

First annual edition

Chilliwack River Valley PDF Guide (2026)

The land, water, life, people and places of the Chilliwack River watershed, British Columbia. A fully cited reference.

Written and researched by ChilliwackRiverValley.com



About this guide

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This guide is a free reference to the Chilliwack River Valley in southwestern British Columbia, from its bedrock to the present day. It brings together published research in geology, ecology, archaeology and history with what Stó:lō and Ts'elxwéyeqw knowledge keepers have chosen to share. It will be revised each year.

Current to 12 October 2026. Roads, closures, fees and regulations change often. Confirm them with the responsible agency before travelling.

For information and education only

This guide is not a navigation aid, a safety guarantee or legal advice.

It describes places that are protected by law or closed to the public: archaeological and burial sites, ecological reserves, caves, Department of National Defence land, correctional facility grounds, First Nations lands and private property. They are described so that they can be understood, not visited. **Before entering any sensitive area, speak with the local First Nations and the responsible government authority.**

Sources. Every fact in the chapters carries a numbered citation linked to the References at the end of the guide. Where reliable sources disagree, each version is given and labelled. The Colophon describes the method.

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How to cite. [Chilliwack River Valley PDF Guide](#)

Feedback. Corrections and suggestions for the 2027 edition are welcome at hi@chilliwackrivervalley.com, as described on the final page.

Acknowledgement

The Chilliwack River Valley lies within S'ólh Téméxw, the world of the Stó:lō, the People of the River. The watershed is the ancestral, unceded homeland of the Ts'elxwéyeqw, whose name is also the name of the river [1, 2, 3]. The seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations (bands) describe themselves as the descendants of the original villages around Sx̱ótsaqel (Chilliwack Lake) [1].

The valley's history is shared with neighbouring Indigenous peoples. Oliver Wells's 1966 map of the territory as it stood in 1858 shows the territories of the neighbouring Pilalt, Sumas and Nooksack peoples alongside that of the Chilliwack [4]. Tourism Chilliwack's acknowledgement names the Pelho'lhwx people together with the Ts'elxwéyeqw [3]. The Nlaka'pamux have stated that their territory extends to Chilliwack Lake Park [5, p. 8].

ChilliwackRiverValley.com is not affiliated with any First Nation. The guide draws on knowledge that Stó:lō and Ts'elxwéyeqw Elders, historians and scholars have chosen to share in published form, and on oral accounts shared directly with the authors. That knowledge is credited wherever it is used. The guide does not speak for any First Nation, and it defers to the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre on all matters of their history, names and protocols.

The guide begins with the Stó:lō guiding principles, as published by the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations [1]:

S'ólh Téméxw te íkw'élò. Xólhmet te mekw'stám ít kwelát. — This is our land. We have to look after everything that belongs to us.

Xaxastexw te mekw' stam. — Respect all things.

Haqles chexw xwelmi:ay staxwelh. — Remember the future generations.

Ewe chexw qelqelit te mekw' stam loy qw' esli hokwex yexw lamexw ku:t. — Don't ruin, waste, destroy everything; just take what you need.

Xwoyiwel met yama latslut. — Greeting the visitors.

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Introduction

One valley, one system

The Chilliwack River Valley is a narrow mountain valley in the northern Cascades of southwestern British Columbia. Between Chilliwack Lake and Vedder Crossing, where it opens onto the Fraser Lowland, the river falls nearly 600 m (1,970 ft) in 40 km [6]. That short distance spans coastal rainforest and alpine tundra, salmon spawning grounds and remnant glaciers, thousands of years of Ts'elxwéyeqw history, and nearly two centuries of fur trade, survey, logging, military training and recreation since the first recorded European visit in 1828.

This guide treats the valley as a single system and arranges its chapters so that each prepares the ground for the next. The structure of the bedrock set the pattern of the drainage [6, p. 8]. The last glaciation filled the valley with ice and meltwater lakes, and left the benches and terraces into which the river has since cut, and along which the railways and roads were later built [6, 7]. Climate drives the river, and the river's floods and gravels shape both its fisheries and the risks to the people who live beside it [6, 8, 9]. Elevation sorts the forests and their animals into zones [7, 10]. People have lived within these limits for thousands of years: the Ts'elxwéyeqw by a seasonal round that reached from the river to the alpine [7, 11], and later arrivals by fur trade, survey, logging, mining and, today, recreation. The guide closes with the practical consequences: where things are, what is dangerous, which rules apply and what pressures the valley faces now.

How the guide is arranged

- **Part I, The Valley as a System**, locates the valley, defines its watershed, explains its name and its governance, and describes the climate that drives everything else.
- **Part II, Earth**, reads the rocks, the record of the ice age, and the landforms, mountains, glaciers and caves that remain.
- **Part III, Water**, follows the river from its source in Washington to the Fraser, with its tributaries, floods, groundwater, fish and whitewater.
- **Part IV, Life**, climbs through the forest zones and describes the valley's animals, plants and species at risk.
- **Part V, People and History**, begins with the Ts'elxwéyeqw and traces the human record from 4,800-year-old pithouses to the community of today.
- **Part VI, Places**, is the practical geography: the road, the campgrounds, the trails and the neighbouring landscapes.
- **Part VII, Safety and Stewardship**, sets out hazards, rules and current pressures.

- **Part VIII, Reference**, holds contacts, place names, the register of official names, further reading and the References.

Read from beginning to end, the guide tells one story, from bedrock to the present. Readers with a narrower purpose can start at any part: travellers at Parts VI and VII, students of the land at Parts II to IV, and readers of history at Part V. Cross-references link related material and, on paper, give page numbers. [Figure 1.1 \(p. 11\)](#) is a schematic map of the valley showing most of the places named in the text.

What "the valley" means here

The core of the guide is the Canadian part of the Chilliwack River watershed: about 72,000 ha drained by the river between Vedder Crossing, where it leaves the mountains, and the international boundary south of Chilliwack Lake [7]. Because the river does not stop at either end, the guide also follows it upstream into the United States and downstream to the Fraser River. It includes the neighbouring landscapes that share the valley's history: Cultus Lake and the Columbia Valley, the Ryder Lake upland and Promontory, the Cheam Range, the Vedder River and Canal, Sumas Lake and the Sardis lowland.

Conventions

Names. Places are named in English first, with the Halq'eméylem name in brackets where one is recorded, as in Slesse Mountain (Selísi). Places known only by a Halq'eméylem name, such as most village sites, are given that name. Halq'eméylem spellings follow those used by the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations and Galloway's *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem* [1, 2]; Oliver Wells's phonetic renderings of 1966 appear, where useful, as historical forms [4]. Official names follow BC Geographical Names [12].

Road kilometres. Chilliwack Lake Road is measured from its start at Vedder Crossing (km 0) to the end of the public road beyond Chilliwack Lake (about km 50). Distances in this edition come from a 2015 road log and from official sources, and are approximate [13]; they will be re-measured for the 2027 edition. Places are listed in driving order, upstream, against the flow of the river.

River kilometres. Geological sources measure the river upstream from Vedder Crossing [6]. Fisheries and restoration sources often measure it from the old mouth, which places the hatchery near river km 38 [14]. The text states which convention it uses.

Units. Measurements are metric. Elevations and key distances also give feet in brackets.

Ages. Geological and archaeological ages are given as published. "¹⁴C years BP" means radiocarbon years before 1950. For the late glacial period, radiocarbon ages run about 2,000 years younger than calendar ages: 11,000 radiocarbon years corresponds to roughly 13,000 calendar years. "cal BP" marks calibrated calendar ages, taken from the cited source or from the calibration table in [Chapter 4 \(p. 19\)](#).

Evidence labels. Small labels mark the standing of a statement:

- **Record** a documented fact from an official, scientific or historical record;
- **Stó:lō knowledge** shared by Stó:lō or Ts'elxwéyeqw people, in published or oral form, and credited to its source;
- **Confirm** a rule, fee, closure or hour that changes and must be checked before travel;
- **Local note** an observation from people who live in the valley;
- **Sources disagree** reputable accounts or figures differ, and each is shown;
- **Unverified** a claim that circulates but could not be traced to a reliable source.

Citations. Numbers in square brackets, such as [1], link to the numbered References. Each reference links back to the first place it is cited.

The valley at a glance

1,230 km²

drainage area above Vedder Crossing; 60–70% in Canada

[6]

72,000 ha

Canadian watershed, Vedder Crossing to the boundary

[7]

≈ 50 km

river length, Vedder Crossing to the boundary; ≈ 80 km for the whole system

[7, 15]

≈ 600 m

fall of the river from Chilliwack Lake to Vedder Crossing, in 40 km

[6]

2,439 m

Slesse Mountain, the highest summit on the Canadian side (sources give 2,429–2,439 m)

[16]

621 m

Chilliwack Lake (other sources: 625–640 m)

[17]

≈ 13,000

calendar years (about 11,000 radiocarbon years) since the ice dam at the valley mouth melted

[17, 18]

4,800

years since the oldest dated house at Iy'oythel was lived in

[19]

95,000 ha

territory of the seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations (bands)

[1]

9,258 ha

Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park

[20]

1,503 mm

mean yearly precipitation on the valley floor (hatchery, 225 m)

[21]

1,568

residents of Electoral Area E, 2021 census

[22]

Quick answers

Where does the river begin? At Hannegan Pass in North Cascades National Park, Washington. It flows north into Canada and through Chilliwack Lake ([Chapter 7, p. 30](#)).

