

# Basin

## NEWS

The Newsletter of the Fraser Basin Council • February 2000

[www.fraserbasin.bc.ca](http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca)

Coming soon to the World Wide Web.



The Fraser Basin Council is set to launch its website early this spring. The information-rich site will serve as another interactive communications tool to help people find out more about and comment on efforts toward building the sustainability of the Fraser Basin. The site will also have a feedback mechanism for visitors to respond to what they see on the site - and what they experience in the Basin. In addition to the Five-Year Plan (with regular updates), the site will also offer other key documents and information, including: The *Charter for Sustainability*, lists of directors and staff, maps of regions, updates on initiatives, and links to related websites.

### *Council takes the measure of sustainability*

*Draft sustainability measures to be presented at biennial conference this fall.*

Being able to gauge progress toward the sustainability of the Basin is only second in importance to making it. To this end the Council is developing measures to track the effectiveness of future efforts more precisely. As a guide to ongoing evaluation, the sustainability measures will include some 15 to 20 indicators relating to the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. These measures could then be used to help people with different interests monitor progress - or lack thereof. The following gives an overview of the thinking that will guide development of the new sustainability measures. They will be:

- **linked to the Four Directions**, as outlined in the *Charter for Sustainability*.
- **accompanied by limited text including:** an explanation of link to sustainability, source of data, discussion of trends within data, and interpretation.
- **revisited and reported on regularly** (i.e., 3 - 5 years).

Over the coming months, the Council will work with partners with expertise to develop draft measures of sustainability to be presented at the second biennial State of the Fraser Basin Conference on Sustainability to be held this year on November 24 and 25, 2000 in Richmond, BC. All Conference participants will be invited to take part in the review and further development of the draft sustainability measurements. *For more information on Sustainability Reporting please contact Malcolm Smith: 604-605-3454; e-mail: [msmith@fraserbasin.bc.ca](mailto:msmith@fraserbasin.bc.ca)*



## Proposed Changes to Action Plan

- A new point of primary access: the Fraser Basin Council Website (see cover story on website launch).  
Print versions of specific sections of the document to be mailed/faxed on request.
- A summary of new initiatives and call for new initiatives (accompanied by criteria for same) will be published in the annual FBC spring newsletter.
- A full printed document will be available periodically for general distribution, particularly for those without electronic access.
- Contacts for specific projects will be included in the registry.
- Maps showing locations of initiatives will be included.

## Five-Year Action Plan Overhaul

*Survey results guide proposed changes*

In the second half of 1999, the Council conducted a survey to determine ways to improve the Five-Year Action Plan. The survey went out to 4,300 and asked a number of questions about the usefulness and content of the document. In addition, the survey also requested suggestions for improving the Five-Year Plan, which was originally intended to communicate what the Council and other partners are doing to achieve sustainability in the Fraser Basin. Highlights of the survey and suggestions follow.

- 97% found the Plan to be a useful and informative document.
- 91% said it fulfills its intended function.
- 86% felt it has a "good" or an "adequate" balance in terms of presenting government, non-government, social, environmental and economic initiatives while 14% saw it as imbalanced.

Suggestions fall into two main categories: Content, and Format and Distribution.

**Content:** include more private sector and community initiatives, and greater focus on social aspects of sustainability.

- Provide more information on projects; include maps showing locations of initiatives
- Summarize actions by topic or focus
- Emphasize results and progress, and acknowledge lack of same
- Include contact names and numbers for specific projects
- Provide clear criteria for including items in the Plan

**Format & Distribution:**

- Use less paper; make documents smaller and use uncoated stock
- Put the Plan in electronic form on the Internet (i.e., on a website)

## Council Welcomes Michael O'Brien

*Airport Authority Official named Basin Wide Director*

Michael O'Brien is the Vice President, Legal and Corporate Affairs and Corporate Secretary, Vancouver International Airport Authority. Michael is part of the team that managed the privatization and expansion of the airport with responsibility for law, government relations, communications, community relations, and environment. Having also worked for three different federal government departments, including the Ministry of Transport, he believes his experience dealing with many different groups in the airport privatization and expansion will enable him to contribute to the Council's role as a facilitator, bringing all parties, including the private sector, to the table. "Good economics is an ally of social well-being and environmental health," he says. "Everybody must be included in meeting the challenges we face."



