

# A WATER RECREATION CODE OF ETHICS



British Columbia's extensive coastline and its numerous lakes and rivers provide many water based recreation opportunities. Despite the length of these shorelines much of the coast and interior waterways have limited landing sites that are suitable for going ashore. An increase in the number of people using our waterways for recreation coupled with the limited number of landing sites has led to damage to the natural aquatic environment in some areas.

Whether you are running whitewater on the Fraser, canoeing the Bowron lakes, or kayaking the Broken Group Islands, your impact on the natural environment and other recreationists should always be considered. Adopting the guidelines outlined in this brochure will help ensure that your next outing on the water will be an experience that is not only enjoyable, but also protects the environment.

## THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT



The ocean and our lakes and rivers provide a convenient pathway for exploring British Columbia's many natural wonders. As more and more people take to the water for their recreation pursuits there is an increased need for awareness of how our actions impact the aquatic environment and other users. By planning ahead and taking care the impact can be minimized.

## CHOOSE YOUR CAMPSITE CAREFULLY



There are a number of precautions and steps you can take to reduce camping impacts and leave a site in as natural a state as possible for the next visitor.

◆ If designated campsites are available use them.

- ◆ If no designated sites exist, choose a flood plain, beach, or sandbar - a non-vegetated area below the high water line. Areas with gravel or small rocks are best because they not only limit impact, but tend to have fewer insects. By choosing sites such as these, footprints, tent marks, and other camp markings will soon be washed away.
- ◆ If it is not possible to choose a site below the high water line due to flooding, tides, or for other reasons choose a well worn site or a durable unused one, preferably out of sight of the water.
- ◆ On ocean beaches you will want to set your camp up above the daily high tide line - be aware of the tide times and levels. Consult the tide and current tables published by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
- ◆ Around camp wear sandals or sneakers, not hiking boots, to minimize soil compaction. Watch where you walk to avoid crushing vegetation.
- ◆ In some areas suitable campsites are scarce.

Set up your camp so that there will be room for others.

- ◆ Finally, when in provincial and national parks be aware of, and respect, all rules and regulations including length of stay and group size. Call BC Parks or Parks Canada before your trip.

## BUILD A FIRE ONLY IF NECESSARY



Campfires on the beach are a significant part of recreation outings for many people. However, blackened circles of rocks and other campfire related debris significantly diminish a wilderness experience. Bring a stove! If you must have a fire, and if fires are permitted, then please consider the following:

- ◆ Never count on a fire for cooking.
- ◆ Driftwood can be in short supply, so don't count on it. One solution is to carry your own wood.
- ◆ Use existing fire containment structures. If there are none use a fire pan - a container upon which the fire is built (garbage can lids or thin metal sheets that can be rolled up for transport work well). This will help contain the fire and prevent scars on the land. Simply build your fire on the pan after placing a layer of sand in it.
- ◆ If you're on the ocean build the fire below the high tide line. Keep it small. Never cut vegetation for fuel, and limit the fire to one per party. Throw any blackened rocks into the water or wash them.
- ◆ Do not scatter or bury charcoal or ash in your campsite or on the beach. In many well used areas this practice has turned the earth an unsightly black colour.

- ◆ With the exception of coastal regions, do not throw charcoal and ash into the water as it will likely end up being washed back to shore, or caught in an eddy downstream.
- ◆ The best way to deal with fire remnants is to place them in a sturdy, lidded box and use them as a base for tomorrow's fire.

## DISPOSE OF HUMAN WASTE CAREFULLY



Disposing of human waste can be a large problem in water wilderness areas because what is deposited on the shore generally ends up draining into the water. Some ocean beaches are suitable for disposing of human waste but shorelines of freshwater bodies should never be used as a toilet. Recreationists must take precautions not to contaminate water supplies as many intestinal diseases are transmitted through water. The following are some points to consider when deciding how to deal with human waste.

- ◆ If a toilet is available, use it.
- ◆ The ideal solution when no toilet is available is to carry out all solid human waste - much easier than it seems if you are travelling by boat! Portable toilets can be bought at motorhome and camping stores, or you could make your own by lining a sturdy, lidded box with two garbage bags and placing a detachable toilet seat on top. After each use put some powdered chlorox on top. With a little practise this procedure requires little additional effort.
- ◆ If you do not have a portable toilet, build your own at least 100 metres from the water. Dig a 10-15 cm deep hole, placing a thin layer of soil on top after each use. After the final use

fill the hole right up. Pack out or burn all toilet paper.

