

2019

BC Freshwater Sport Fishing  
Economic Impact Report



Freshwater Fisheries  
Society of BC



## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

**\$498**  
million

Spent annually  
by BC's freshwater  
anglers

**\$299**  
million

Towards  
BC's GDP

**\$176**  
million

Salaries  
and wages

**\$73**  
million

Total provincial,  
federal and  
municipal tax  
revenues

**3,500 people employed**





# BC IS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO FISH.

British Columbia possesses one of the best freshwater fisheries in North America. With over 20,000 lakes and 750,000 kilometres of fishable rivers and streams, our province is an angler's paradise. We have mountain-top alpine fisheries. We have remote rivers surrounded by ancient forests. We have easily accessible lakes fringed by golden grasslands. The diversity of both geography and angling opportunities we have in BC is truly unique around the world.

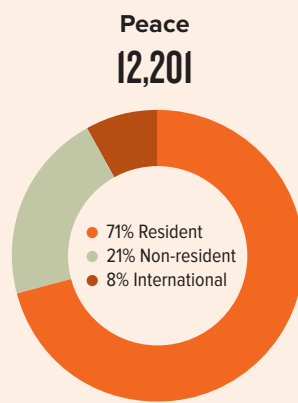
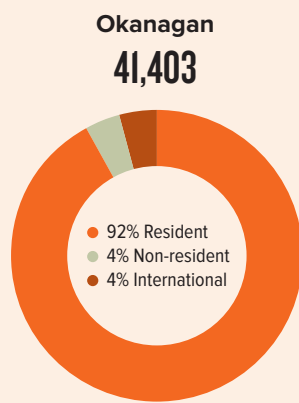
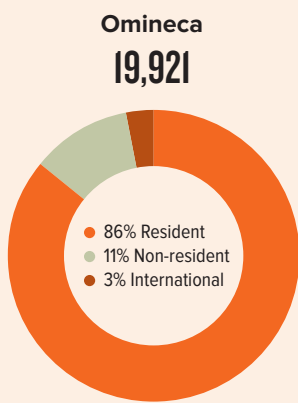
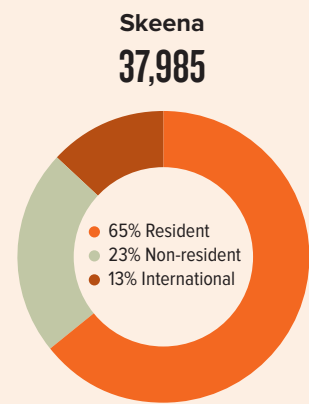
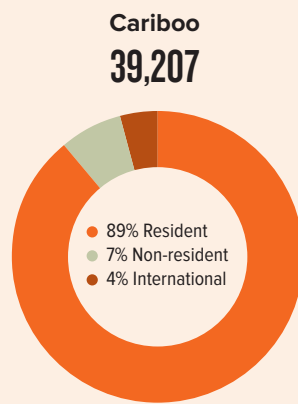
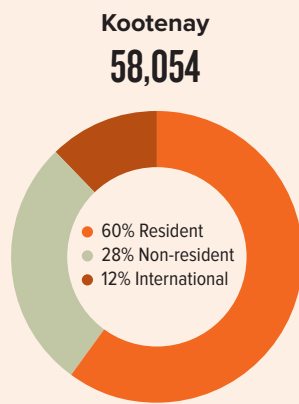
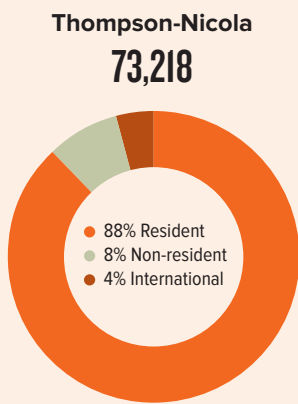
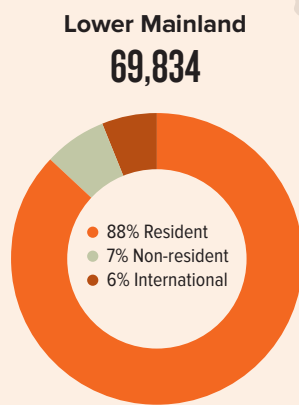
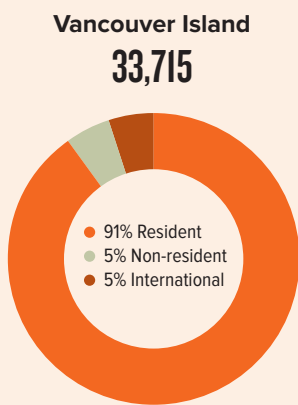
And did we mention the 24 different species of sport fish?