# Fraser River White Sturgeon Resurgent

*White sturgeon may be the largest freshwater fish in North America,* but our knowledge of its numbers, migration habits and reproductive habits remains small compared to other species. The Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society (FRSCS), founded in 1998, is out to change that. The Society's mission is to raise awareness about the sturgeon and preserve Fraser River stocks, which were almost wiped out earlier this century by commercial fishing. The Fraser is one of a handful of West Coast rivers, including the Sacramento and the Columbia, in which sturgeon, a species with a 98-million-year history, have flourished.

Funded by the provincial government through the Habitat Conservation Fund of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Fisheries Renewal, the Vancouver Foundation and Endswell, the Society stages an annual catch, tag and release operation to help get a fix on the species abundance, migration patterns and spawning grounds. A team of about 20 volunteer anglers and guides provides the labour.

In 1998, they tagged 221 sturgeon; in 1999, 354 were tagged. Based on the recapture of some of these fish and other research, provincial fisheries biologists estimate sturgeon numbers between Hope and Mission to range from 6,000 to 64,000, with a best guess at about 17,000. There is no estimate at all for the number between Mission and Steveston.

"The tagging will give us base line data on the sturgeon," says Craig Orr, communications director for the FRSCS. "Our goal is to tag 5,000."

A similar program in the lower Columbia River in the U.S. has tagged some 100,000 sturgeon, an encouraging indicator that the species is flourishing, at least in that portion of the river. Orr expresses concern, however, for sturgeon populations in the Upper Columbia and the Upper Nechako Rivers in BC. While it is too early to determine precisely the numbers or current health of the Fraser River sturgeon stocks, the early indications are that the fish, which has survived since the tail end of the Jurassic period, is showing signs of recovery.



*Rick Hansen and Wayne Yamauchi, Director of the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society, with a white sturgeon caught, tagged and released in the Fraser River.*



# *Council to facilitate management plan for Fraser River Gravel Reach*

*Along with water, the Fraser River carries gravel, sand and silt on its journey from the mountains to the sea.*



*The Fraser River deposits much of the gravel, sand and silt it carries in the gravel reach located between Hope and Sumas Mountain.*

The Fraser deposits much of this burden in the gravel reach located between Hope and Sumas Mountain. This deposit causes the riverbed to rise in some places, which, in turn, could cause increased flood hazards. The deposited gravel also forms bars, which can cause the river channel to move, increasing the risk of eroding the riverbank as well as flood protection structures.

One possible solution is to take out the gravel, which itself is highly valued for a number of uses, such as road construction and maintenance, drainage, concrete, asphalt and fill. Little is known, however, about how potential extraction affects fish and wildlife habitat and the river channel itself. The gravel reach of the Fraser River supports a diverse ecosystem, providing important spawning and rearing habitat for many fish species. Given the questions about the impact of extraction and the roles of the reach, extraction operations have for the most part been suspended in the reach.

A number of studies -- among the first of their kind in the world -- are seeking answers to these questions. Dr. Michael Church, for example, leads a UBC research team investigating how much gravel is being deposited, what the impacts of gravel accumulation are on flood hazards, and what the impacts of potential gravel extraction would be on aquatic habitat. The knowledge gained from these studies will help guide the development of new solutions to the potential for increased flood hazards or impacts on fish habitat.

There are numerous government organizations with an interest in the management of the gravel reach and all have opinions on what constitute appropriate solutions. All involved, however, recognize the need for an integrated management plan for the gravel reach, in order to provide a consistent, integrated framework for the planning and management of land and water resources.

