

Omineca Reduced Risk Timing Windows for Fish and Wildlife

This Best Management Practices (BMP) document aims to reduce risk to fish, wildlife, and their habitat, by recommending timing for works to avoid disturbance during sensitive periods such as spawning or nesting. The reduced risk timing windows and requirements for works outside of those windows in the Omineca Region are described below.

IMPORTANT: Mandatory vs. Non-Mandatory

BMPs are widely accepted and recognized approaches that, when adopted and implemented, help individuals to avoid and mitigate potential adverse impacts. It is recommended that you use relevant provincial BMPs for your work planning.

BMPs should be interpreted as **non-mandatory guidance if they are NOT required in a legal instrument** (term or condition in an authorization, change approval, or order). If, however, BMPs ARE referenced as a term or condition, then they are mandatory and you **must adhere to BMPs required by the legal instrument**.

Background

By controlling the timing of works in areas that support fish and wildlife populations, disturbance can be limited to periods of reduced risk of impacts to fish, wildlife, and their habitat. Reduced risk timing windows can vary among species and between and within regions, due to geographic differences in the timing of critical life stages. In BC's Omineca Natural Resource Region, there are reduced risk timing windows for vegetation clearing, for beaver dam removal, and for instream works (also known as Changes In and About a Stream, or CIAS; see [A User's Guide to CIAS in British Columbia](#) for additional details).

Reduced risk timing windows for the clearing of vegetation help to reduce impacts to birds, eggs, nests, and young. Timing windows vary depending on the bird species present and the sensitivity of the habitat where clearing will occur.

Timing restrictions on beaver dam removal avoid unintended mortality of juvenile and adult beavers during the winter, in addition to preventing impacts to other aquatic organisms and fish overwintering in beaver ponds. Additional beaver dam removal guidance can be found in [regional beaver dam removal best management practices](#).

Reduced risk timing windows for CIAS reduce the potential for harm to spawning habitat, fish eggs, and juvenile fish, while also preventing impacts to adults that may be migrating, overwintering, or rearing young. The instream work reduced risk timing window means a period of the calendar year when CIAS are less likely to harm aquatic life or ecosystems. If your project occurs in a location where the stream is dry or frozen to the bottom, reduced risk timing windows for fish may not apply.

IMPORTANT: Adherence to General and Scope-Specific BMPs

For all CIAS, you are expected to follow general [Requirements and Best Management Practices for Making CIAS in British Columbia](#) and [Scope-specific Best Management Practices for CIAS Under the *Water Sustainability Act*](#).

Please be advised that for certain species at risk there may be no period of least risk.

Timing Windows

Reduced risk timing window for vegetation clearing

Typically, August 1 to April 30 is the reduced risk timing window for vegetation removal in the Omineca, but some raptors may begin nesting as early as February; nesting periods can be identified by a Qualified Professional. You should be aware that a tree or other structure containing the nest of an eagle, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, osprey, or heron must not be felled, even outside of the breeding season for these species. Nest trees of these species must be buffered with surrounding forest; BMPs for this process can be found in the [Guidelines for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia](#).

Reduced risk timing window for beaver dam removal

The reduced risk timing window for beaver dam removal is July 15 to September 14. Dam removal is not typically permitted between September 15 and March 31, and removal on known or default fish-bearing streams is not permitted between April 1 and July 14. You must submit a [Notification under the *Water Sustainability Regulation for beaver dam removal*](#); depending on the circumstances, a permit under the *Wildlife Act* may also be required.

Applications to remove dams outside the reduced risk timing window should provide supporting information, including about fish in affected streams. See the [regional beaver dam removal best management practices](#) for additional details.

Reduced risk timing windows for Changes In and About a Stream

To identify the timing window for your project, you need to determine which species may be present where you are planning to work. You can use [Habitat Wizard](#) to map publicly available fish, wildlife and ecosystem information; a Qualified Professional can also identify species present.

- If your project is planned for a stream that does not have fish data it must be treated as a fish-bearing stream until shown otherwise by a Qualified Professional.
- If your project occurs on a stream that is connected to a fish stream, use the reduced risk timing windows for fish found downstream (see below), as their habitat may be impacted.

Instream work should be avoided in locations where species at risk (plants or animals designated provincially or federally as vulnerable, threatened or endangered) are known or expected to be present. You can use the [BC Ecosystem and Species Explorer](#) to determine the status of fish, wildlife, or plant species that may be affected by your project.

Aquatic species at risk in the Omineca include [White Sturgeon](#) and [Bull Trout](#); a **Qualified Professional** may be required for instream works in their habitat, or for CIAS that impact any regionally important (rare, at risk, or of cultural value) species.

Once you have identified the species potentially present or possibly impacted, the appropriate reduced risk timing window(s) can be applied. Reduced risk timing windows are indicated by open (unshaded) cells in the table below; there are also district- or watershed-specific timing windows for some species (below the table). **Species that are regionally important (rare, at risk, or of cultural value) may not have windows of reduced risk.**

Species	Reduced risk timing window		Month											
	Start	End	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Arctic grayling	15-Jul	31-Mar			31				15					
Rainbow trout	15-Jul	15-Apr				15			15					
Bull trout	15-Jun	15-Aug						15		15				
Dolly Varden	15-Jun	15-Aug						15		15				
Kokanee	01-Jun	15-Aug						1		15				
Mountain whitefish	01-Jun	15-Sep						1			15			
Spring/fall spawners*	15-Jul	15-Aug							15	15				
Migratory Salmon	Contact Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) BC Offices for appropriate timing window.													

**other than species listed in the table*

District or watershed-specific timing windows:

Mackenzie Forest District

- Bull trout – July 1 to August 15
- Mountain whitefish - July 15 to August 31

Vanderhoof Forest District

- Kokanee – June 1 to July 31 - Cluculz watershed area

Fort St. James Forest District

- Kokanee – June 1 to July 31 – Tsilcoh River watershed area

CIAS Outside the Reduced Risk Timing Window

CIAS outside of reduced risk timing window may require a technical rationale for an alternative timing window, prepared by a Qualified Professional. It is expected to describe:

- The reason work cannot occur during approved regional timing windows.
- Which species may potentially be impacted.
- The pre-disturbance habitat quality and expected post-disturbance habitat quality.
- How potential impacts to fish, wildlife and habitat will be avoided or mitigated.
- How fish bearing sections of the stream will be avoided (when feasible) and/or how the absence of fish in the work area(s) will be achieved (e.g., by salvage or other approaches).

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