

Guidelines for Reduced Risk Instream Work Windows
Ministry of Environment, Lower Mainland Region (March, 2006)

IMPORTANT: Check the regional web site <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/sry/wateract/index.html> to ensure you have the most recent version of this document

Works in and about watercourses must be undertaken at a time of year when the risk of negative impacts to aquatic organisms is low. Given the complexity of stream ecosystems and the various laws that protect them, due diligence requires that appropriately qualified professional biologists be consulted for almost all instream works proposals to assist in the determination of the best time to undertake them. Proponents must ensure that instream works minimize the impacts to all aquatic organisms including fish, aquatic wildlife, aquatic invertebrates and species at risk.

Fish - In general, the lowest risk period for fish streams is when no fish spawning is taking place, there are no eggs or alevins (fry with yolk sacs) within the stream gravels and no over-wintering juveniles are present. Table 1 presents the highest and lowest risk periods for the most commonly encountered salmonid species in the Lower Mainland Region. Other fish species might be present which must be considered when determining the reduced risk work window. It is the responsibility of the proponent to determine which species are potentially impacted by a project. Although useful information can be obtained from some databases, due diligence requires that the assistance of appropriately qualified professional biologists be obtained to determine the fish species present in a watercourse.

Table 1. Highest (dark shaded) and Lowest (un-shaded) Risk Periods for Lower Mainland Fish Species

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainbow, Steelhead, Cutthroat												
Dolly Varden, Bull trout												
Kokanee												
Pacific salmon												

The information in Table 1 should be used in conjunction with project-specific information such as the bio-physical site conditions, type and scope of works, length of construction period, seasonal weather patterns and other risk factors to determine an appropriate period to undertake the works (i.e. reduced risk work window). Appendix 14.1 of the [Standards and Best Practices for Instream Works](#) provides additional useful information on reduced risk work windows.

Other Aquatic Organisms - Depending on the form and features of the watercourse, consideration must also be given to the potential presence of other aquatic organisms, for example, the eggs and larvae of amphibians, aquatic invertebrates etc.

Species at Risk - If works in and around a stream can potentially impact any COSEWIC or provincially “Red” or “Blue” listed Species at Risk (SAR) (including plant, animal and invertebrate groups), appropriately qualified professional biologists should be retained to assist in planning, design and monitoring. This is necessary not only to ensure that impacts will be minimized but also to ensure the works will comply with SAR legislation. For some listed species there may be no window of least risk. The Ministry’s Lower Mainland Region Species at Risk Biologists should be contacted for project-specific guidance on timing of works on streams that support SAR.