

Economic and Ecological Value of Lizard Creek

Summary

- Representing 12 angling outfitters that Operate on The Elk River watershed
- The impact on the value of Lizard Creek as an untouched Spawning Habitat for Cutthroat trout and Bull trout.
- Economic value of the Fishery
- Additional economic value – spin offs from guided and non guided anglers
- Importance of the health of the watershed to the reputation of the Guiding and Angling industry.
- What are we asking

Introduction

- My name is Paul Samycia.
- I am the owner and outfitter of Elk River Guiding company and I base myself out of my Retail Fly Shop in the town of Fernie. I am here representing a coalition of 12 other angling guides that also operate on the Elk River watershed. All Combined we represent over 5000 guided angler days that are tenured to us through the Classified waters system under which we are regulated.
- I have been a licensed angling guide for 22 years in the East Kootenay. And as a stake holder in the watershed,
- I have been involved with the development of the East Kootenay Angling Management plan, I also sit on the Kootenay Fisheries Regional Advisory Team, and since 2011, I have had extensive involvement with the water quality issues arising from the increase in levels of selenium and other related mining, development, and land disturbance issues.
- My education consists of a BSc in Ecology and Zoology from the University of Alberta, However after spending countless hours walking, drifting, fishing and guiding, I feel I have a very good “street sense” of what has been happening to the Elk River watershed over the last 22 years.

Economic Value of the Fishery

- What I would like to start with is bringing forth the economic value of the Fishery that Lizard creek plays a major role in.
- The 2019 BC Freshwater Sport Fishing Economic Impact Report Estimates over \$498M spent annually by Fresh water Anglers in BC
- **This equates to over 89M annually in direct angler expenditures in the East Kootenays.** Of all the regions, The Kootenays is the most popular destination for non-residents and international anglers. This equates to a significant influx of tourist dollars coming directly into our community.
- Specifically, The local Angling Guiding Industry on the Elk River watershed alone, generates approximately 2.7 million in **direct guided angler expenditures annually.**
- When you Add in associated expenditures on lodging, food, retail and transportation costs, Locally, Angling guiding becomes a significant industry for the Elk Valley.

Angler interest is growing !

With the Recent trends as a result of the COVID pandemic, Valley locals and Residents have developed an increased the interest in angling, especially since they have discovered that we have one of the best fresh-water fisheries in North America right on our door- step.

With this new-found interest of locals, and the opening up of travel, we expect the fishery to get more attention from anglers as time goes on.

This development will put Lizard Creek in the spot-light, it will create access and opportunity for increased pressure hat will not necessarily benefit the health of this fishery.

So Moving Forward, What are our concerns?

The importance of the health of the watershed to the Reputation of the Elk Valley Angling industry is extremely important

- Specifically in the Fly Fishing industry, The Elk River is well known as a world class destination for wild native west slope cutthroat trout wild native bull trout. It is truly one of the best dry fly fisheries in North America.
- The Elk River and its tributaries have been featured in numerous trade magazines, travel magazines, film and documentary features, solely because of the quality of this native fishery.

However,

- The angling guide industry is experiencing negative repercussions over the past six years due to the demise of the reputation of the Elk River in the global Angling Community.
- Clients of Angling Guides are well aware of the threats to our fishery.

- Word Spreads fast in the angling community and the messaging of these threats to the Elk River watershed are starting to reach discerning anglers.
- These Anglers are starting more and more, to choose to go elsewhere as word and evidence of development, poor logging practices, mining impacts, and Stream bank fortification along, roadways, railways and private properties continually occur.
- All of these detrimental effects are distracting from what the fishery could be and should be. The Result creates challenging issues for angling guides to retain a recruit clientele.
- From the mouth of the Fording River above Sparwood, down to the town of Elko there are only two significantly untouched water sheds that are critical spawning and rearing streams for our native cutthroat trout and bull trout.
- Lizard Creek is one of those streams and likely the most important. Its' value for rearing a healthy trout population for the Elk River watershed is priceless.
- The angling community cannot stress enough how critical the role of Lizard Creek is to helping maintain a healthy trout population in the elk river watershed.

The Angling guide industry in the Kootenay's is extremely regulated by the Angling management plan and the wildlife act. On the elk river and its tributaries, the guiding activity is primarily low impact, fully sustainable , catch and release, following the least invasive fish handling practices.

- I would like to mention, Very little guiding occurs on Lizard Creek and There are no legal reasons why an Outfitter could not guide on Lizard Creek.
- As Guides with vested interest in our local fishery, we have an un written rule where Elk Valley Guides voluntarily refrain from Guiding on Lizard Creek.
- Why?
- For the reasons I just previously stated. As Guides we value Lizard Creek as a recruitment water that is fragile and critical to sustaining healthy populations of trout throughout the lower Elk River watershed. With Lizard Creek being valuable in this sense, We see its better to minimize angling pressure and its disturbance for the benefit of the entire water shed.
- If This development goes forward as planned, it will threaten lizard creeks ability to maintain its role in fish recruitment for the elk river water shed.

- I am aware as a Retail shop owner and Guide, that 74 luxury properties Will likely produce potential customers and clients for my business. And I personally am not opposed to development, as long as it is done properly. However, by creating this space for them with the proposed plan, I know, It will do more damage to the future and sustainability of my business, and that of the other outfitters. This development needs more work and is not ready to move forward.

What Is the Guiding community Asking for?

- The Angling guide industry finds that this development with its current plan, does not adequately protect the Lizard Creek watershed and it ignores the potential risks to Native Cutthroat trout and Bull Trout. Specifically, we feel setbacks are not adequate and as a result, risk from runoff, development caused erosion, and un-authorized use of fertilizers pest control by future residents is un-controllable and rarely enforced.
- This development does not take into account the economic impact on the Guiding and angling industry in the Elk Valley. And therefore, An economic impact study on the effects on the angling industry should seriously be considered.
- Developers can make promises, developers can put in covenants, however who is there to ensure that they are going to deliver on those promises. And who is there to ensure that the covenants will be enforced or changed in the future. This demonstrates that risks are high and opens the door for further development along Lizard Creek.
- Please Reject this application as a more comprehensive look into the effects on the fishery and the economic impacts on the Angling industry.

Conclusion

- Thank your time and For Listening to me today.
- I would Just like to close in saying,
- I am a small business owner and I am here representing myself and other like small business owners.
- As Angling guides, our opinions are often ignored, Our voice is small so we are often unheard, However, we are guardians of the rivers and we know that we must look after them to ensure the viability of our business for the future.
- We see protecting Lizard Creek as an important part of our future.