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## General Information

Over 400,000 anglers enjoy fishing on lakes, rivers, and streams throughout British Columbia. The popularity that recreational freshwater fishing enjoys may compromise not only the experience anglers are seeking, but also contribute to decline of some fish stocks, impact fish habitat and increase conflicts between anglers.

**Respect fish and treat them humanely.** Keep fish immersed in water until you identify the species and its size. Help Ministry of Environment look after our fisheries by limiting your catch to your needs and never exceeding the legal limit. "Let them go, let them grow," and practice "[catch and release](#)" when appropriate or required.

**Protect the environment.** Each aquatic ecosystem is complex and unique. Prevent transfer of aquatic species or weeds from one water body to another. Never contaminate water bodies or shorelines with litter. For tips about how to dispose of fish wastes properly, see Angler Safety Considerations

**Practise courtesy toward other anglers and respect their rights.** Share the water with other users. Practise good angling etiquette by:

- moving around a water body in patterns appropriate to your gear and local conditions;
- when in a boat give a wide berth to wading anglers, other boaters and swimmers;
- leaving adequate room between other anglers and yourself, especially flyfishers.

**Respect public and private property.** Always ask permission before entering private property, including Indian Reserve land. Leave natural areas as you found them, keep campsites clean and be careful with campfires.

**Support fishing regulations and obey the law.** Regulations are set to manage fisheries now and for the future and are based on the best scientific advice available. Acquaint yourself with daily quotas, size and possession limits, tackle and bait restrictions, and seasonal closures.

**Use the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline to report violations 1-877-952-RAPP (7277) or via cell (on the Telus network) at #7277:** We can all help ensure that those who break the law do not spoil future angling opportunities for everyone. For more information, see [Report All Poachers and Polluters \(RAPP\)](#).

For more information on angling practices on specific waters, you may wish to contact a local angling club or tackle shop.

## Releasing Fish – The Gentle Way

There is a growing trend among anglers to catch and release, unharmed, a part of their allowable catch. As well, more restrictive regulations on specific waters can severely limit the angler's allowable harvest. A fish that appears unharmed may not survive if carelessly handled, so please abide by the following:

1. Play and release fish as rapidly as possible. A fish played for too long may not recover.
2. Keep the fish in the water as much as possible. A fish out of water is suffocating. Internal injuries and scale loss is much more likely to occur when out of water.
3. Rolling fish onto their backs (while still in the water) may reduce the amount they struggle, therefore minimizing stress.
4. Carry needle-nose pliers or haemostats (surgical pliers). Grab the bend or round portion of the hook with your pliers, twist pliers upside down, and the hook will dislodge. Be quick, but gentle. Single barbless hooks are recommended, if not already stipulated in the regulations.
5. Any legal fish that is deeply hooked, hooked around the gills or bleeding should be retained as part of your quota. If the fish cannot be retained legally, you can improve its chances of survival by cutting the leader and releasing it with the hook left in.
6. If a net is used for landing your catch, it should have fine mesh and a knotless webbing to protect the fish from abrasion and possible injury.
7. If you must handle the fish, do so with your bare, wet hands (not with gloves). Keep your fingers out of the gills, and don't squeeze the fish or cause scales to be lost or damaged. It is best to leave fish in the water for photos. If you must lift a fish then provide support by cradling one hand behind the front fins and your other hand just forward of the tail fin. Minimize the time out of the water, then hold the fish in the

water to recover. If fishing in a river, point the fish upstream while reviving it. When the fish begins to struggle and swim normally, let it go.

## Guidelines for Angling White Sturgeon in BC

Most white sturgeon populations in British Columbia are protected under the federal Species at Risk Act and are closed to recreational angling. The lower and middle Fraser River populations are designated as endangered but are considered healthy enough to support a catch and release sport fishery. Catch and release angling can be low impact if extra care is taken to ensure sturgeon health and survival. To sustain this treasured fishery, the following angling practices are necessary:

1. Use only single barbless hooks and appropriate tackle
2. Only single barbless hooks are permitted while sturgeon angling. Use heavy rod and reels, with at least 130 lb. manufacture rated test line.
3. Play sturgeon quickly
4. Play and release sturgeon as quickly as possible. Sturgeon played too long may not recover. If you hook a **large sturgeon** (by definition large sturgeon are 1.5 meters and greater in length) when boat fishing, release the anchor and play the fish to a pre-determined landing location. This will significantly reduce stress on the sturgeon by reducing time played and by not fighting the river current.
5. Choose your fishing location carefully - Keep sturgeon in the water
6. Never lift a large sturgeon out of the water. Fish suffocate out of water. Large sturgeon are at risk of internal injuries due to their own weight. Ropes, tailers, nooses or other devices must not be used to hold or land sturgeon.
7. **From shore:** Your fishing location must be suitable for landing sturgeon. Elevated docks are not suitable. Do not drag sturgeon out of the water onto the shore or dock. Release smaller sturgeon at the side of the dock. Be prepared to get wet when releasing sturgeon.
8. **From boat:** Do not lift or drag a large sturgeon into a boat. Land and release large sturgeon at the side of the boat. Never tow a large sturgeon by the tail to shore. Towing by the tail is damaging and can be lethal.
9. Release **small sturgeon** (by definition small sturgeon are less than 1.5 meters in length) at the side of the boat. If you lift a small sturgeon into a boat, then cradle it with two gloved hands – one placed behind the front fins or on the mouth and the other hand placed just forward of the tail. Once in the boat use as many people as necessary to support the sturgeon. Never pull a sturgeon into a boat by using a rope or by the sturgeon's gill plates, pectoral fins, or by its mouth or tail only.