Why does it have several names? It is the Chilliwack River above Vedder Crossing, the Vedder River below it, and the Vedder Canal in its straightened lowest 4.8 km ([Chapter 7, p. 30](#)).

What does "Chilliwack" mean? It comes from Ts'elxwéyeqw, the name of the river and its people. Its meaning is given variously as "as far as you can go upstream in a canoe" and "slough or backwater at the top of the head"; the popular "valley of many streams" has no traceable linguistic source ([Chapter 1, p. 10](#)).

How far is Chilliwack Lake? About 40 km of road from Vedder Crossing to the park entrance ([Chapter 25, p. 93](#)).

Is there cell service? Not beyond the store at about km 2 of Chilliwack Lake Road ([Chapter 29, p. 104](#)).

Can I walk across the border? No. There is no crossing in the valley, and anyone entering Canada must report at an official port of entry ([Chapter 30, p. 106](#)).

When can I see salmon? At the hatchery, chinook adults from August to November and coho from October to December ([Chapter 10, p. 44](#)).

Is the mountain beaver found only here? No. In Canada it lives in southwestern British Columbia, mainly in the Cascades south of the Fraser; the coastal giant salamander, by contrast, lives in Canada only in the Chilliwack drainage ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)).

How long have people lived here? Ts'elxwéyeqw oral history speaks of time immemorial; the oldest dated house in the valley is about 4,800 years old ([Chapter 18, p. 75](#)).

What happened on Slesse Mountain? Trans-Canada Air Lines Flight 810 crashed there on 9 December 1956, killing 62 people. The site is a protected burial site ([Chapter 21, p. 84](#)).

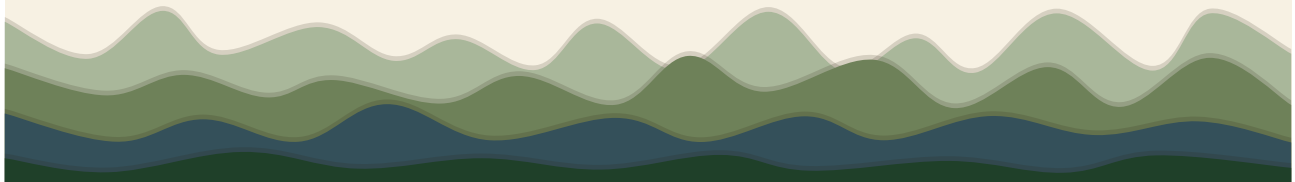
The 2026 season, as of 12 October 2026

- **Foley Creek forest road** closed at km 0 by a washout (December 2025), cutting road access to the Mount Cheam and Baby Munday trails. **Tamihi** road closed at km 3.0; **Bench** road closed between km 3.9 and 13 [23].
- **Recreation sites:** Tamihi Rapids closed because of flooding; Riverside closed for the season and expected to reopen in spring 2027; Rapids and Chipmunk Peninsula under seasonal closure [24].
- **Wilson Road Dike** repairs were scheduled from 17 August to 25 September 2026 [22].
- **River level:** about 0.52 m at the gauge above Slesse Creek on 11 October, below the range recommended for paddling [25].
- **Fishing:** the 2025–2027 provincial synopsis applies; salmon rules change in season [26, 27].

Part I

The Valley as a System

A valley is easiest to understand from the outside in. This part fixes the Chilliwack River Valley on the map: where it lies in the northern Cascades, how far its watershed reaches on both sides of the international boundary, what its name means and who is responsible for it today. It then turns to climate. The Pacific storms that soak the valley each winter, and the snow that melts from its peaks each spring, drive the floods, forests and hazards described in the rest of the guide.

**Chapter 1**

The valley in context

Where the valley lies, how far its watershed reaches, what it is called and who is responsible for it.

Location and setting

The Chilliwack River Valley lies in southwestern British Columbia, about 100 km east of Vancouver [6]. Its upper end, Chilliwack Lake, is about 150 km from Vancouver and 64 km southeast of the city of Chilliwack, reached by 40 km of road from Vedder Crossing [28]. Between the lake and Vedder Crossing the valley runs east–west; above the lake, the upper river and the lake itself run north–south [7].

The valley belongs to the Skagit Range of the northern Cascade Mountains. Ecologically it lies in the Northwestern Cascade Ranges ecosection, and the Georgia Depression, the lowland that holds the lower Fraser River, begins just west of Vedder Crossing [7]. The mountains are steep and deeply dissected: summits generally stand between 2,100 and 2,500 m (6,900–8,200 ft) and local relief reaches 2,000 m (6,600 ft) [6].

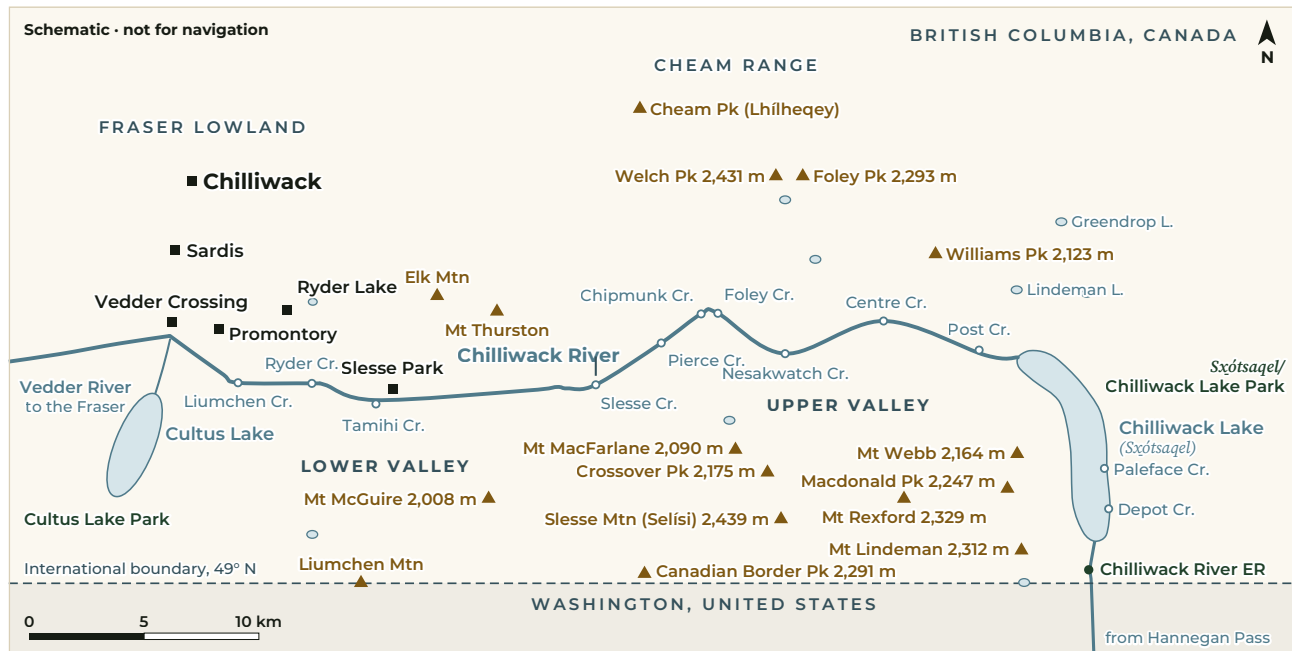


Figure 1.1. The Chilliwack River Valley from Vedder Crossing to Chilliwack Lake and the international boundary. Schematic, not for navigation: positions of named features are from BC Geographical Names [12]; the river is drawn through the recorded mouths of its tributaries, and the outlines of Chilliwack and Cultus lakes are approximate. Summit elevations as in Chapter 6 (p. 27); Chilliwack Lake Road follows the river.

The watershed

The Chilliwack River rises at Hannegan Pass in North Cascades National Park, Washington. It flows north across the international boundary into Chilliwack Lake, leaves the lake at its north end, and runs west through the valley to the Fraser Lowland [29]. At Vedder Crossing it receives the Sweltzer River from Cultus Lake and becomes the Vedder River; the Vedder Canal then carries it across the former bed of Sumas Lake to the Sumas River, just above that river's mouth on the Fraser [29]. The whole system is about 80 km long [15].

The drainage area above the Vedder Crossing bridge is 1,230 km² (475 sq mi), of which 60–70 percent lies north of the boundary [6]. The Canadian part of the watershed between Vedder Crossing and the boundary covers about 72,000 ha, and the river flows about 50 km between those points [7]. The two figures are broadly consistent: 72,000 ha is about 59 percent of the total basin. Between the foot of Chilliwack Lake and Vedder Crossing the river falls nearly 600 m (1,970 ft) in 40 km, an average gradient of 1.5 percent [6].

Geologists divide the valley at Slesse Creek. The **lower valley** runs from Vedder Crossing to Slesse Creek, and the **upper valley** from Slesse Creek to Chilliwack Lake [6]. This guide uses the same division. It also treats Chilliwack Lake and the river above it, including the American headwaters, as a third unit.

