



Coquitlam River Watershed Strategy

Kwikwetlem, known as “Red fish up the river.” A living river that reveals its spirit.

We are here, in the Coquitlam River Watershed ...

The Coquitlam River watershed is one of a number of watersheds on the north shore of the Fraser River’s lower reach in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland region and is mostly located within the municipalities of Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam. This mountain and valley region is characterized by a varied natural, rural-agricultural, urban and industrial landscape, with cultural, recreational and natural resources values, including habitat for Pacific salmonids. The Coquitlam watershed has a vast headwater wilderness including Coquitlam Lake Reservoir above the Coquitlam Lake Dam. From this catchment area, at least thirty watercourses flow into a developed lower watershed that drains into the Fraser River, just above its estuary on Georgia Strait. The two largest tributaries of the Coquitlam River are Or Creek and Hoy/Scott/Pinnacle Creek. The Coquitlam River watershed is part of the traditional territory of the Kwikwetlem First Nation.

In its lower reaches, during modern times, the Coquitlam River has been the site for industrial and agricultural activities, and land uses associated with urban development. From the 1880s, Coquitlam Lake served to provide drinking water to New Westminster and the surrounding area. Through the early 1900s the River was dammed for water supply and power generation to support growing communities in the Lower Mainland. Gravel operations began in and along the Coquitlam River in the 1950s, and commercial logging in the watershed developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Over time, land use and urban development has evolved to meet the needs of residents, businesses and others in the community, which continues to thrive today.

The accumulation of these expanding, diverse land uses, combined with a history of major flooding events, has caused the once plentiful salmon populations of the watershed to dwindle significantly over the last century. Pressures and impacts such as the salmon decline have been addressed by numerous volunteer, government and private sector initiatives, projects and plans. Yet progress towards a healthy, sustainable watershed has been too slow and inefficient. Better coordination through development of a new governance body, guided by a common vision, will allow us to collectively address the long-term sustainability of the Coquitlam River.

The Coquitlam River watershed continues to be about ‘people and fish.’ Through the formation of a Coquitlam River Watershed governance body, a healthy watershed is possible.