It's not surprising that in BC each year we have over 350,000 anglers spending a combined 3.8 million days fishing.

This document is an abridged version of the 2020 report: "Economic Contributions of Freshwater Angling in British Columbia" prepared by Southwick and Associates. The economic impact estimates are based on the 2015 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada, a coordinated initiative between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the provincial and territorial agencies that license recreational fisheries. This nationally coordinated study, conducted every five years, provides the most comprehensive information on recreational fisheries activities and harvests for the various regions of Canada.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

There are nine provincial fisheries management regions in BC. Answers from the 2015 survey provided an overview of fishing activity across the province, measured by the number of anglers who visited each region. While the Thompson-Nicola was visited by the most anglers, the Kootenay region was the most popular destination for non-resident and international anglers.





## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY: LANDING THE BIG ONE

Most anglers will purchase not only a fishing licence but also a variety of equipment and supplies. Most anglers will also travel some distance to fish. This travel might involve driving down to a local lake or setting out on an overnight fishing adventure. Overnight (or longer) fishing trips usually involve significant fuel, food and lodging costs. Some anglers purchase large expenditure items such as campers and even cabins to allow them to stay closer to their preferred fishing spots. When factoring in each of these purchases, the total amount spent by British Columbia freshwater anglers in 2015 was nearly \$498 million.

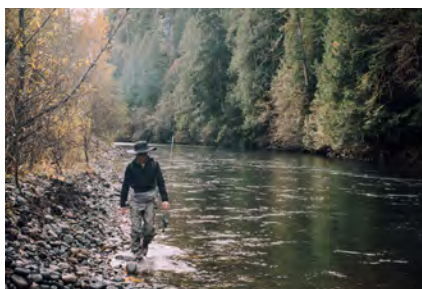
Total spending per licenced angler added up to over \$1,445 in 2015. This equates to an average of more than \$127 in angler spending for each day fished. BC residents spent \$102 per fishing day, Canadian non-residents spent over \$181 per fishing day, and International non-resident anglers spent over \$334 per fishing day.

Fishing investments are considered to be large expenditures on items such as fishing rods, vehicles, campers and even cabins situated near fishing areas. Anglers were asked to report how much they spent on these items in BC during 2015, as well as the percentage of each purchase that was used for freshwater fishing in BC (since items like vehicles are often used for multiple purposes). These investments – accounting for nearly half of the total freshwater fishing-related spending in BC during 2015 – are a crucial part of angler spending. Below is a breakdown of the investments made by freshwater anglers in BC to support their fishing activities.

### Fishing Investments (excluding travel costs and lesser equipment)

Investment Category	Annual Spending for Freshwater Fishing (\$ thousands)
Fishing Equipment (rods, reels, fish finders, etc.)	\$33,717
Camping Equipment (tents, camper trailers, etc.)	\$44,393
New Boating Equipment (boats, motors, trailers, etc.)	\$45,932
Used Boating Equipment (boats, motors, trailers, etc.)	\$25,538
New Special Vehicles (4x4's, camper truck, ATV's, snowmobiles, etc.)	\$45,209
Used Special Vehicles (4x4's, camper truck, ATV's, snowmobiles, etc.)	\$8,250
Land-Buildings (cabins, cottages, land, etc.)	\$18,347
Other (special clothing, waders, ice-huts, etc.)	\$9,886
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$231,271</b>