Table 1.1. The Chilliwack River Valley in numbers

Measure	Value	Source
Drainage area above Vedder Crossing	1,230 km ²	[6]
Share of drainage area in Canada	60–70%	[6]
Canadian watershed, Vedder Crossing to boundary	about 72,000 ha	[7]
River length, Vedder Crossing to boundary	about 50 km	[7]
Total length of Chilliwack–Vedder system	about 80 km	[15]
Fall from Chilliwack Lake to Vedder Crossing	nearly 600 m in 40 km	[6]
Elevation of Chilliwack Lake	621 m	[17]
Elevation of Vedder Crossing	25 m	[17]
Mean discharge at Vedder Crossing	77 m ³ /s	[15]
Typical summit elevations	2,100–2,500 m	[6]
Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park	about 9,258 ha	[20]
FVRD Electoral Area E population (2021)	1,568	[22]
FVRD Electoral Area E land area	652 km ²	[22]
Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations territory	95,000 ha	[1]

Sources disagree: the elevations of the lake and the crossing

Saunders, Clague and Roberts give Chilliwack Lake as 621 m and Vedder Crossing as 25 m [17]. Schaepe gives the foot of the lake as about 640 m and Vedder Crossing as about 40 m [7], and the Trans Canada Trail guide lists the lake at 625 m [30]. The differences reflect where each measurement was taken and the maps used.

Who is responsible for the valley

Responsibility for the valley is layered.

The Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations. Seven First Nations (bands) make up the Ts'elxwéyeqw: Áthelets (Aitchelitz), Sq'ewqéyl (Skowkale), Shxwhá:y (Skway), Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie), Sxwoyehá:lá (Squiala), Ch'iyáqtel (Tzeachten) and Yeqwyeqwi:ws (Yakweakwioose). Together they describe their territory as covering 95,000 ha of southwestern British Columbia, including land across the border in the United States, and exercise Aboriginal rights and title over it [1]. They own the Stehiyaq property at Centre Creek, where their Chiefs and Councils gathered in January 2013 to renew their connection with their ancestral lands [1].

The Fraser Valley Regional District. Most of the valley outside the parks forms Electoral Area E, which the regional district describes as "known as the Chilliwack River Valley." It had 1,568 residents in 2021 and covers 652 km². The district provides fire protection, dyke maintenance, emergency management, water, transit and community parks [22].

The City of Chilliwack. The western end of the valley, around Vedder Crossing, Promontory and Ryder Lake, lies within the City of Chilliwack [31].

The Province of British Columbia. BC Parks manages Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park, the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve and Chilliwack River Park [28, 32, 22]. Recreation Sites and Trails BC manages eight recreation sites along the river [24]. The Chilliwack Natural Resource District is responsible for the forest service roads [23]. The province also operates correctional facilities in the middle valley [7].

The Government of Canada. Fisheries and Oceans Canada runs the Chilliwack River Hatchery [33]. The Department of National Defence retains a training area in the valley [34].

Across the border. The river's headwaters lie in North Cascades National Park [29]. BC Parks manages Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park as part of a transboundary complex of more than a million hectares of protected land in Canada and the United States [5, p. vi].

The name

The English word *Chilliwack* comes from the Halq'eméylem name Ts'elxwéyeqw, which refers both to the river and to the people [2, 1]. Its spelling has varied. Charles Wilson of the British Boundary Commission wrote *Chilukweyuk* in the 1860s, and Charles Hill-Tout wrote *Tcil'Qe'uk* in 1903 [35]. The township that became today's city was incorporated in 1873 as Chilliwack. That spelling was kept until the city and township merged in 1980 [31]. The name of the river was adopted officially in 1924 [36].

Sources disagree: what "Ts'elxwéyeqw" means

- "As far as you can go with a canoe." Elder Albert Louie, recorded by Oliver Wells: "As far as you can go with a canoe — you can't go no further ... Ts'elxwéyeqw. Then the white people have Chilliwack" [7, 37]. Tourism Chilliwack gives "as far as you can go upstream in a canoe" [3].
- "Going back upstream, a backwater." Oliver Wells's 1965 gloss [2].
- "Slough, backwater or quieter water at the top of the head." Galloway's linguistic analysis, which he relates to the many sloughs at the river's former mouth on the Fraser [2]. Tourism Chilliwack gives a similar "slough at the top of the head" [3].
- "Valley of many streams." Given for Tcil'Qe'uk by the provincial name record, which calls it the meaning "often" given, and by general reference works [36, 31, 29]. No linguistic analysis supporting this meaning was found Unverified.

Land status at a glance

Most of the valley is provincial Crown land: forest, parks, ecological reserves and recreation sites. Private homes, farms and businesses line Chilliwack Lake Road, especially in the lower valley. Ecological reserves are closed to most uses. Department of National Defence land and correctional facility grounds are not open to the public. First Nations lands, such as reserves and the Stehiyaq property, belong to their owners. [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#) sets out the rules for each kind of land.

Boundaries, names and jurisdictions describe how people have divided the valley. What holds it together is the movement of water from the peaks to the Fraser, and that begins with the climate.

Chapter 2

Climate and weather

A wet maritime climate, winter storms, summer snowmelt, and mountains that change conditions with height.

The climatic setting

The valley lies in the path of Pacific weather systems that reach the coast of British Columbia mainly between October and March. Its climate is maritime: winters are mild and very wet, summers are warm and comparatively dry, and conditions change sharply with elevation. Two long climate records describe it. One comes from the Chilliwack area on the Fraser Lowland at the valley mouth. The other comes from the Chilliwack River Hatchery, on the valley floor at 225 m (740 ft) [21], about 20 km up Chilliwack Lake Road [33].

Table 2.1. Climate normals, 1981–2010: the Fraser Lowland at Chilliwack and the valley floor at the hatchery

	Chilliwack A (Fraser Lowland)	Chilliwack River Hatchery (225 m)
Mean daily maximum, year (°C)	15.5	13.7
Mean daily minimum, year (°C)	6.0	5.0
Warmest months, mean daily maximum (°C)	July 25.0, August 25.3	July 23.2, August 23.5
Precipitation, year (mm)	1,667.5	1,502.9
Wettest month (mm)	November, 283.8	November, 244.9
Driest month (mm)	July, 48.1	August, 52.8

	Chilliwack A (Fraser Lowland)	Chilliwack River Hatchery (225 m)
Snowfall, year (cm)	85.3	74.5
Days with precipitation	189.9	187.1
Record high (°C)	43.7 (28 June 2021)*	37.0 (July)
Record low (°C)	−21.7 (27 December 1968)	−18.5 (November)

Environment Canada normals, as tabulated in [38] and [21]. *The lowland record high was set during the western North American heat wave of June 2021 and is reported from a table that combines the Chilliwack A normals with later records from the Cultus Lake station [31]. Records at the two locations cover different periods and are not directly comparable.

Three features stand out. **November is the wettest month** at both stations, with about one-sixth of the year's precipitation. **Rain dominates** on the valley floor: snow accounts for only about 5 percent of precipitation, and the hatchery averages about 13 snowy days a year. **Wet days are frequent**, with measurable precipitation on more than 185 days a year at both stations [38, 21]. On average, the valley floor at the hatchery is about 1–2 °C cooler than the lowland and receives about 10 percent less precipitation.

How the mountains change the climate

Inside the valley, the climate changes with elevation and with distance from the coast. The clearest evidence is the vegetation. Coastal western hemlock forest grows below about 1,200 m, mountain hemlock forest between about 1,200 and 1,600 m, and alpine tundra lies above [7]. Near Chilliwack Lake the lowland forest belongs to the *dry submaritime* subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock zone, a drier and more continental variant than the forests of the lower valley [5, p. 6, 13]. BC Parks attributes the temperate rainforest of the upper valley to high annual rainfall [39].

Snow lasts long at height. The province operates an automated snow weather station named Chilliwack River (1D17P) at 1,600 m (5,250 ft) [40]. On the Trans Canada Trail, snow can cover Paleface Pass (1,270 m) until mid-June [30]. In the alpine zone of Mount Cheam (Lhílheqey), snow limited Indigenous use to roughly July through October [11].

Sun and shade

Orientation matters in a deep valley. Chilliwack Lake, which lies north–south, receives direct sunlight year round. Much of the east–west valley floor is partly shaded in winter, when the low sun stays behind the south wall of the valley [7]. Frost, ice and snow can therefore persist on shaded stretches of road long after sunny ones have cleared.

Wind

Afternoon winds are a feature of Chilliwack Lake. BC Parks warns that severe afternoon winds occur frequently on the lake and that dangerous currents exist at its outflow [28].

The river's seasonal rhythm

The climate sets the rhythm of the river. Spring and early-summer snowmelt dominates the flow. At the outlet of Chilliwack Lake, 92 percent of the highest monthly flows on record fall in May or June. At Vedder Crossing the figure is 77 percent, because the lower valley also responds to winter storms: there, the highest daily flows are divided equally between the May–June melt and the October–February storm season. The lowest monthly flows fall in February, March, September and October [6]. [Chapter 7 \(p. 30\)](#) gives the river's discharge record.

Extreme weather

The valley's most damaging events have come from heavy autumn and winter rain, often falling on snow.

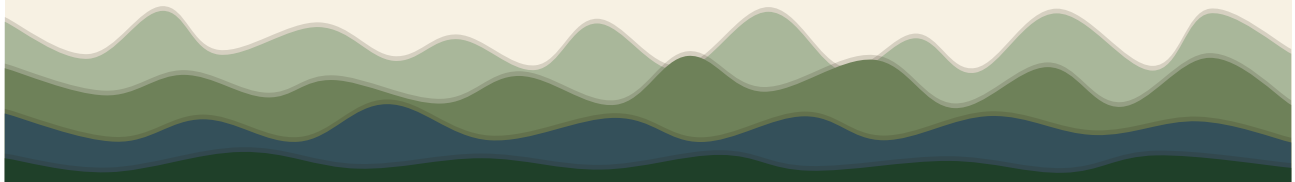
- **December 1975.** Waterlogged slopes failed throughout the valley in a series of landslides and mudflows [6].
- **1989 and 1990.** Floods triggered clay slides that have delivered silt to the river every November to March since [14].
- **November 2021.** A sequence of atmospheric rivers struck southwestern British Columbia. Sumas Lake re-formed on its old bed [41]. On 1 December 2021 the regional district ordered properties on Chilliwack Lake Road evacuated because of high flows and bank erosion by the Chilliwack River [42].
- **December 2025.** Another atmospheric river delivered 110 mm of rain at Chilliwack and 140 mm at Hope by the morning of 11 December. The regional district ordered the evacuation of eight properties on Wilson Road, beside the Chilliwack River, and put others on Chilliwack Lake Road on alert [43]. Washouts and slope failures closed several forest service roads in the following days [23].