The Council has agreed to facilitate the development of a management plan for the Fraser River gravel reach. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, the Fraser River Estuary Management Program and the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry have all contributed funding. The management plan for the gravel reach will be developed using a multi-interest, collaborative process involving representatives from government agencies, local government, First Nations, industry, and non-government organizations.

*For more information, please contact Jim Vanderwal, the Council's new Gravel Stewardship Coordinator, at (604) 605-3461.*



# *Council to facilitate development of Nutrient Management Action Plan in the Fraser Valley*

*The Fraser Valley is one of the most productive agricultural regions in Canada.*

Besides thriving operations growing vegetables, berries, mushrooms and flowers, it supports some 60,000 cows, more than 18 million chickens and more than 140,000 hogs. Over the past 30 years, however, the Valley has also seen a rapid rise in human population and development and an increase in the intensity of livestock production.

With the trend toward more animals and less land to support them, a federal-provincial study released in 1997 indicated that there was growing cause for concern in managing nutrients, especially manure, to protect soils and water. That study, and others, showed that many parts of the Valley have adequate land to use manure as a fertilizer, given proper management and adequate storage capacity. In other parts of the Valley, however, there is just too much fertilizer for the land to support.



*In some parts of the Lower Fraser Valley there is just too much manure for the land to support, posing risks to water quality.*

Both government and agricultural producers acknowledged the need for action. The Fraser Basin Council has been asked to help farmers and government agencies work together to create a plan to address nutrient management issues. A working group with more than 30 members representing agricultural interests and government agencies is now developing a draft Nutrient Management Action Plan (NMAP). The Plan focuses on land and water with regard to nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) in the Fraser Valley from Hope to the estuary. The Plan will build on existing efforts to manage nutrients, including producer initiatives, government regulations and educational guides and will complement other efforts to deal with non-point source pollution.

The working group has identified three focus areas in developing actions for the Plan: changing nutrient management practices, providing incentives to change and ensuring there are resources to support the new practices. Kevin Chipperfield, who has served as manager for the Sustainable Poultry Farming Group for the past nine years, says that theoretically, developing and implementing a plan is in everyone's best interests, with more being accomplished with less government regulation and more incentive for producers to manage effectively. "Someone needed to bring everyone together," he adds, "and the Fraser Basin Council has gotten the process off to a good start in coordinating all the participants as we work together."



BC's municipal elections in November 1999 have led to the retirement and departure of some long-serving Council directors as well as the arrival of some new faces. The Council extends heartfelt thanks and fond farewells to:

**Bob Ellis**, Director, Thompson Nicola Regional District, Savona, has been on Council since its inception in 1997. Prior to the Council, he served on the Fraser Basin Management Board from its inception in 1992.

Three other departing Directors have also served on the Council from the start: **Roy Decker**, Columbia Shuswap Regional District; **Corisande Percival-Smith**, Greater Vancouver Regional District; and **Frank Read**, Bulkley-Nechako Regional District. Also departing is **Jon Wolbers** of the Cariboo Regional District.

## *Incoming Local Government Directors*

### **Colin Mayes, Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Salmon Arm**

Colin Mayes, Mayor of the District of Salmon Arm, combines vast experience as a municipal officeholder with a varied career in business that has included general contracting, property development, owning and operating a supermarket and placer mining in the Yukon. During the latter he jokes that he learned "as much about salmon, spawning and habitat protection as about placer mining".

Mayes also became acquainted with the Council through its work with water-related issues, in his case groundwater quality in the Shuswap. As mayor of a rapidly growing district, he knows first hand the challenges of integrating environmental protection with economic and social

development. He brings to the Council "knowledge of the process and an ability to see the big picture for the Fraser Basin."