<sup>1</sup> Categories may not sum to totals due to rounding errors



Total annual angler spending in BC:

**\$498 million**

Fishing investments:

**\$231 million**

Package deals:

**\$25 million**

Other fishing expenditures:

**\$241 million**

## THE WHOLE PACKAGE

Many anglers went on fishing trips that involved the purchase of a package of bundled services (like accommodations, meals, supplies, and guiding services). Package deals greatly simplify the process of trip planning, and are therefore more popular among those who live outside the province. In fact, 17% of Canadian non-resident anglers and 25% of international non-resident anglers reported purchasing a fishing package in 2015. This is compared with less than 6% of BC resident anglers who purchased a fishing package. The Lower-Mainland (Region 2) was the most popular destination, with over 50% of reported packages occurring in this region. Thompson-Nicola (Region 3) and Skeena (Region 6) were tied as the second most popular regions for fishing packages.

### Package Deal Spending

Package Type	Annual Spending (\$ thousands)
Charter boats – Guided (guided fishing in a boat only)	\$6,600
Charter boats – Full package (guide, meals, supplies, etc.) <sup>2</sup>	\$6,194
Fly-in Packages (air, lodging, meals, etc.) <sup>3</sup>	-
Lodges/Resorts (lodging, meals, supplies, etc.)	\$10,464
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$25,619</b>

<sup>2</sup> Estimate is based on a sample size of >30, and therefore should be viewed with caution.

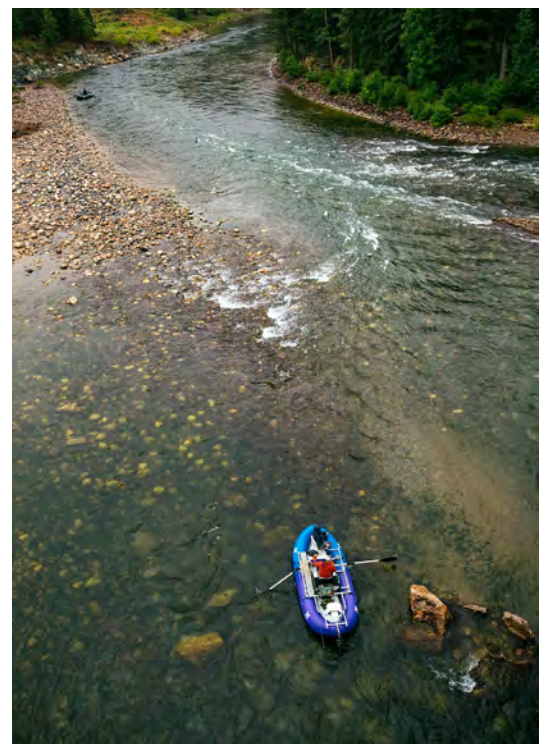
<sup>3</sup> A reliable estimate cannot be presented due to the sample size <10

### Other Fishing Expenditures

Expenditure Category	Annual Spending (\$ thousands)
Accommodations (hotels, motels, etc.)	\$15,708
Campsite fees (private, provincial, etc.)	\$14,982
Food (groceries, restaurant meals, alcoholic beverages)	\$63,158
<i>Travel costs within British Columbia for freshwater recreational fishing:</i>	
Vehicle (gas, repairs, etc.), vehicle rentals, tolls, etc.	\$67,220
Ferry	\$3,794
Airfare (not included in package deals)	\$5,100
Other (not including personal boating costs)	\$2,639
Household owned boat costs (gas, repairs, launch/ramp fees, moorage, insurance, etc.)	\$18,989
Rentals for fishing (boats, gear, snowmobiles, ice-huts, etc.)	\$1,613
Fishing supplies (lures, line, tackle, bait, etc.)	\$26,960
Guide services (not included in package deals)	\$3,600
Fishing licence fees (permits, tags, etc.)	\$15,822
Access fees (park fees, etc.)	\$957
Other	\$556
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$241,099</b>

**“Freshwater fishing in BC continues to deliver economic benefits throughout the province. Our strategy of investing licence fees back into the fisheries is clearly helping anglers, the fishing industry, and communities.”**

–Andrew Wilson, *President*,  
Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC



While many freshwater anglers in BC did not make significant fishing-related investments or purchase a fishing package in 2015, there are a lot of smaller purchases that are necessary for freshwater fishing. These purchases include everyday items such as travel expenditures, fuel, bait and ice. For those who own a boat, expenditures included maintenance, repair and storage.