Dry summers bring the opposite hazard. On 29 July 1859 the Boundary Commission secretary Charles Wilson watched a forest fire cross the valley [35]. In 1938 a fire caused by a logging-railway accident ended the era of railway logging [28]. [Chapter 29 \(p. 104\)](#) describes current hazards, and [Chapter 31 \(p. 108\)](#) discusses climate change.

Part II

Earth

Climate acts on a stage built of rock and ice. Part II begins with the bedrock, ancient sea-floor and volcanic rocks folded and intruded by the granitic Chilliwack batholith, whose structure set the pattern of the drainage. It then follows the last glaciation, when a valley glacier and the much larger Fraser Lowland ice met near the valley mouth, dammed lakes and left the benches, terraces and moraines that make up the valley floor. The part ends with the mountains, glaciers and caves that frame the valley.



Chapter 3

Bedrock

Ancient sea-floor rocks, a Tertiary granite batholith and scattered limestone underlie a valley whose drainage follows the grain of the rock.

The northern Cascades

The Chilliwack River Valley cuts through the northern Cascade Mountains, a range with a core of gneiss and granite flanked by sedimentary, metamorphic and volcanic rocks [6, p. 5]. The bedrock of the valley was mapped by Monger in 1970, and later studies of the valley follow his units [6, p. 5, 7]. The rocks fall into three broad groups. Older layered rocks were deposited in ancient seas and later folded and metamorphosed. Granitic rocks of the Chilliwack batholith intruded them in the mid-Tertiary. Patches of younger sedimentary rock cap the sequence.

Table 3.1. The bedrock units of the Chilliwack River Valley, oldest to youngest

Unit	Age	Rocks	Where
Amphibolite and diorite (correlated with the Yellow Aster Complex of Washington)	probably early Paleozoic; exact age unknown	amphibolite, diorite	small areas; the oldest rocks in the valley

Unit	Age	Rocks	Where
Chilliwack Group	late Paleozoic	metamorphosed pelite (shale) and sandstone, minor conglomerate, pyroclastic rock, greenstone, limestone; complexly folded and faulted	widespread in the lower and middle valley
Cultus Formation	Triassic–Jurassic	pelite, siltstone, sandstone, breccia; strongly deformed	rests unconformably on the Chilliwack Group
Nooksack Group	Cretaceous to early Tertiary	greywacke, shale	Vedder Mountain
Custer gneiss; Chuckanut Formation conglomerate	various	gneiss; conglomerate	local, near Chilliwack Lake
Chilliwack and Mount Barr batholiths	mid-Tertiary (Chilliwack batholith 26–29 million years)	granodiorite	the eastern valley, Chilliwack Lake, the high peaks

Sources: [6, pp. 5–7] for units and rock types; [44] for the age of the Chilliwack batholith.

The granodiorite batholiths, the Chilliwack Group and the Cultus Formation together make up most of the bedrock of the drainage basin [6, p. 7].

The Chilliwack batholith

The Chilliwack batholith is the largest mass of exposed intrusive rock in the Cascade Volcanic Arc, the chain of volcanoes and their roots that runs from northern California into southwestern British Columbia. It was emplaced between about 26 and 29 million years ago, belongs to the Pemberton Volcanic Belt, forms much of the North Cascades on both sides of the border, and takes its name from the valley, where it outcrops in many places [44]. Mount Rexford, Williams Peak and Mount MacFarlane are carved from the batholith; Mount Rexford is granodiorite [45, 46, 47]. Its resistant granitic rock forms the steep walls and spires of the upper valley, and its boulders are strewn across the glacial outwash plain below Chilliwack Lake [6, p. 123]. A second, related body, the Mount Barr batholith, lies at the head of Foley Creek. Boulders from it litter the lower end of the same plain in the middle valley [6, p. 123].

Structure and drainage

The rocks of the Chilliwack Group and the Cultus Formation are tightly folded and faulted [6, p. 5]. Their structure controls the shape of the river network: the drainage pattern is quasi-rectangular, with long straight valleys meeting at sharp angles. The Columbia Valley, which slopes south from Cultus Lake to the international boundary, is the only other major valley in the area [6, p. 8].

Limestone and caves

Limestone beds within the Chilliwack Group are the host rock for the valley's caves, including the Chipmunk Caves near the mouth of Chipmunk Creek and Iron Curtain Cave in the Cheam Range [48, 49]. They are described in [Chapter 6 \(p. 27\)](#).

Minerals, mines and stone

Prospectors worked the valley for gold, silver and copper from the 1910s to the 1960s. Lode mines included the Red Mountain Mine on Border Peak. Placer dredges worked the gravels of the lower river between Vedder Crossing and Tamihi Creek until fisheries legislation ended the practice in the 1960s [7]. In the eastern Cheam Range, a group of peaks takes its name from the abandoned Lucky Four Mine [50].

Long before mining, the valley's rocks were a resource for Indigenous toolmakers. - A quartz-crystal outcrop near the Lucky Four Glacier, on the north side of Foley Peak, was a known source of crystal [7]. - Local red chert was worked at the village of Iy'oythel [19]. - Stone was also brought in from farther away: Hozameen chert from the upper Skagit and volcanic glass from Mount Rahm in the Silver Creek watershed [7, 11]. - A small amount of obsidian from outside the region was found at Iy'oythel in deposits 2,000 to 2,800 years old [19].

Ethnographers also recorded that salt was obtained from Cheam Peak [35].

The bedrock set the valley's direction and supplied its stone, but its present shape is the work of ice.

Chapter 4

Ice, lakes and mammoths

How the last glaciation filled the valley with ice, dammed it with a lowland glacier, drowned it under meltwater lakes and finally released it about 13,000 years ago.

The last glaciation

The landscape of the valley was shaped above all by the Fraser Glaciation, the last advance of the Cordilleran ice sheet. In the Fraser Lowland it lasted from about 26,000 to 11,000 radiocarbon years ago [7]. Two glaciers met in the valley during this period. A valley glacier flowed down the Chilliwack River from the high Cascades. A much larger lobe of the ice sheet filled the Fraser Lowland and pushed into the mouth of the valley. Most of the valley's glacial history comes from the contest between these two bodies of ice [6, 17].

Ice covered almost everything. Most of the land below about 2,000 m was rounded by ice, and even the sharp high peaks were probably buried only briefly [6, p. 8]. The valley's classic glacial forms date from this period: hanging valleys, horns, arêtes, truncated spurs and the paired cirques that the geologist Reginald Daly called "tandem cirques" [6, p. 8].

Advance: mammoths and an outwash plain (about 21,000–22,000 ¹⁴C years ago)

The oldest dated feature in the valley is an outwash plain (a *sandur*) built by the Chilliwack Valley glacier as it advanced at the start of the Fraser Glaciation [6, p. iii]. Its gravels underlie the Ryder Upland on the north side of the lower valley. At the Chilliwack River Pit, gravels of this age contain mammoth tusk, dated to 21,400 and 22,700 radiocarbon years before present [51, 52]. Saunders dated the active building of the outwash plain to between 21,400 and 21,600 radiocarbon years [6, p. 120]. In calendar years, these ages fall roughly 25,700 to 27,000 years ago.

At that time the outwash plain probably filled the width of the lower valley and drained west past Vedder Crossing. Because no Fraser River of that age has been found, the Chilliwack River may then have emptied directly into a marine estuary [6, p. 120].

The first glacial lake

As the Fraser Lowland ice lobe grew, it blocked the mouth of the valley and dammed a lake in the lower valley. Clays laid down in that lake are dated to $20,190 \pm 1,000$ radiocarbon years [6, p. iii, 120]. The lowland ice then flowed far into the lower valley and deposited a thick till. Nearly half of the Ryder Upland is made of this till. Wood from its centre is dated to $15,610 \pm 130$ radiocarbon years [6, p. 121].

The Ryder Upland appears to have been a principal dumping ground for the lowland ice lobe. Saunders suggests that the meeting of the lowland ice with the Chilliwack Valley glacier caused the heavy deposition there [6, pp. 121, 129]. No deposits from the Everson Interstade, a period of retreat recorded farther west in the Fraser Lowland, have been found in the valley. Ice probably stood still or retreated only slowly here [6, p. 122].

Retreat and the late glacial lake (about 12,000–11,000 ¹⁴C years ago)

Late in the glaciation the two ice masses separated, and a lake filled the gap between them. By 11,900 radiocarbon years ago it reached at least as far upstream as Slesse Creek [6, p. 122]. Its surface stood between about 300 and 430 m (980–1,410 ft) [6, p. 122, 7]. The Chilliwack Valley glacier was in general retreat, and it had pulled back about 20 km by 11,900 radiocarbon years ago [17]. As it melted back it built a new outwash plain in the upper valley. That plain ended in

the lake, and parts of it were laid down under water [6, p. iii]. Larsons Bench is part of this outwash plain [17]. The glacier paused at Chilliwack Lake long enough to leave a bouldery moraine [6, p. 123].