### **Bill Kershaw, Thompson-Nicola Regional District, Barriere**

Bill Kershaw, now serving his second term with the TNRD, has long been active in community service with the local water board, fire department and improvement district. For many years a self-employed mechanic and entrepreneur, he first became involved with the Council while attempting to deal with flooding problems in the region. Bill values the Council's ability to help identify resources needed to deal with issues, to bring together the parties required to solve them, and to build solid partnerships (including First Nations) on issues of common concern. "Our concerns in the Interior are basically the same as downstream: we have to look after the water here the same way."



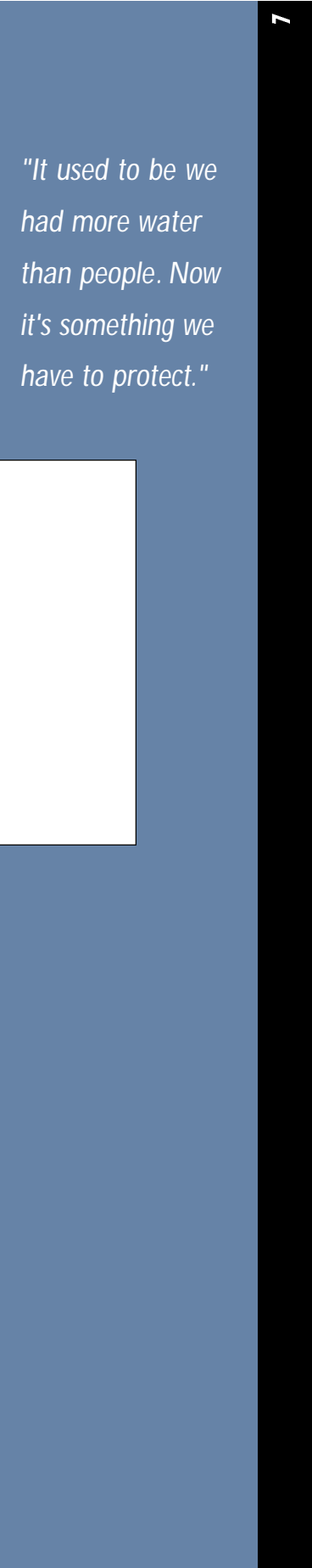
*"Being a director is giving me a better appreciation of how all parts of the system affect each other."*

*"Everybody must be included in meeting the challenges we face."*

**Jerry Petersen, Bulkley-Nechako Regional District, Vanderhoof**



Jerry Petersen has been a rancher in the Nechako valley for more than 30 years and has long been active in community organizations. A former director of the BC Cattlemen's Association, he is very knowledgeable about issues facing farmers and ranchers. "Water is becoming ever more precious," says Petersen. "It used to be we had more water than people. Now it's something we have to protect." He feels the Council's past performance has shown that it can deal with the issues - and believes that people and nature can co-exist. "People forget that we are a part of nature."



*"It used to be we had more water than people. Now it's something we have to protect."*

**Steve Wallace, Cariboo Regional District, Quesnel**

The immediate past president of the Union of BC Municipalities, Steve Wallace, Mayor of Quesnel, brings nearly 20 years of experience in local politics to the Council and a reputation as a staunch defender of local government. He participated in the initial meetings in 1990 that led to the establishment of the Fraser Basin Management Board, the forerunner to the Fraser Basin Council, and was instrumental in Quesnel becoming the only municipality in the Fraser Basin to date to incorporate the Council's principles of sustainability in its Official Community Plan. He strongly believes that "a marrying of economic and environmental interests" is not only desirable but also entirely possible "with proper support and management".



**Kurt Alberts, Greater Vancouver Regional District**



Kurt Alberts, the newly elected Mayor of Langley Township, has worked as planner/ administrator for different municipalities and regional districts for the past 25 years, most recently for Langley Township. A member of the Planning Institute of BC (PIBC) and the GVRD's Planning and Environment Committee, he has extensive experience in developing growth management strategies; in 1996, the PIBC awarded Langley Township's Growth Management Strategy its Award of Excellence. Alberts knows from experience the

"challenges -- and necessity -- of coordinating multiple interests," and the value of the Fraser Basin Council's role in this regard.