Vehicle travel and food were the two largest expense categories reported by British Columbia freshwater anglers in 2015. Each item accounted for more than 10% of the annual fishing-related spending reported in the province. Fishing supplies, household-owned boating costs and fees for licences, accommodations and campsites also accounted for a substantial percentage of annual angler spending.

## JUST WHO ARE THESE ANGLERS?

During the 2018/19 season, 79% of all licenced anglers were male, while 21% were female. Additionally, 9% of licenced anglers were under 25 years of age, while 38% were 55 years or older. Presently, women and younger anglers provide an opportunity to grow future licence revenues. Fortunately, as 35% of licenced anglers were between 25 and 44 years of age, there is currently a strong base of young adult anglers. And encouragingly, women make up 24% of anglers aged 16 to 34.

### Angler demographics

Age Category	16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
Licensed Anglers	30,650	61,960	61,350	60,900	66,700	67,630
% Female Anglers	24%	24%	20%	21%	21%	21%
% Male Anglers	76%	76%	80%	79%	79%	79%

## WHAT MAKES AN ANGLER BITE?

The 2015 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada asked anglers for feedback about their reasons and motivations for fishing in the freshwaters of British Columbia. Individuals were given several possible motives and asked to rate the importance on a scale of 1-5. Across all segments, the anglers' top response was "To be close to nature". The second and third most highly-ranked responses were "For relaxation" and "To get away from the routine". This feedback indicates that the many anglers are motivated by the escape from daily life that fishing in BC provides.

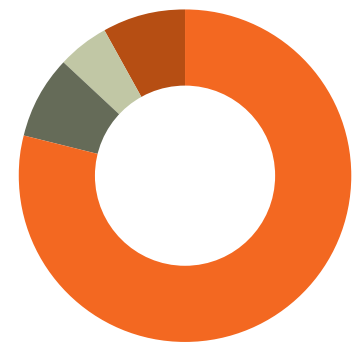
Not unexpectedly, secondary motivations vary depending on the residency of the respondent. Non-resident anglers are drawn to the challenge and sport of fishing (which may include the appeal of catching many or large fish). As travelling to BC requires greater effort, they are relatively more motivated by the chance to enjoy a memorable day on the water. At the same time, with easier access to fishing in BC, residents were relatively more motivated by the opportunity to catch fish for food.



### Anglers by Residency

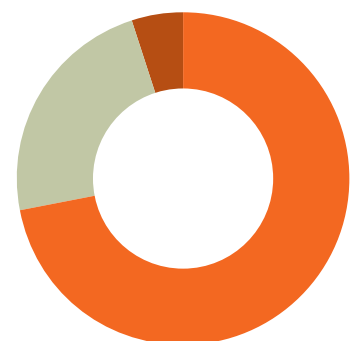
British Columbia Resident	80%
Canadian Non-Resident	12%
International Non-Resident	8%

### Canadian Non-Resident Angler Origins



- 79% Alberta
- 8% Ontario
- 5% Saskatchewan
- 8% Other provinces and territories

### International Non-Resident Anglers



- 72% United States of America
- 23% Europe
- 3% All other continents



## WHAT ANGLERS ARE ANGLING FOR

The Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada asked anglers to report information on their annual catches in 2015. Freshwater anglers in BC reported over 8.8 million individual fish caught, with rainbow trout accounting for approximately 50% of all catches. Cutthroat trout and freshwater salmon were the second most popular catch, with anglers reporting over 1 million of each species landed.