The lowland ice did not retreat steadily. During the Sumas Stade it readvanced twice into the valley mouth, about 11,500 and 11,200 radiocarbon years ago. A brief recession separated the two advances, recorded by a volcanic ash layer at the Tamihi Slide. The Tamihi end moraine, which crosses the Ryder Lake upland, marks the farthest reach of the later advance [17].

Meanwhile meltwater found new outlets. - Streams along the south side of the lowland ice lobe built the Lower Bench, a kame terrace, and flowed into an ice-marginal lake at Smith Falls Creek. That lake extended south to the snout of a second ice tongue at the south end of Cultus Lake. It drained down the Columbia Valley to the Nooksack River [6, pp. 122–123]. - At the upper end of the valley, near the close of the glaciation, water from the neighbouring Silverhope–Klesilkwa basin crossed the divide into the Chilliwack via Post Creek. It capped the moraine at Chilliwack Lake with gravel, and a brief, probably catastrophic flood then cut through it and carried boulders a few kilometres downvalley [6, pp. 123–125]. Saunders treated the details of this flood as tentative.

The ice leaves

The ice dam at the valley mouth was gone by about 11,000 radiocarbon years ago, and the Fraser Lowland was free of ice less than a century later. The Cordilleran ice sheet had disappeared from southern British Columbia by about 10,500 radiocarbon years ago [17]. When the lake drained, stagnant ice still lay in the lower valley. It diverted the river into the newly formed Cultus Lake basin, where it built a kame delta, the Cultus Bench. Once that ice melted, the river took its present course out of the valley at Vedder Crossing. The Cultus Bench remained and still holds back Cultus Lake [6, p. 126].

After the ice

With base level lowered, the river cut down through the upper-valley outwash plain. It left high terraces near the Slesse Creek confluence and fed new alluvial fans from unstable slopes in a vigorous *paraglacial* period [6, pp. 126–127]. In the middle Holocene, debris flows from the slopes of the Upper Bench built the Tamihi Bench across the valley floor and temporarily dammed the river. The resulting lake stood at about 165 m (540 ft) and backed up about halfway to Slesse Creek [6, pp. iii, 126–127, 7]. Wood from the Tamihi Bench is dated to $4,270 \pm 60$ radiocarbon years [6, p. iii]. For roughly the last 5,000 years the landscape has been comparatively stable [7]. Neoglacial moraines from the last few thousand years are found only below the Depot and Redoubt glaciers in the far southeast of the watershed [6, pp. 17, 127].

Radiocarbon and calendar years

The dates in this chapter are radiocarbon ages. Because the amount of radiocarbon in the atmosphere has varied over time, radiocarbon years are not calendar years. For the late glacial period they are about 2,000 years too young. The table converts the valley's key dates to calendar ages with the IntCal20 calibration curve.

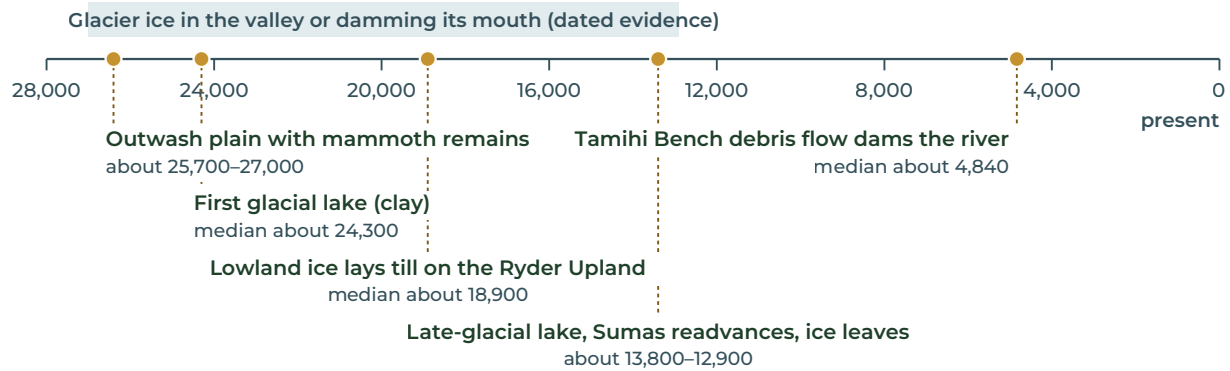
Table 4.1. Radiocarbon dates from the Chilliwack River Valley, with calibrated calendar ages

Laboratory no.	Material and site	¹⁴ C age (years BP)	Calibrated age, 95% range (cal BP)	Median (cal BP)
SFU-406	glacial-lake clay, lower valley	20,190 ± 1,000	26,440–22,064	24,302
BETA-11057	wood in till, Ryder Upland (Tamihi Scar)	15,610 ± 130	19,166–18,671	18,898
GSC-3306	wood in glacial-lake clay, Slesse Creek	11,900 ± 120	14,043–13,508	13,767
GSC-4090	wood, base of lower diamicton, Tamihi Slide	11,800 ± 110	14,007–13,452	13,664
GSC-2966	wood, Slesse Creek	11,700 ± 100	13,770–13,354	13,561
GSC-4097	wood, Tamihi Slide	11,600 ± 90	13,734–13,250	13,457
GSC-4102	upper diamicton, Tamihi Slide	11,500 ± 100	13,577–13,175	13,370
GSC-3300	rooted stump, Slesse Creek	11,400 ± 140	13,582–13,077	13,284
GSC-4036	log, Tamihi Slide	11,300 ± 100	13,424–13,007	13,202
GSC-2523	ice-contact wood, Cultus Lake	11,300 ± 100	13,424–13,007	13,202
GSC-4041	log, Tamihi Slide	11,200 ± 90	13,298–12,905	13,114
GSC-4037	upper diamicton, Tamihi Slide	11,200 ± 90	13,298–12,905	13,114
GSC-3961	debris-flow fill, Tamihi Bench	4,270 ± 60	5,029–4,587	4,838

Radiocarbon ages from [6] and [7]. Calibrated for this guide with the IntCal20 curve using IOSACal [8, 53]; 95.4 percent ranges, outer limits shown where the range has several parts. The mammoth-bearing gravels (21,400 and 22,700 ¹⁴C BP, published without errors [5]) correspond to roughly 25,700–27,000 cal BP.

In calendar years, the sequence is as follows. About 26,000 years ago the advancing valley glacier was building the outwash plain that holds the mammoth remains. By about 24,000 years ago the lowland ice had dammed the valley mouth. The late-glacial lake, the two Sumas readvances and the final melt all fell within about a thousand years, between roughly 13,800 and 12,900 years ago. About 4,800 years ago the Tamihi Bench debris flow dammed the river.

A. The last 28,000 years (calibrated years before present)



B. Late-glacial dates, 14,200 to 12,700 years ago (95 percent calibrated ranges)

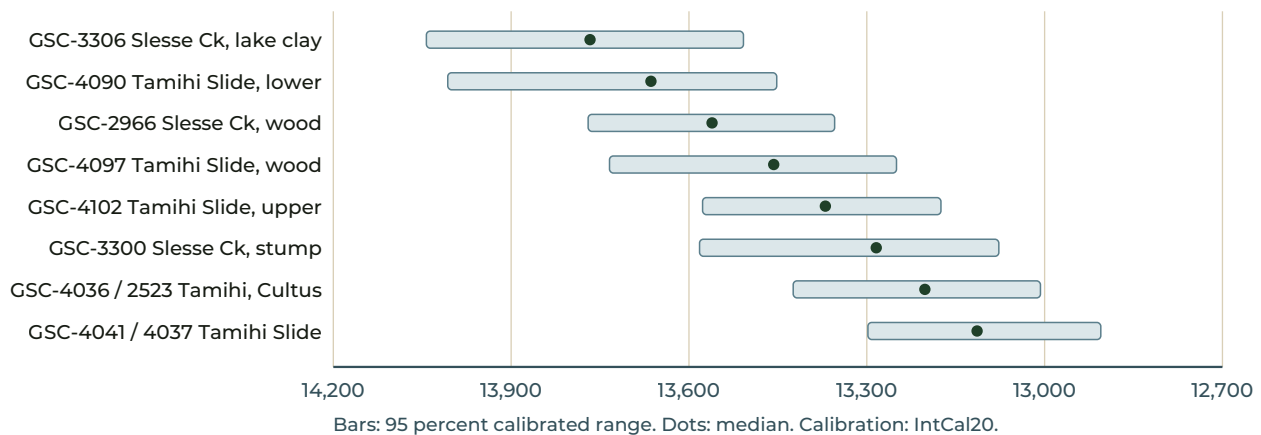


Figure 4.1. Glacial and postglacial events in the Chilliwack River Valley, plotted in calibrated calendar years. Compiled from [6] and [77]; calibrations as in Table 4.1.

The glaciers and their lakes left more than a sequence of dates: they built the benches, terraces and moraines that make up the valley floor today.

Chapter 5

Landforms

Benches, terraces, fans, moraines and landslides — the deposits that the ice and the river left on the valley floor.

