



## CALGARY RIVER USERS' ALLIANCE

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE – APRIL 2016

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#### **Background:**

The Calgary River Users' Alliance (CRUA) was formed in January 2016 to improve recreational, non-motorized boating access to the Bow and Elbow Rivers in Calgary. It will also address other needs and concerns that are common to recreational river users. The CRUA consists of representatives of recreation and conservation groups and businesses in the city, including canoeing, kayaking, rafting, paddleboarding, river surfing, and fishing.

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#### **Founding Members of Calgary River Users' Alliance:**

Bow Waters Canoe Club	Harvie Passage Alliance
Alberta Whitewater Assoc.	Calgary River Valleys
Rocky Mountain Paddling Centre	Alberta Slalom Canoe Kayak
Calgary Kayak Club	Undercurrents
RiverWatch	Lazy Day Raft Rentals
Paddle Alberta	University of Calgary Outdoor Centre
Angling Outfitter & Guide Association	Alberta River Surfing Association
Bow River Fishing Interests	

It is expected that other interested groups will join CRUA in support of the goals and objectives of the Alliance.

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#### **Issues Identified by the CRUA:**

- The Bow and Elbow Rivers are tremendous assets with a great potential for expanded recreational, educational, and cultural activities that are not being properly realized.
- The general public lacks information on paddling and angling opportunities on Calgary's rivers. River users lack information about existing formal and informal boat access points.
- The City of Calgary business community benefits from the recreational activities of local and visiting anglers and paddlers.
- Aside from angling, there is little to no data available about recreational river use in Calgary.
- The "Parks & Pathways Bylaw" 20M2003 technically prohibits anyone from wading (ie. fishing within the river) or launching any type of boat in the city's rivers and lakes, unless specifically allowed by the Parks Dept. The City treats all public riverbank land as a series of parks.
- The City of Calgary needs to clarify river accessibility for boating and river uses like wading for fishing, because both boaters using informal river access areas and anglers wading in the rivers in the city are potentially breaking this bylaw and are liable to fines.
- The Bow River is considered a "Blue Ribbon Trout Stream" and is recognized around the world as one of the best destinations for the opportunity to catch a "Once in a Lifetime" Brown or Rainbow Trout.
- Fishing boat owners and outfitters, rafting companies, paddling courses, and other large groups lack sufficient and adequate truck and trailer boat launch ramps and parking facilities.

- The City of Calgary has been steadily closing access to the formal boat ramps on the Bow River in recent years. There are about 8 formal boat ramps within the city, although only 2 are now open to the general public.
- Small boats like canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, and small rafts only require hand launches, which are access trails down riverbanks, but also benefit from boat ramps.
- The majority of hand launch river access points are poorly supported by facilities and are in poor condition. Few have parking lots and toilets close by, and none have any signage to indicate their existence, surfaced trails, or places for people to change clothes. Some of the informal access trails on riverbanks are eroding due to heavy use by canoeists, kayakers, paddleboarders, and rafters. The lack of toilets is creating a sanitation issue with many people relieving themselves “in the bushes” close to the rivers.
- The Harvie Passage needs to be seen by the City and the public as a recreational asset to Calgary, rather than as a hazardous section of whitewater that the Province built.
- There are opportunities being missed to incorporate recreational improvements into infrastructure projects of the Province and City.
- There is no guiding plan for Calgary’s rivers which addresses recreation, education, conservation, and infrastructure issues.

### **CRUA’s General Goals:**

- To represent the interests of all boaters using the rivers of Calgary, including anglers and paddlers.
- To improve non-motorized recreational boating access to the rivers of Calgary.
- To clarify the intent of the City’s “Parks & Pathways Bylaw” 20M2003 as it relates to river access.
- To improve working relations with City of Calgary departments, specifically Fire, Police, and Parks Departments.
- To educate City Councillors and City Departments about the importance of river recreation in Calgary and its value to the local economy.
- To work towards an overall River Management Plan.

### **CRUA’s Specific Objectives:**

- To establish short and long term action plans to meet CRUA objectives and goals.
- To have a sustainable system of formal river access points established.
- To have seasonal toilets provided at river access points to improve sanitation.
- To reduce riverbank erosion caused by unsupported and random river access activities, by formalizing access trails on riverbanks.
- To have the existing hand launch river access points upgraded – in the short term by installing signs to publicize them and providing seasonal toilets, and in the longer term by improving their riverbank access trails, installing change rooms, and constructing parking lots where necessary; and also ensuring the facilities are properly maintained.
- To have some of the formal boat launch ramps re-opened to public use as soon as possible and to have them improved by installing signs to publicize them and providing portable toilets and change rooms.
- To ensure continued user input in the Harvie Passage redevelopment process.
- To have proper boat access points with parking lots, signage, trails, toilets, and change rooms installed by the City along with the redevelopment of Harvie Passage, in order to facilitate its use by the public and paddling groups.
- To have the improved boat launch ramps and hand launches formally designated for public use by the City, if necessitated by the “Parks & Pathways Bylaw”.

- To develop a plan for recreational improvements along the Bow and Elbow Rivers in Calgary. To negotiate with the City and Province to include recreational components in selected river projects, eg. riverbank stabilization and bridge construction.
  - To have recreational river use and river access properly advertised by the City on their website and in their promotional and educational materials.
  - To engage other interest groups, agencies, and government bodies to enhance the usage and sustainability of Calgary's rivers.
  - To help educate river users to use the rivers responsibly, by recreating safely and obeying regulations, not creating riverbank erosion, and not leaving litter or waste.
  - To help educate Calgarians in conserving, protecting, and managing our riparian areas and waterways.
  - To work with the City of Calgary to develop a River Management Plan for Calgary's rivers, which would address issues including recreation, education, conservation, culture, flooding, and infrastructure.
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## Summary

The CRUA believes that improving non-motorized recreational boat access within the city of Calgary will contribute greatly to the recreational paddling and angling experience of both local citizens and visitors. This will lead to an increase in the demand for equipment and services, which will benefit local paddling and angling businesses and other parts of the local economy like restaurants and hotels. Properly managed river access locations will improve safety, reduce conflicts with other river users and landowners, and minimize damage to vegetation and other shoreline natural resources.

Furthermore, the importance to the City of Calgary of good-quality boat access cannot be overstated. Well-designed boat access and parking is critical to a safe, enjoyable trip on the river, and would reduce risk, time, and expense to the City of Calgary's Emergency Services.

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