Some significant differences emerged when viewing species catch by residency type. Rainbow trout appear to be a more popular species among BC residents compared to visitors, comprising 55% of resident's annual catch versus just 29% of annual catch for both Canadian and international non-residents. Cutthroat trout showed the opposite trend, accounting for just 8% of BC resident catch but 29% and 42% of Canadian non-resident and international non-resident catch, respectively. This suggests that BC residents spend relatively more of their fishing effort in lakes and ponds that are stocked with rainbow trout, versus international visitors who tend to travel to certain fishing destinations to target specific species of fish (such as westlope cutthroat in the East Kootenays).

Anglers were also asked to report their favourite species to catch. Rainbow trout proved to be the most popular overall, with over 50% of anglers listing it as their most preferred species. Freshwater salmon was the second most popular species, and steelhead, cutthroat trout and kokanee salmon rounded out the top five.

While over half of BC residents listed rainbow trout as their favourite species, only about a third of Canadian and international non-residents listed it as theirs. Over 16% of Canadian and international non-resident anglers listed steelhead as their top species, compared to just 5% of BC residents. A similar trend was noticed for cutthroat trout, which were the favourite species of more than 10% of visiting anglers, but just 5% of BC residents. And 10% of international non-resident anglers listed sturgeon as their favoured species, compared to just 3% of BC resident anglers. Again, these differences are likely attributable in part to international visitors being more likely to target trophy catches versus the many BC residents who enjoy fishing for food.



### OUR STOCKING PROGRAM PAYS OFF BIG TIME

Estimates for angler spending directly attributable to the Freshwater Fisheries Society stocking program in 2015 range from about \$165 million to \$175 million, with an average value of \$170 million. The stocking program's total operating cost was \$10.524 million that year. This meant a return on investment ranging from \$15.68 to \$16.59, with an average value of \$16.13 in angler spending for each dollar spent on the stocking program.



**“Freshwater sport fishing supports businesses across BC – that includes fishing lodges, resorts, angling guides, hotels, charter operators, distributors, tackle shops, dealers, boat and tackle manufacturers, and regional airlines. These are important economic benefits that make an especially large impact in rural BC”**

–Matt Jennings, *Executive Director*,  
BC Fishing Tourism Association





## THE FUTURE OF ANGLING IN BC

The \$498 million spent in British Columbia by freshwater anglers in 2015 created significant ripples of economic activity throughout the province.

This spending added to Canada's GDP, created significant tax revenue and supported thousands of jobs. Many of the jobs created are directly related to BC's freshwater fishing industry, including jobs related to guiding, fishing equipment manufacturers and staff who work at fishing lodges. The economic activity associated with freshwater fishing in BC also indirectly supports a variety of jobs, including retail sales, manufacturing, hospitality and even energy production.

While the majority of British Columbians live in urban centres, anglers routinely pursue angling adventures that take them to rural BC. Through indirect expenditures, this associated travel provides significant economic impact throughout rural communities that extends beyond lodges and guides.

Providing a tremendous opportunity for growth, the angler demographic is becoming younger and more female. Each year, over 25,000 kids and families attend the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC's Learn to Fish programs that are held at over 100 different locations across BC, and over 10,000 people borrow gear for free through our rod loan program. Further, the Society is reducing barriers to fishing through easier access to the lakes, gear, and fish.

**“BC’s freshwater fisheries provide a tremendous wealth of social, cultural, and economic benefits to British Columbians, and we are committed to enhancing and protecting this very special resource so we can all enjoy it now and into the future.”**

—Doug Donaldson, *Minister Of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development*



## OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE THE BEST FRESHWATER FISHERIES IN NORTH AMERICA.

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC is a private non-profit organization. Our mandate is to enhance and conserve BC's freshwater fisheries for public benefit. Working in partnership with government, industry and anglers, our goal is to make fishing in BC even better through the enhancement and conservation of BC's freshwater fish resources.

Visit [gofishbc.com](http://gofishbc.com) for a full copy of the economic impact report or to learn more about freshwater angling in BC.