A valley floor built of deposits

The Chilliwack River Valley has the U-shaped cross-section of a glaciated valley. Its floor, however, is not bare rock. It is built of glacial, lake, river and landslide deposits that form terraces and benches at many levels. Saunders mapped ten distinct depositional terrain units in the Canadian part of the valley below Chilliwack Lake [6, pp. 8–17]. Classic alpine moraines, by contrast, are rare. Deposits high on the steep valley walls and in the narrow tributary valleys were removed soon after the ice left [6, p. 17].

Table 5.1. Depositional terrain units of the Chilliwack River Valley

Unit	Name	Character	Origin
L1	Ryder Upland	very thick deposit with a rolling, hummocky surface and scattered erratics; north side of the lower valley	early-Fraser outwash overlain by thick till from the Fraser Lowland ice
L2	Upper Bench	gently sloping bench on the south side; edges gullied and slumped	probably till (tentative)
L3	Lower Bench	flat-topped terrace from near Tamihi Creek to the north end of Cultus Lake, in several levels within 20 m	kame terrace beside the lowland ice
L4	Cultus Bench	smooth, flat surface that dams Cultus Lake	kame delta
L5	Tamihi Bench	hummocky in places, crossed by relict channels near Chilliwack Lake Road; actively eroded by the river	mid-Holocene debris-flow fill
L6	Low terrace	undulating surface 5–10 m above the floodplain; river scarps to 6 m	postglacial river terrace
L7	Upper-valley outwash plain	16 km unbroken from near Chilliwack Lake to Slesse Creek, with remnants 3–4 km farther; incised up to 130 m	late-glacial sandur, partly built into a lake
L8	Chipmunk Creek bench	about 40 m above L7 at the creek mouth	dissected hanging delta
L9	Foley Creek bench	at the mouth of the Foley Creek valley	fan or delta graded to L7

Unit	Name	Character	Origin
L10	Chilliwack Lake Barrier	dams Chilliwack Lake; moraine form with an unusually flat top, terraced by Post Creek and the river	recessional moraine capped by outwash

After [6, pp. 8–17, 112]. Unit numbers are Saunders's map units.

The lower valley

On the north side of the lower valley, the **Ryder Upland** is the largest single deposit. It is made of outwash gravels from the advancing valley glacier, overlain by thick till from the Fraser Lowland ice (see [Chapter 4, p. 19](#)) [6, pp. 9, 120–121]. Its deposits are so thick that the water table on the upland lies more than 200 m below the surface, compared with 5 to 10 m on the valley floor [51].

On the south side, the **Upper Bench** and **Lower Bench** step down toward the river. The Lower Bench ends abruptly near the north end of Cultus Lake, where the **Cultus Bench** holds back the lake [6, pp. 9–15]. Near Vedder Crossing, two very narrow dry valleys north of the Cultus Bench may be ancient river courses [6, p. 15].

The **Tamihi Bench**, just east of Tamihi Creek, is the mid-Holocene debris-flow fill that briefly dammed the river ([Chapter 4, p. 19](#)); the river is still eroding it today [6, pp. 126–127]. Older literature mapped the Tamihi Bench as outwash sand and gravel. Saunders showed that it is mostly diamict, a poorly sorted debris deposit [6, p. 131].

The upper valley

Above Slesse Creek, the valley floor is dominated by a single great outwash plain. It runs unbroken for 16 km from near Chilliwack Lake to Slesse Creek. In its lower part the river has cut down as much as 130 m, but downcutting stops at a bedrock outcrop at the Chipmunk Creek confluence, and above that point there is little incision [6, p. 16]. Larsons Bench, near the Slesse Creek confluence, is part of this plain. It was built out into the late-glacial lake [17, 51]. Below it, high terraces near the Slesse confluence record the river's downcutting after the lake drained [6, p. 126].

At the head of the plain, Chilliwack Lake is held back by a flat-topped barrier that has the form of a recessional moraine. Post Creek has terraced it on the north and the river on the west [6, p. 17, 7].

Fans, gorges and hanging valleys

Only two tributaries, Slesse Creek and Foley Creek, are graded to the main river. All the others enter from hanging valleys left by the glaciers. Liumchen, Tamihi and Chipmunk creeks have cut narrow bedrock gorges where they drop to the valley floor. Nesakwatch and Centre creeks

have instead built alluvial fans that constrict the river in places. Many small fans, most now inactive, line the edges of the upper valley. Because they rest on the late-glacial outwash plain, they must be postglacial. Many probably formed in the first centuries after the ice, when slopes were unstable and sediment was abundant [6, p. 19].

The river channel

The river's channel is single-threaded, with straight and meandering reaches, and braided in its lowest 4 km [6, p. 19]. Its long profile, with bedrock steps near Allison Pool and Foley Creek, and the year-to-year changes of its lower channel are described with the river in [Chapter 7 \(p. 30\)](#).

Landslides

The Geological Survey of Canada's surficial geology map of the lower valley warns that "the mountain slopes are all subject to landslides" [54]. Landslides have shaped the valley since the ice left. Postglacial slides, especially below Slesse Creek, dammed the river more than once [7].

Recent decades have brought several kinds of failure. - **Storm-triggered slides.** In December 1975, waterlogged slopes failed throughout the valley [6, p. 18]. - **Clay slides.** Since the floods of 1989 and 1990, slides in glacial clay and silt have delivered sediment to the river every winter. The three chief problem slides are at Slesse Park, Upper Tolmie and Willow Run [14]. - **The 1997 Slesse Park slump.** On 27 January 1997 a large slump at the Slesse Park slide, on the north side of the river about 1 km east of Slesse Park, overtopped a berm built in 1991 and temporarily blocked the river [14].

Ts'elxwéyeqw oral history records that villages were buried by slides. One former village, Xéylés, lies under a slide on the north bank opposite the mouth of Liumchen Creek [2]. Another, below Centre Creek, was destroyed by a slide [2]. Two village sites and a burial area are reported to have been covered by landslides [7]. [Chapter 17 \(p. 71\)](#) tells these histories.

Above the valley floor rise the ranges from which the ice came down, where small glaciers survive and limestone hides caves.

Chapter 6

Mountains, glaciers and caves

The ranges that wall the valley, their highest summits, the remnant glaciers among them and the limestone caves beneath.

The ranges

The valley lies within the **Skagit Range**, the official name for this part of the northern Cascades in British Columbia [12]. Within it, local usage recognizes several groups of peaks.

- **The Cheam Range** walls the north side of the middle valley and separates it from the Fraser. It covers about 112 km² and its highest point is Welch Peak, 2,431 m (7,976 ft) [50]. Its western peaks (Cheam, Lady, Baby Munday and Stewart) are known as the "Four Sisters" where they are seen from the Fraser Valley. The eastern peaks are the "Lucky Four Group," named after the abandoned Lucky Four Mine. Foley, Welch and Stewart peaks commemorate the partners of Foley, Welch and Stewart, the contractors who built the Pacific Great Eastern Railway [50]. The official gazetteer now uses the name Cheam Ridge for the main ridge and records "Cheam Range" as rescinded [12].
- **The border peaks** stand along the 49th parallel south of the river. They include Canadian Border Peak (2,291 m), at the head of Tamihi Creek, and its higher neighbour American Border Peak (2,437 m) in Washington [55], as well as Slesse Mountain and the peaks around Chilliwack Lake.
- **The Slesse–Rexford group** rises between Slesse Creek and Chilliwack Lake. It includes Slesse Mountain, Crossover Peak, Mount Parkes, Mount Rexford with its subsidiary Nesakwatch Spires, the Illusion Peaks and Mount MacFarlane [12, 45].
- **The Chilliwack Lake peaks** include Mount Lindeman, the highest peak in Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park, together with Macdonald Peak and Mount Webb on the west shore and Paleface Mountain and Mount Meroniuk on the east [56, 12].
- **The north side above the middle valley** includes Williams Peak, the highest of what climbers have called the "South Hope Mountains," together with Mount Mercer, Mount Laughington, Mount Archibald, Goetz Peak and Mount Northgraves [46, 12].
- **The Vedder Crossing hills** at the lower end include Mount Thurston, Elk Mountain, Mount Tom and Lookout Ridge on the north, and the Liumchen and International Ridge highlands on the south [12].

Principal summits

Table 6.1. Principal summits of the Chilliwack River watershed and its rim

Summit	Elevation	Notes
Slesse Mountain (Selísi)	2,439 m (8,002 ft) or 2,429 m Sources disagree	prominence 862 m; west face drops more than 1,950 m to Slesse Creek [16, 45]
American Border Peak (Washington)	2,437 m (7,995 ft)	on the boundary south of Canadian Border Peak [55]
Welch Peak	2,431 m (7,976 ft)	highest of the Cheam Range; prominence 1,441 m [57, 50]
Mount Rexford	2,329 m (7,641 ft)	granodiorite; Nesakwatch Spires are subsidiary peaks [45]
Mount Lindeman	2,312 m (7,585 ft)	highest in Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park [56]
Foley Peak	2,293 m (7,523 ft)	Cheam Range [46]
Canadian Border Peak	2,291 m (7,516 ft)	at the head of Tamihi Creek [55]
Baby Munday Peak	2,250 m (7,382 ft)	trail high point [3]
Macdonald Peak	2,247 m (7,372 ft)	parent peak of Mount Webb [58]
Crossover Peak	2,175 m (7,136 ft)	2 km north-northwest of Slesse [59]
Mount Webb	2,164 m (7,100 ft)	rises 1,560 m above Chilliwack Lake in about 2 km [58]
Williams Peak	2,123 m (6,965 ft)	prominence 793 m [46]
Cheam Peak (Lhílheqey)	2,104 m or 2,112 m Sources disagree	northernmost of the Cheam Range [60, 3]
Mount MacFarlane	2,090 m (6,857 ft)	[47]
Mount McGuire (T'amiyahó:y)	2,008 m (6,588 ft)	historically called Tamihi Mountain [61, 2]

Elevations for many other named summits in the watershed have not yet been confirmed from a published source; they are listed by name in [Chapter 27 \(p. 98\)](#) and will be added in later editions.

