

Watershed Management

A Living Rivers Strategy for British Columbia

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In "A New Era for British Columbia" (2001) the British Columbia government committed to "pass a Living Rivers Act to protect and improve British Columbia's river systems with scientifically based standards for watershed management, enhancements to fish habitat, and a 10-year program to correct past damage." The British Columbia Strategic Plan (2002/03–2004/05) also commits the government to "implement a Living Rivers Strategy." The Service Plan of the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection indicates that the Living Rivers Strategy will be fully operational by 2004.

The Living Rivers Concept

Living rivers are healthy freshwater ecosystems, essential to a healthy society and a prosperous, sustainable economy (Figure 1). The term "living rivers" recognizes that river systems are complex ecosystems involving

ACD meter with those calculated using a commercial fisheye camera and software system. His results show that the ACD meter can provide numbers within a few percent of the fisheye system, but that the percentage varies between users. Further evaluation of the accuracy of ocular estimates under a wide range of canopy conditions, and with different operators, is currently underway. The advantage of the

physical, biological, and chemical processes and interrelationships, and that people and society are part of this dynamic interaction. The essence of the Living Rivers concept is that the conservation and restoration of rivers and watershed systems should be centred on an ecological, science-based management model



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Figure 1. Stellako River: the Living Rivers Strategy supports healthy watersheds where physical and biological processes function effectively to support sustainable aquatic ecosystems and human communities.

and the engagement of the public, private, and voluntary sectors in active stewardship roles.

Progress to Date

In the January 2002 reorganization of the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, a Living Rivers Section was established in the new Biodiversity Branch to lead this initiative and to begin building a strategy.

instrument is that it is faster, easier, and cheaper to use than a fisheye system.

The ACD meter shows promise for a variety of hydrologic and silvicultural applications. With a slight modification, the instrument has been used to measure overhead canopy related to snow interception and snowmelt. Researchers, consultants, and other government agencies are

The Ministry completed a review of river-based conservation activities in selected jurisdictions in North America, Europe, and Oceania to identify exemplary practices and new program ideas applicable to British Columbia. The report is available from the Ministry and will be posted on its web site shortly.

A Living Rivers Trust Fund has been established at the Vancouver Foundation to act as a catalyst by providing seed funding for river-conservation

Draft Vision

The draft vision is healthy watersheds, where physical and biological processes function effectively to support sustainable aquatic ecosystems and human communities.

activities. A draft discussion paper, to be released in 2003, will outline concepts and program proposals from interested stakeholders.

For further information, contact:

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using the instrument to quantify winter cover for moose, for fish habitat surveys, and for stream temperature studies.

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