

Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC

Highway 24 Access and Infrastructure Improvement Initiative Overview

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (FFSBC) is embarking on a collaborative, multi-project initiative to enhance and improve access to the world class recreational fishing opportunities located along the Highway 24 corridor (zone boundary: 30 minutes north and south of the highway). A stretch of highway known as the 'Fishing Highway' running east to west from Highway 97 near Lone Butte in the South Cariboo to Highway 5 near Little Fort in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District. FFSBC stocks 27 lakes along this stretch of highway that provide excellent fishing opportunities for local residents and visitors.

It has been identified that a number of the world class fisheries along this stretch have either poor or no facilities and access constraints (dysfunctional launches, no shore fishing opportunities, etc.). The key driver of this initiative moving forward is the potential source of significant funds available through the BC Rural Dividend Program (BCRDP). The BC Rural Dividend provides \$25 million a year to assist rural communities with populations of 25,000 or less to strengthen and diversify their local economies. This region has been negatively impacted by the mountain pine beetle epidemic that has decimated the mid-term timber supply and, more recently, the wildfires of 2017 and 2018, and mill closures in 2019. Fishing is an integral part of the local economy and in our view, this project is well suited for the fund. The 2019/2020 intake was recently announced, with an August 15th, 2019 deadline. We anticipate completing the component projects in fiscal years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

The scope of the project will include marketing and promotion of angling opportunities and several access improvement projects along the corridor that have been identified in consultation with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and various local stakeholder groups. Including:

Cariboo Regional District

Hathaway Lake – Improve road and parking access, and fishing dock at Hathaway Lake

Fawn Lake – Fishing Dock

Bridge Lake – Upgrade Rec Site parking capacity and day use site. Improve boat launch and parking area in Provincial Park

Big Dekka Lake – Develop existing BC Park site as a front country campground with lake access

Thompson-Nicola Regional District

Birch Lake, Lac Des Roches, Lynn Lake – Improve Access

Emar Lake Provincial Park – Improve trail network, access, and facilities

What we are requesting from partners and stakeholders?

- We would like to hear of other potential projects along the corridor that may not have been considered that could enhance access or the fishing experience in the area including new and or improved boat launches, docks, access, etc.
- FFSBC is looking to submit a proposal under the 'Partnership' funding stream. To be eligible, we must have partners on board that are willing to provide a letter of support demonstrating how they will play an active role in the project.
- Partners to provide a financial contribution to meet the leveraged funding requirements. FFSBC will also be committing a cash contribution to the initiative. As the BCRDP is a matched funding program the proponent (FFSBC) and partners must contribute between 30%-40% of the total project funds. The remainder would be eligible to be funded by the BCRDP.
- Support from local governments as required.

If you any questions or require additional information please contact Mike Gass (Manager, Sport Fishing Development, FFSBC, Abbotsford) by email at mike.gass@gofishbc.com or by phone at (604) 302-6235 or Dana Atagi (Vice President, Sport Fishing, Smithers) by email at dana.atagi@gofishbc.com or by phone at (250) 847-7290.