The valley's relief is extreme. Mount Webb rises 1,560 m above Chilliwack Lake in about 2 km of horizontal distance [58]. The west face of Slesse Mountain drops more than 1,950 m to Slesse Creek [16]. Saunders notes that the summits of this part of the Cascades cluster in lines along high ridges at 2,100 to 2,500 m. Early geologists read this "summit accordance" as the remains of an uplifted plateau [6, pp. 7–8].

Glaciers

The glaciers of the Chilliwack watershed are small. Saunders described most of them as "small pockets of relatively inactive ice" [6, p. 17]. Four glaciers in the Cheam Range have official names: the Foley Glacier, on the northwest side of Foley Peak, a name proposed by Neal Carter of the BC Mountaineering Club and adopted in 1979 [62]; the Lucky Four Glacier, east of Foley Peak in the cirque between Welch and Foley peaks [63, 50]; the Stewart Glacier, below Stewart Peak [12]; and the Wahleach Glacier, at the northeast end of Cheam Ridge, which shares its name with Wahleach Lake and Wahleach Creek on the Fraser side of the divide [64, 65, 66]. The sources consulted do not establish which of these glaciers drain to the Chilliwack. In the far southeast of the watershed, the Depot and Redoubt glaciers are the only ones to have left fresh moraines from the Neoglacial advances of the last few thousand years [6, pp. 17, 127]. Pocket glaciers and cirque lakes are characteristic of the high country [7].

Caves

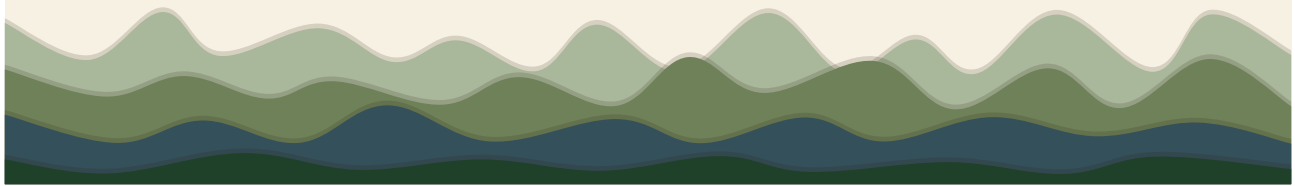
Limestone in the Chilliwack Group hosts several caves. Because caves are fragile and can be dangerous, they are described here for understanding, not as destinations. See [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#) for the rules that apply.

- **Chipmunk Caves.** This group of small limestone caves lies near the mouth of Chipmunk Creek. The official gazetteer places them on the south side of the river, opposite the creek mouth [48]. The name was adopted on 7 March 1975 as an established name, citing the first *BC Speleological Research Bulletin* of 1970 [48]. The caves consist of shallow cavities and narrow passages, reached from the Chipmunk Creek Forest Service Road [67].
- **Slesse Creek Cave.** This officially named cave lies near the mouth of Slesse Creek [12].
- **Iron Curtain Cave.** This limestone cave in the Cheam Range was discovered in 1993. It has a single gated entrance, fragile formations and restricted access [49]. Microbiologists have studied its bacteria, which live in darkness on very little food, for compounds relevant to antibiotic resistance [49, 68].

Part III

Water

The deposits of Part II are largely the work of water, and the river that laid them down is still at work. Part III follows the Chilliwack from its source at Hannegan Pass in Washington, through Chilliwack Lake and the valley, to the Fraser. It describes the tributaries and lakes that feed the river, the floods and channel changes that have reshaped the lowland, and the gravels that store Chilliwack's drinking water. It ends with two of the river's great human uses: its salmon and steelhead fisheries, and its whitewater.



Chapter 7

The river from source to sea

One river under several names, flowing from a pass in Washington through a lake, a mountain valley, a canal and the bed of a vanished lake to the Fraser River.

One river, several names

The river that drains the valley carries a different name on each part of its course. From its source at Hannegan Pass to Vedder Crossing it is the **Chilliwack River**. Below the bridge at Vedder Crossing it becomes the **Vedder River**. Its lowest 4.8 km (3 mi) were straightened into the **Vedder Canal**, which delivers the river to the **Sumas River** just above that river's mouth on the Fraser [29, 69, 70].

The official names have their own history. The name Chilliwack River was adopted on 31 March 1924. In 1951 it was extended upstream to include the channel above Chilliwack Lake, which earlier maps labelled Klabneh Creek and later Dolly Varden Creek. Control structures built in the 1930s cut off the old lower channel, which still runs north to the Fraser and was renamed Chilliwack Creek [36]. The name Vedder River was adopted on 6 October 1936. It honours the family of Volkert Vedder, who arrived in the Hope district around 1860; his son Adam Swart Vedder settled near Chilliwack in 1870 [69]. The straightened channel was named Vedder Channel in 1939 and renamed Vedder Canal in 1948 [70].

In Halq'eméylem the river and its people share one name, Ts'elxwéyeqw [2, 1]. The course now followed by the Vedder River, from Vedder Crossing to the old Sumas Lake, was called Lhewálmel. Galloway translates it as "wanting to run away"; Oliver Wells recorded its meaning as "river that changed its course" [2].

Table 7.1. The river from source to mouth, in downstream order

Point	Distance and elevation	Notes
Hannegan Pass, Washington	source	North Cascades National Park [29]
International boundary	—	the river enters Canada at the south end of Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve [71]
Chilliwack Lake	about 625 m (2,050 ft) at the outlet	about 39.5 km above Vedder Crossing [6]
Foley Creek confluence	about 360 m (1,180 ft)	about 25 km above Vedder Crossing [6]
Slesse Creek confluence	about 240 m (790 ft)	about 20 km; divides the upper and lower valley [6]
Tamihi Creek confluence	about 120 m (395 ft)	about 10 km [6]
Vedder Crossing	about 30 m (100 ft)	km 0 of the river profile; the river becomes the Vedder [6, 29]
Vedder Canal	4.8 km (3 mi) long	straightened 1920s channel across the former Sumas Lake bed [70, 72]
Mouth on the Sumas River	49°07'34"N, 122°05'53"W	just above the Sumas River's confluence with the Fraser [70, 29]

Elevations are read from Saunders's long profile and are accurate to about ± 10 m. The lake's elevation is also given as 621 m and 640 m; see [Chapter 1 \(p. 10\)](#).

The headwaters in Washington

The Chilliwack River rises at Hannegan Pass in North Cascades National Park and flows north. Near its headwaters it runs through Hells Gorge, a deep and hard-to-reach gorge where the river drops over a waterfall. Before it crosses the boundary it is joined by several tributaries, among them Bear Creek and the Little Chilliwack River [29].

A long trail follows the American headwaters. The Hannegan Pass Trail (#674) climbs about 8 km (5 mi) to the national park boundary, where the Chilliwack River Trail (#676) begins its descent along the river. About 8 km (5 mi) farther on, hikers cross the river in a hand-pulled cable car with a weight limit of 227 kg (500 lb). The route passes junctions with the Brush Creek Trail, which leads to Ross Lake, and the Copper Ridge Trail. Measured from the trailhead, the route is 27.8 km (17.3 mi) one way, with 721 m (2,365 ft) of climbing and a high

point of 1,353 m (4,440 ft). Dogs are not allowed, and overnight camping requires a backcountry permit [Confirm](#) [73]. The international boundary has no crossing point in this valley; [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#) sets out the rules.

Chilliwack Lake

After crossing the boundary, the river runs for about 2 km through a forested floodplain, between latitudes 49°00' and 49°01' N, before it enters the south end of Chilliwack Lake. This is the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, set aside in 1980 to protect productive floodplain forest for research [5, p. 2, 71]. A large sandy beach lies where the river enters the lake. People have used it for recreation, but access is now restricted [29]. [Chapter 12 \(p. 52\)](#) describes the reserve's record trees.

Besides the river, the lake is fed by Paleface Creek and Depot Creek, which flows north from the boundary [74]. Galloway records the Halq'eméylem name of Depot Creek as possibly Chechíxem, from Oliver Wells's 1966 map [2]. Unlike the east–west valley below it, the lake lies north–south and receives direct sun throughout the year [7].

The lake is held in by a large, flat-topped recessional moraine that the retreating glacier left at its north end. Post Creek and the river have cut terraces into it [6, pp. 15–17, 7]. [Chapter 5 \(p. 24\)](#) describes this "Chilliwack Lake Barrier." The lake's level fluctuates through the year, and the boat launch can become unusable at very high or very low water [74]. BC Parks warns that strong afternoon winds are frequent on the lake and that dangerous currents occur at its outflow [28].

The lake's name. The Halq'eméylem name is Sxóchaqel. Galloway's dictionary, drawing on the Elder Bob Joe and the Elders Group, translates it literally as "lake at the head (of the river)" [2]. When the province renamed the park Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park in 2021 [20], the name was widely glossed as "sacred lake" [75, 3]. [Sources disagree](#) The two translations may reflect different emphases rather than a contradiction, but no published linguistic source for "sacred lake" was found.