10. Remove hooks quickly but gently
11. Remove deeply embedded hooks with long needle-nose pliers or a hook remover. Grab the bend on the hook and twist. Be quick, but gentle. Sturgeon that are deeply hooked, hooked on or near the gills, or bleeding heavily have lower survival rates. Improve survival by cutting the leader and releasing the sturgeon with the hook left in.
12. Handle and recover sturgeon with care – Be prepared to take photos quickly
13. Never squeeze or hug sturgeon. Keep your fingers away from the gills and out of the gill plates. If you want photographs, always leave large sturgeon in the water. Have your camera ready and be quick. Recover sturgeon by pointing nose-first upstream into the current and letting go when it struggles to swim.

***Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society, Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association, Recreational Sturgeon Anglers of BC, Fisheries & Oceans Canada, and the Province of BC supported the development and encourage the practice of these Guidelines.***

For more information on white sturgeon recreational fisheries management please contact:  
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
Lower Mainland Regional Office , 200 – 10428 153<sup>rd</sup> Street Surrey, BC V3R 1E1  
Metro Vancouver Phone: 604-586-4400, Toll –Free Phone: 1-800-663-7867

## Rotational Angling

### **Courtesy and Common Sense – Enjoying the Experience and sharing the Opportunity.**

As angling pressures increase because of population growth, expanding recreational time and improved access to our rivers and streams, the need for courtesy and an angling code of conduct has become more evident.

"Rotation angling" is a system designed to encourage everyone on a stretch of river to fish sequentially through it, whether wading or from a boat. It was designed to allow each angler an equal opportunity to spend some time in the prime pools and riffles. Simply stated, it means starting at the head of a pool or run and following the immediate downstream angler at a courteous distance, with everyone progressing at a reasonable pace.

While rotation angling is not applicable to all waters and conditions, it has become an accepted practice on many of our Classified Waters.

The basic rules are:

- Avoid entering the water downstream of another angler who is already fishing, unless invited to do so;

- Leave adequate room between the downstream angler and yourself but do not remain stationary unless no one is following you;
- After catching a fish, step out of the line and return to the head of the pool, or start of the line;
- If you are not sure about the local etiquette, avoid any problems by first inquiring about the procedures from the anglers already on the water.

**Rotation angling is a system, which can work well regardless of gear type, so long as each angler respects the others' methods.**

## Co-existing with Spawning Salmon

Angling opportunities provided for some species of fish (e.g., trout, char, whitefish) may have negative impacts on holding or spawning salmon in the same river system. In many cases, angling for salmon is prohibited during times when angling for other species remains open. Anglers can minimize disturbances or incidental hooking of salmon by adopting these simple voluntary measures:

### Gear Selection

Use fishing gear which will effectively avoid hooking salmon. For example, use fly fishing gear with a floating line and a dry fly. Sinking lines or spoons are not recommended as spawning salmon can be easily foul hooked. If the target species is smaller than the spawning salmon, use of a light tippet is a good added measure.



### Bait Selection

If bait is allowed, avoid using bait types which aggressively attract salmon. Using bait such as worms, grasshoppers or other insects will effectively avoid salmon yet attract other species such as trout and whitefish.

## Wading the River

Concentrate angling activity in areas of the river where salmon may be less prevalent. For example, avoid deep pools where salmon are holding prior to spawning. Also, avoid areas of shallow water where you observe concentrations of spawning salmon and their redds (gravel “nests”). Salmon redds are generally between 1-2 square meters in size and may be recognised by the appearance of clean looking gravel which is loose and soft underfoot, as opposed to firmer and darker gravel nearby. When newly formed, redds will appear to be a depression with a mound of gravel on the downstream side. Eggs will be buried in the mound of gravel and for several metres downstream. Walking on the redds may kill buried eggs, so please avoid them entirely. With the cooperation of knowledgeable anglers, it is often possible to maintain angling opportunities which might otherwise be eliminated to protect vulnerable fish. Please adjust your angling techniques accordingly.

## River Boating Etiquette and Safety

**For your safety and the enjoyment of everyone using the river, please:**

- Keep boat launch areas clear so that all boaters have equal access.
- Don't mix alcohol and boating. You will need your best reflexes to keep you, your boat and other stream users safe. It's illegal to operate a boat while impaired.
- Limit your speed (particularly when entering corners) to avoid collisions with other boaters, anglers, swimmers and hidden obstacles.
- **Respect the Universal Shoreline Speed Restriction (10km/hr within 30m of the shore).**
- Be careful when boating at dawn and dusk, or in other conditions of limited light or visibility.
- Refrain from running your boat through water being fished by others. Go slowly or drift by anglers along the shoreline. Be considerate of others.
- Avoid sensitive habitats such as shallow water, spawning areas, and wildlife nesting or foraging areas.
- Give animals crossing the river the space and time to do so. It's illegal to harass wildlife.
- Pack out your garbage. Old fishing line, litter, fuel and oil damage fish habitat, endanger aquatic life and reduce water quality.