopardized.

Specific Approach to Independent Power Producer (IPP) Projects:

Background:

CKBC-WW supports the position of the BC Rivers Alliance, that there should be a moratorium on all IPP developments until a provincial plan is developed taking into account conservation and cumulative impacts. Many of the proposed developments are not considered to be “green” at all, due to the fact that construction and infrastructure result in significant environmental impacts. However, it is recognized that some projects are “greener” than others, and that hydro-power is a renewable resource.

These projects do not require community support for approval, due to the passing of Bill 30 in the BC legislature.

The Navigable Waters Protection Act and Navigational Impact Assessment Requirements for Privately Operated Hydro Electric Facilities provide little or no protection to waterways for the purposes of whitewater paddling. Mitigation measures are suggested, but may or may not be required for project approval. The mitigation measures identified are:

- Post project flow monitoring
- Real-time flow information to support recreational opportunities
- Provision of additional access points for recreational users
- Establishment of portage route or bypass
- Signage for construction hazards

Industry representatives have contacted CKBC-WW to establish a positive working relationship, primarily to obtain additional input on how best to apply the identified mitigation measures to specific projects. Additional mitigation measures may also be considered, such as in-stream works to improve whitewater features. Creating opportunities for promotion and development of the sport of whitewater canoe/kayak is seen as something that can benefit the industry.

Whitewater on specific creeks and rivers will undoubtedly be impacted by these developments; but it is possible that mitigation measures could create other opportunities that may provide substantially more benefit to the sport.

The whitewater community currently has a low credibility among industry and government. Potential changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act may remove canoeing and kayaking completely as navigation that needs to be protected. These projects will proceed with or without our involvement, so it is to our benefit to influence the process in any way we can, now.

Approach:

CKBC-WW will engage industry representatives, and government, taking a positive, professional, collaborative, practical, realistic and pragmatic approach. We will work together to look for “win-win” solutions.

This is a pragmatic approach, since CKBC-WW supports the position of the BC Rivers Alliance, that there should be a moratorium on all IPP developments until a provincial plan is developed taking into account conservation and cumulative impacts. Right now these projects are going to go ahead regardless, so we will likely participate in most projects unless there is significant reason not to.

CKBC-WW will liaise with industry representatives to examine each specific project, and evaluate (a) the overall sustainability of the project, and (b) what impacts there will be to paddling opportunities. If the project is considered to be reasonably sustainable, appropriate mitigation measures will then be jointly identified, **commensurate with the value of the paddling opportunities lost due to the development**. The mitigation measures identified by the NRPD will be used as a starting point, but preference will be given to development of in-stream works or artificial features that could allow for significantly increased use by a wider range of paddlers. Key mitigation measures to be considered include:

- FLOW WINDOWS – Integration into regional flow network so that something is always in a "flow window" during paddling season.
- Access improvement - roads, paths, portages, signage.
- River enhancement - park and play features or whitewater parks
- Web based real time flow gauges
- Web Cams
- Web based release schedules with historical data
- Signage

Where projects are not considered by CKBC-WW to be reasonably sustainable, CKBC-WW may decline to participate in that project. Factors that may be examined include:

- Local community support
- Environmental impacts (physical, biological)
- Recreation/Aesthetic
- Socio-economic impacts (tourism, whitewater industry)
- Cultural/Archaeological impacts (First Nations)
- Historical/Heritage

The value of the paddling resource that may be impacted will be determined from a number of factors, including:

- Current frequency of use (days per year)

- Total numbers of paddlers using the resource per year
- Diversity of paddling activities possible (i.e. site can be used for freestyle, slalom, wildwater, and by a wide range of skill levels)
- Quality of water features (i.e. well formed waves, holes and eddies that can support the highest levels of paddling performance, or that are exceptional in nature, or not commonly found)
- Well established historical use (i.e. where site has historically been used for a long period of time)
- Suitability for hosting events (site has a good combination of access, features, nearby amenities, etc. that make it suitable for hosting events and competitions)
- Suitability for commercial operators (site is suitable for commercial operators to run regular kayak trips, or kayak schools, which benefit the overall community)
- Exceptional aesthetic values

Facilitation:

CKBC-W will endeavour to keep river access and conservation efforts separate from facility development efforts wherever possible. This allows for clear goal-setting and efficient action.

River access and conservation oriented work carried out by CKBC-W will be led by the River Access Sub-Committee, chaired by the River Access Coordinator

Facilities development work will be led by the Facilities Sub-Committee, chaired by the Facilities Coordinator.

To support these committees, it may make sense to seek a grant from IPP BC or other sources. Goals and rationale include:

- Promote paddle tourism in BC
- Creation of a provincial master plan for mitigation guidelines on a regional basis
- Accurate paddling usage and whitewater resource value assessments for the regions targeted by IPP development

CanoeKayak BC – Whitewater Role as BC Rivers Alliance Member:

CKBC-WW supports the BC Rivers Alliance core values:

- Wilderness conservation to protect wild salmon and species at risk
- Watershed and ecosystem integrity
- Sustainable power solutions
- Equal consideration of all river users and stakeholders
- Public hydro power
- Conservation of power to meet demand
- Comprehensive and transparent approval processes for hydro projects
- Non partisan

CKBC-WW supports the BC Rivers Alliance position that a moratorium on independent power projects (IPP's) be put in place until a provincial plan is developed that considers conservation and cumulative impacts.

The River Access Coordinator within CKBC-WW is the designated representative to the Alliance.

CKBC-WW directly supports the Alliance by promoting membership in the BC Creek Protection Society. Clubs are encouraged to provide BC CPS membership forms to all members when doing renewals.

The River Access Coordinator liaises with whitewater clubs/groups throughout the province, coordinating activities with the Alliance. The River Access Coordinator will work with CKBC clubs to encourage them to elect a Club River Access Coordinator, so that a network of coordinators is established.

Paddlers around the province are often on the front lines of new developments, and can be a valuable resource to the Alliance. The River Access Coordinator will collect information and bring it to the Alliance, and request support from the Alliance for specific projects/issues. It is highly beneficial for paddlers to be part of a united opposition, not just on their own.

The goal is for CKBC-WW clubs and members to support and supplement the activities of the Alliance, where there is a clear benefit to paddlers.

Vision for BC Rivers Alliance:

Act as the coordinating body, to represent all member organizations and stakeholders concerned about the welfare of BC rivers.

Utilize the resources of all member organizations. Work closely with external organizations who may share similar interests.

Identify and prioritize threats to BC rivers, and inform the public and member organizations.

Conduct research on each threat/development to identify key issues of concern, and to develop an Alliance position, based on accurate social, scientific, and other data.

Lobby all levels of government to increase awareness, and promote the Alliance position.

Conduct intensive public relations campaigns to inform the public of all issues.

Where required, coordinate peaceful, direct actions to protect BC rivers, such as demonstrations and publicity events.