

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, March 19, 2002

GOAT RIVER LISTED AMONG MOST ENDANGERED

The Goat River, a tributary of the Fraser River located 35 km west of McBride, is among British Columbia's top five endangered rivers according to a list released yesterday by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORC).

"We are drawing attention to those rivers where the need for action and an appropriate response from government is deemed most urgent," says Mark Angelo, Committee Chair with the Vancouver-based group, whose membership includes 38 recreation and conservation organizations across BC.

Since 1994, the fate of the upper Goat River has been highly contested. McBride Forest Industries has already started developing the 35,000-hectare area and plans to extract more than 12,000 truckloads of timber in the next few years. Current plans include building a logging road in the channel of the salmon-bearing Goat River itself, a river noted for its pristine water quality.

The Fraser Headwaters Alliance (FHA), a grassroots conservation group based in the Robson Valley, is leading a campaign to gain protection for the upper Goat. Logging will negatively affect the watershed's wildlife populations and sever critical habitat connectivity between Kakwa and Bowron Lake Provincial Parks. The Goat is home to Chinook salmon, grizzly bears, and endangered mountain caribou—a species that has declined to less than 2,300 individuals.

FHA is also concerned about the impact of logging on the Historic Goat River Trail, an 1886 gold rush route that has tremendous potential to become a premier eco-tourism destination, partly because it connects with the renowned Bowron Lake Provincial Park.

"The Goat is one of the last remaining undeveloped watersheds in the headwaters of the Fraser," says FHA President, Cary Glenn, "and development in the headwaters affects the entire Fraser River system."

The Goat received special mention as part of the Fraser River, which was listed in fourth place. Also on the ORC's list are the Okanagan River and the steelhead streams of BC's south coast.

More information on the effort to protect the upper Goat River watershed can be found at www.savethegoat.ca, or by contacting Roy Howard, FHA Coordinator, at (250) 968-4490 (email: roy@fraserheadwaters.org).