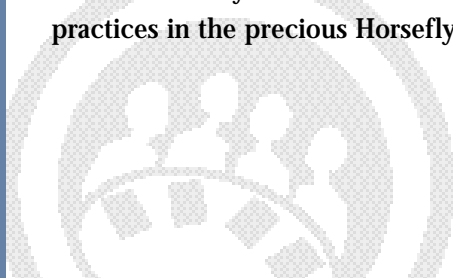
**Bridge Creek.** The Council continues to provide support to local community watershed groups in the Bridge Creek area and in the region. Efforts are underway to initiate a new group in the lower Bridge Creek area and the Council has been asked to provide input on structure and non-profit constitutions. This group would be one of many in the area, but focuses primarily on the lower or downstream area of the large Bridge Creek system. In addition, the Cariboo Tribal Council and the Fraser Basin Council have submitted a joint proposal to Fisheries Renewal BC. The proposal has two main components. One is to foster communication among groups with an eye to creating a complementary community-based action plan for the Bridge Creek watershed. The other focuses on conducting research for future actions and implementing a water quality monitoring program for the Lower Bridge Creek/Canim Lake area.

The proposal would help create training and employment opportunities while building knowledge and action for the river. If approved, the Council and the Cariboo Tribal Council will work in close partnership to ensure effective delivery of the project. Support for this joint proposal was received from local community groups and local government.



The Fraser Basin Council continues to work with other groups such as the Cariboo Chilcotin Fish Enhancement Society, the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society and the local Stewardship Coordinator to help strengthen watershed groups across the region. A recent region-wide workshop helped identify common interests and future needs and this has formed the background for joint meetings. The intent is to identify how these organizations, along with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans can work together to help support the many local watershed groups.

**Horsefly Named Heritage River.** The Horsefly River was named a BC Heritage River in 1999. The nomination came after progress on the Cariboo Chilcotin Land Use Plan enabled the reactivation of the application for Heritage River status. This River contributes some of BC's largest salmon runs along with important forest, ranching and recreation opportunities. Effectively managing activities around the River has required developing working partnerships among federal and provincial government agencies and businesses to help protect the River's integrity. Council Chair Iona Campagnolo, Thompson Regional Coordinator Phil Hallinan and Cariboo Regional Directors Marie Mervyn, Ken Day and Jon Wolbers spent a productive day, organized by Bill Young, Horsefly Forest District Manager, with representatives of federal fisheries and the private sector. They saw firsthand some very progressive and sustainable selective forestry practices in the precious Horsefly area.



**Services Canada Pilot Project.** Williams Lake will be one of Services Canada's four pilot projects in BC. The project's goal is more effective delivery of government programs in rural areas. Communities involved will help design how the project can best meet local needs. Services Canada is contributing staff time, training, phone service (1-800-CANADA) and a database. Regional Coordinator Gail Wallin provided support in identifying local community groups who may be interested in working towards having better service in the local area. The next step is for Services Canada to work with partners to launch this pilot project early in 2000.



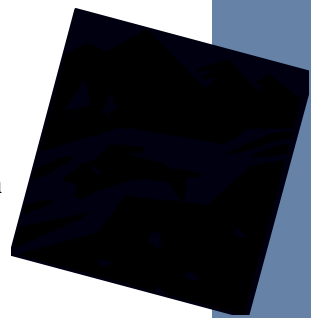
**Nechako Watershed Council.** The Nechako Watershed Council (NWC) met nine times in 1999. Some 25 issues to date have been identified and many field trips made to the Nechako River and Reservoir. The Council will spend the next several months using the information gathered to explore possible solutions to these issues, including the possibility of a water release facility at Kenney Dam. Council members are also participating in the Nechako

Environmental Enhancement Fund's (NEEF) Management Committee's public consultation on the downstream enhancement of the Nechako River. The Fraser Basin Council continues to contribute half the time of the Upper Fraser Regional Coordinator to act as a secretariat to the NWC.