- ◆ In many exposed coastal regions it is acceptable to deposit solid waste in a 15-20 cm deep hole just above the low tide line. Cover the hole after use.
- ◆ Be careful where you urinate. Choose a place well away from your site and at least 100 metres (not uphill) from fresh water.

## KEEP IT CLEAN



The same adage holds as true for travelling on water as it does on land - pack out what you pack in. The sight of other people's garbage does not make for an enjoyable outing and can injure or kill marine and freshwater animals. If you are travelling by boat then packing out your garbage should pose little problem. You will probably have some extra room, so if you see refuse left by someone else then pick that up too! Never bury your garbage, and never throw it off the boat into the water! A little pre-trip thought will enable you to limit the amount of garbage you will have to carry.

Left over cooking water shouldn't be scattered around the campsite because it attracts animals and insects, and can produce a lingering putrid smell.

Bathing should be done at least 100 metres from the water, ideally in an area with organic soil. Use a biodegradable soap.

## RESPECT MARINE LIFE



The marine areas of BC are home to an incredible diversity of plant and animal life and should be treated with respect. Harvesting plants and

animals is often a memorable part of a recreational outing but there are limits to the amounts that should be taken. Always be aware of fishing and hunting laws, licencing, and regulations in the area you are visiting. As well, be aware of the regulations governing the harvesting of shellfish and other marine life. Take only what you will use. In the ocean be aware of "red tide" (paralytic shellfish poisoning). Check with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans about the safety of eating shellfish in your area.

Many fragile ecosystems with little inherent resistance to human disturbance are located in marine areas. Be careful where you step and replace small creatures that you pick up where you found them.

Keeping your distance from all animals and avoiding sudden movements will prevent shocking the animals as well as prolong your viewing. Viewing these animals should be the limit of your contact with them. Never try to feed any animal, for their protection and yours. Most importantly, read up on the animals native to the area you will be visiting - understanding their habits, nesting, and feeding patterns will add to your experience, and not disrupt theirs.

*Remember - you are a guest in their home!*

## BE AWARE OF PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS



BC's coastline and inland waterways were and still are pathways and gathering places for British Columbia's native peoples. Treat everywhere you land as a potential archaeological site. Do not damage these sites or remove artifacts.

As well, respect the rights of fishers and others who make a living or recreate on the water.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION



### Call:

- ◆ BC Parks: (250)387-4550
- ◆ BC Environment (Fisheries Branch): (250)387-4573
- ◆ Department of Fisheries and Oceans:
  - ◆ General Enquiries: (604)666-3545
  - ◆ Red Tide updates (PSP): (604)666-2828
  - ◆ Recreational Fishing: (604)666-3271
- ◆ Environment Canada Weather: 664-9010
- ◆ Canadian Park Service: General Enquiries: (604)666-0176

### Read:

- ◆ Soft Paths. Hampton, Bruce and Cole, David. Stackpole Books, 1988.

To order more copies of this and other brochures:  
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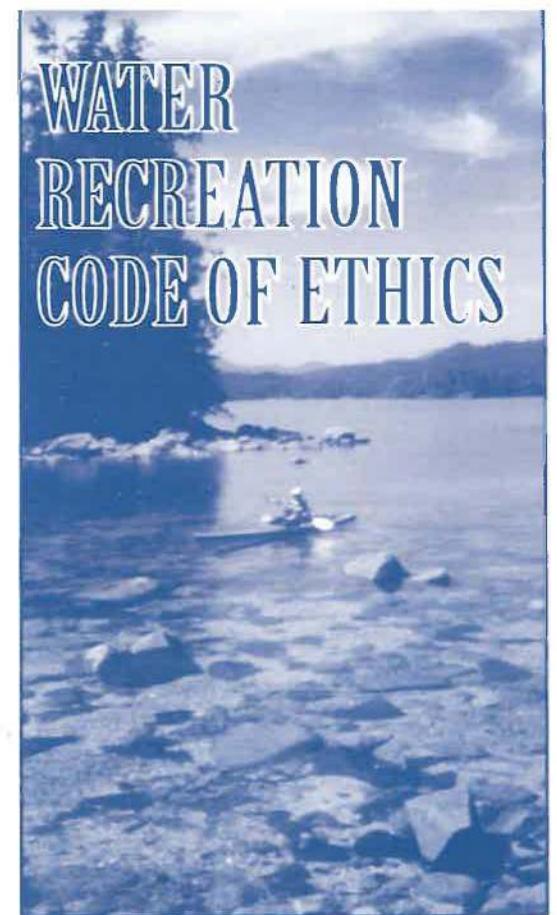
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Minimizing your impact on the aquatic environment and other water recreationists

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