B.9.10 Fish

Resident and migratory fish species within the planning area include: bull trout, west-slope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, mottled sculpin, slimy sculpin, large-scale sucker, rainbow trout, brown trout and brook trout. The Flathead, Elk and Wigwam systems provide important spawning and rearing habitats for these species.

Bull trout, the largest indigenous fish in the area, is a blue-listed species in British Columbia and is listed as endangered in the neighbouring American jurisdictions.

Issues:

- Aquatic and riparian habitat loss and degradation impacts sustainability of fish populations
- Water quality, quantity and timing of flow are impacted by human activities on land and water
- Fish displacement, injury and stress result from intensive angling pressure
- Post-hooking mortality is associated with intensive catch and release angling pressure
- There is a lack of success with international bull trout recovery in the Flathead watershed
- Management of fish stock in Flathead lake in Montana can have a direct impact on recovery efforts for bull trout in the upper Flathead drainage in Canada
- Proper Functioning Condition of streams, rivers and adjacent riparian habitats is dependent upon management of activities within watersheds
- Increasing angler days and intensity from resident, non-resident and guided anglers may be affecting sustainability of fish populations
- A regional angling guide strategy is pending (see Section B.8.4)
- West-slope cutthroat are hybridizing with rainbow trout

Intent:

- Maintain diverse, healthy and self-sustaining fish populations, including red and blue-listed species
- Restore bull trout populations and their habitat in the Flathead watershed
- Support fish co-management strategies for internationally-shared fish stock
- Maintain proper functioning condition of aquatic and riparian ecosystems
- Maintain a quality recreation fishing experience for resident and guided anglers
- Maintain suitable water quality, quantity and timing of flow to sustain fish populations
- Reduce the risk of disease and population pressures to native fish stocks resulting from introduction of non-native species

Economic benefits and opportunities:

- Recreational angling opportunities
- Angling equipment suppliers
- International cooperation and financial support
- Angling guide businesses

- Increased tourism

Measures of success:
- Fish population levels and habitat availability sustained
- Decreased fish mortality resulting from human activities
- Viable angling guide businesses