**Robson Valley Tourism.** Upper Fraser Regional Coordinator Joan Chess worked with project team members from University of Northern British Columbia and Simon Fraser University to help organize two workshops held in autumn 1999 and winter 2000 for Robson Valley Community Based Tourism Development. Residents chose to focus first on "Working Together" and "Visioning," from among eight possible training modules discussed at a May 1999. In late November, some 30 residents participated in the "Working Together" workshop, which focused on why people have different ways of approaching issues and tasks, and the skills needed to work together despite the differences in views and personal styles.

**Fisheries Management.** The Regional Coordinator has also been involved with groups dealing with fisheries issues in the region. She has helped staff at the Upper Fraser Nechako Fisheries Council (UFNFC), the regional partner group for Fisheries Renewal BC, survey some 130 people representing community groups and forest companies, as well as local, provincial, First Nations and federal governments. Survey results will help shape a proposed forum to begin developing a strategic approach to managing fish and fish habitat in the Upper Fraser. The forum takes place March 10-11 in Prince George.





**Watershed Restoration.** The forest industry, First Nations, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Ministries of Forests and Environment, Lands and Parks have invited the Council to provide input to a committee to develop technical criteria regarding priorities in the investment of funds in watershed restoration. All the watersheds in the Kamloops Forest Region are identified and divided into sub regions based on the Columbia drainage, the Thompson drainage or the mainstem Fraser. The Kettle River system is being evaluated separately. The technical committee ranks each watershed to help determine where investment is most needed.

**Shuswap Lake.** The Regional Committee has completed a report on the condition of Shuswap Lake for distribution to area residents in January 2000. The report, *Shuswap Lake. How's It Doing?* gives an overall view of the lake and factors affecting its health, summarizes changes to the lake, highlights efforts to minimize future impacts, and invites residents to respond personally to existing impacts before they cause permanent damage.

**Proposed Centre For Excellence.** The inland fishery of the Thompson and Cariboo-Chilcotin Regions contributes more than \$215 million a year to the regional economies. A proposal is planned to establish a Centre of Excellence in Kamloops to significantly increase this contribution.



**Britannia Mine Pollution.** In early fall of 1999, following an enhanced public review process facilitated by the Council, the provincial government issued a Remediation Order and conditional permits to Copper Beach Estates Ltd. in order to address North America's largest point source pollution problem at the Britannia mine site located just south of Squamish on the eastern shore of Howe Sound. Subsequently, at the urging of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD), the Council was asked by the BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks to facilitate meetings of a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) established to provide members of the broader community with opportunities to be informed about, and provide input to, various aspects of the acid rock drainage mine reclamation and remediation project as it proceeds. In the SLRD's letter to the Premier, which requests the Council's involvement in the PAC, Chair Susan Gimse writes that "The Fraser Basin group has had unprecedented success at involving the regulatory agencies on this project and in facilitating a public review process that has brought us closer than ever before to solving this environmental nightmare."

***Debris Management Partners Group Making Steady Progress.*** On October 6th, some 70 individuals representing local, regional, First Nations, provincial and federal governments; the private sector; commercial non-governmental organizations; and recreation and conservation groups unanimously endorsed a Regional Debris Management Strategy, developed and facilitated by the Fraser Basin Council. Funding and implementation of the Strategy will ensure that the Debris Trap, a critical debris capture facility, will operate in the year 2000 while important strategic initiatives such as improved value-added debris utilization and cost recovery, debris management objectives research, public education/awareness, and establishment of a stable funding mechanism will set the stage for long-term solutions to debris management in the Lower Fraser and Georgia Strait. As Peter Steblin, Director of Engineering for the Corporation of Delta, writes in a letter to the Council, "The Fraser Basin Council is serving a vital function in this area, and we do appreciate it."



## ***Joint Program Committee Creates Implementation Strategy for Integrated Flood Hazard Management***

Floods are part of a river's natural life cycle and the Fraser River is no exception. The river's last major flood was in 1948; we narrowly escaped another in 1999. Although there was a record snowpack in the southern half of British Columbia this past year and the volume of flow in the lower Fraser River between May and September 1999 actually exceeded the flow during this period in 1948, the general consensus among flood professionals was that we "dodged the bullet." Fortunately, the long, cool spring and summer conditions helped to distribute the runoff over a sufficiently long time to prevent higher peak flows that could have threatened the integrity of the dike system.



*Shown here are efforts to protect against damage in the Fraser River's last major flood in 1948. We narrowly escaped another in 1999.*

With climate change, larger snowpacks and other unpredictable variables, the threat of flood remains and concerted efforts to mitigate its effects continue. In November 1999, the Integrated Flood Hazard Management Joint Program Committee (JPC) developed and endorsed the Five-Year Flood Mitigation Implementation Strategy. The Strategy includes the following priorities: develop and update floodplain maps and flood-related policies, develop and implement a plan for future management of flood protection works, and coordinate and integrate flood communications and public education.

Proactive decisions and efforts prior to flooding can significantly reduce future flood damages and recovery costs. ***For more information on flood hazard management, contact Steve Litke at 605- 3461.***

**Council expands outreach**

Many of the Council's initiatives and goals are similar to others within Canada and around the world. The Council has been pursuing new opportunities to share information and experiences with other organizations and bring new ideas back to share with the Council's partners. These include:

- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Puget Sound Council to undertake joint activities of mutual interest.
- A similar working relationship is being developed with the Columbia Basin Trust and the Northwest Power Planning Council.
- A partnership agreement with Ontario's Grand River Conservation Authority to cooperate on issues of mutual concern (e.g. growth management).
- Council is also involved in partnerships, on a fee-for-service or cost-recovery basis, for building international watershed management initiatives in Russia, the Philippines and Brazil, where the Fraser Basin Council governance model is being applied to facilitate cooperative decision making.

# *Friends of the Fraser Basin*

*What does the Fraser Basin Mean to You?*

***If you live here, it means life itself.*** The Fraser Basin is the area drained by the Fraser River and its tributaries. It's an area roughly the size of Oregon and as varied in climate and landscape as Europe. The Basin gives us fresh water, wildlife and wealth. It accounts for 80 per cent of the provincial economy and some of the largest salmon runs in the world. From the Basin's forests come wood for the world; from its mines, metals for manufacturing; and from its rivers, a reliable source of water for farms, fisheries and recreational fun.

***You can help sustain all life in the Basin with a contribution to the Fraser Basin Council,*** a non-governmental, non-profit society that works to achieve sustainability of the Basin by facilitating cooperation and decision-making among environmental, economic and social interests. The Fraser Basin Council needs your support as our growing population puts ever-increasing pressures on the precarious balance between the many different elements of a sustainable tomorrow. Donations to the Fraser Basin Council Society are tax-deductible.

***Yes, I would like to become a Friend of the Fraser Basin***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

***Please accept my contribution of***

\_\_\_ \$25    \_\_\_ \$50    \_\_\_ \$75    \_\_\_ \$100    OTHER: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment method**

Please make cheques payable to the Fraser Basin Council Society.

***Planned Giving***

\_\_\_ Yes, I'm interested in receiving more information on planned giving opportunities including memorial gifts, bequests and legacies to the sustainability of Fraser River Basin.

Please mail your contribution to: **Friends of the Fraser**  
Fraser Basin Council Society  
Suite 1257- 409 Granville Street  
Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2

Registered charity number: 8862-89438