Hanging Lake. A small cirque lake about 0.8 km long and 0.56 km wide straddles the boundary at 1,379 m (4,524 ft) southwest of Chilliwack Lake. Most of it lies in North Cascades National Park; its northern end and its outlet lie in the provincial park [76]. BC Parks advises against the route: the trail is not maintained and there is no safe crossing of the Chilliwack River [75, 28].

The upper valley: lake to Slesse Creek

The river leaves Chilliwack Lake at its north end and turns west [29]. For about 20 km it runs through the upper valley, cut as much as 130 m (430 ft) into the late-glacial outwash plain described in [Chapter 5 \(p. 24\)](#) [6]. Foley and Chipmunk creeks enter from the north, and Centre and Nesakwatch creeks from the south, where their fans push the river aside [6, pp. 18–19].

The river's long profile from the lake to Vedder Crossing is not a smooth curve. It consists of three concave sections, each about 14 km long, separated by steps where the river crosses resistant bedrock [6, pp. 18–19]. The upper step lies between about 22 and 25 km above Vedder Crossing, near Foley Creek. The lower one lies at about 13–14 km, below Slesse Creek (Figure 7.1). The steep reach between the second Chilliwack River bridge and Slesse Creek is the "Canyon" of kayakers ([Chapter 11, p. 49](#)).

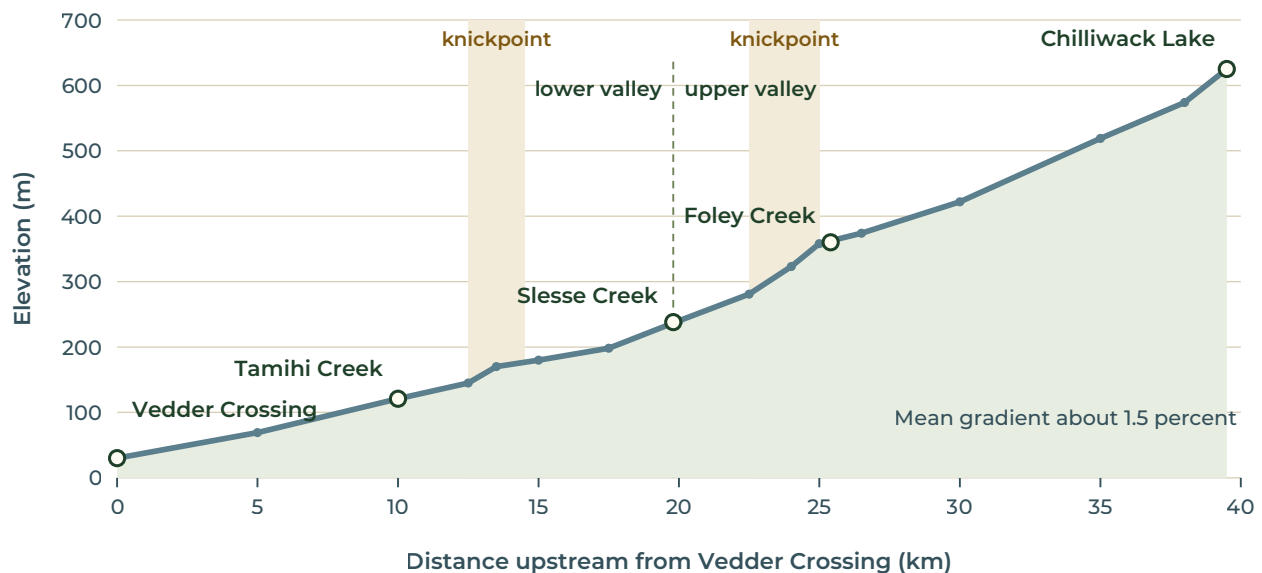


Figure 7.1. Long profile of the Chilliwack River from Vedder Crossing to Chilliwack Lake. Elevations read from Saunders's profile (± 10 m) [6, Fig. 2.3]. Shaded bands mark the two bedrock knickpoints. Slesse Creek divides the lower and upper valley.

The lower valley: Slesse Creek to Vedder Crossing

Below Slesse Creek the river enters the lower valley, cut into the deposits of the late-glacial lake and the lowland ice. Tamihi and Liumchen creeks join from the south through bedrock gorges, and Ryder Creek drains the upland to the north [6, p. 19, 12]. Upstream of Allison Pool the channel is reasonably stable. Downstream of that point it changes from year to year through meander cut-offs, bank failures and shifting gravel bars, and its lowest 4 km are braided [6, p. 19]. Schaepe gives the river's average width in the valley as about 50 m [7].

At Vedder Crossing the river leaves the mountains. Here it receives the Sweltzer River, which drains Cultus Lake, and passes under the Vedder Crossing bridge to become the Vedder River [29]. The Halq'eméylem name of the Sweltzer, Swílhcha Stótelô, means "Cultus Lake creek"; "Sweltzer" is an early English attempt to spell Swílhcha [2]. Vedder Crossing was one of the most important places on the river for the Ts'elxwéyeqw people, with villages at the confluence and a lookout on Promontory above it [2, 35]. [Chapter 17 \(p. 71\)](#) describes them.

The Vedder River and Canal

From Vedder Crossing the Vedder River flows west through a natural channel. Near Yarrow it turns northwest into the straightened Vedder Canal, which carries it to the Sumas River [69, 70]. Below the bridge it separates the former communities of Yarrow, to the south, and Greendale, to the north, both now part of Chilliwack [29].

The canal was built in the early 1920s as part of the Sumas Lake reclamation scheme. Excavation began in September 1920. In September and October 1921 a single large suction dredge moved about 300,000 m³ (400,000 cubic yards) of earth a month. The river was diverted into the new channel in a single operation at the bend in Yarrow: crews dug a trench from the canal toward the river, partly blocked the old channel with sheet piling, let the flow erode the trench open, and then closed the old channel completely [72]. The canal has high dykes on both sides and drains to the Sumas River by gravity. The neighbouring Sumas Canal, which drains the old lake bed, lies below the level of the Fraser and must be pumped [72]. In 1954 the Vedder Canal was the rowing course of the British Empire and Commonwealth Games [29].

The river's old courses, its floods, the draining of Sumas Lake and the work that keeps the canal open are described in [Chapter 9 \(p. 40\)](#).

Flow

The river's flow has been measured at Vedder Crossing since 1911. Daily records cover 1911–1931 and 1951 to the present, and instantaneous peak flows have been recorded since 1969 [77]. Two other gauges are listed for the watershed, one on the river above Slesse Creek and one on Slesse Creek [9, 78].

Table 7.2. Water Survey of Canada gauges in the watershed

Station	Name	Notes
08MH001	Chilliwack River at (near) Vedder Crossing	drainage area 1,230 km ² ; daily flows 1911–1931 and 1951 to present [77]
08MH103	Chilliwack River above Slesse Creek	used in the City of Chilliwack's flood response [9]
08MH056	Slesse Creek near Vedder Crossing	listed by Chilliwack Search and Rescue's trip planner [78]

Real-time data are published by the Water Survey of Canada. Its web pages could not be read for this edition, so long-term statistics are taken from secondary sources.

Wikipedia gives the system's mean discharge as about 77 m³/s, with extremes of about 15 and 1,150 m³/s, but does not name the station or the period [15]. These figures could not be checked against the Water Survey record for this edition. As [Chapter 2 \(p. 14\)](#) explains, the regime combines a snowmelt peak in May and June with short, sharp rain floods from October to February. The City of Chilliwack notes that the largest floods on the Vedder come in autumn and winter, typically last only one or two days, and rise quickly with little warning [9].

The main river is only the trunk of the system. Its behaviour depends on the creeks and lakes that feed it, described next.

Chapter 8

Tributaries and lakes

Eight major creeks, many smaller ones, a string of mountain lakes, and names that record who travelled, surveyed and mapped the valley.

The pattern of the drainage

The Chilliwack River is fed by eight major tributaries [7]. Their layout follows the structure of the bedrock, giving a roughly rectangular drainage pattern [6, pp. 7–8]. The south side of the valley has more drainages, and they are more evenly spaced, than the north side [7].

Most tributaries do not join the river at its own level. Only Slesse and Foley creeks are graded to it; the others enter from hanging valleys, through bedrock gorges or across alluvial fans ([Chapter 5, p. 24](#)) [6, p. 19].

The watershed is international on its south side as well as at its head. Liumchen, Tamihi, Slesse and Nesakwatch creeks all rise in Washington and flow north across the boundary, and Depot Creek crosses it to enter Chilliwack Lake [79, 80, 81, 82, 83]. Apart from Chilliwack Lake, standing water is scarce, confined mainly to a few high tarns, so lakes do little to moderate floods [6, p. 21].

The principal tributaries

Table 8.1. Principal tributaries of the Chilliwack River, upstream from Vedder Crossing

Tributary	Joins from	Halq'eméylem name	Notes
Sweltzer River	south, at Vedder Crossing	Swílhcha Stótelô [2]	Drains Cultus Lake; named in 1936 to recall "Schweltza Lake," the 1862 name for Cultus Lake [84]

Tributary	Joins from	Halq'eméylem name	Notes
Liumchen Creek	south	Loyú:mthel [2]	Rises in Washington; bedrock gorge and falls; Liumchen Ecological Reserve in its upper basin [79, 6, p. 19, 85]
Ryder Creek	north	T'ept'ô:p Stótelô, "Ryder Lake creek" [2]	Drains the Ryder Lake upland [12]
Tamihi Creek	south	T'ami(ye)hóy Stótelô [2]	Rises in Washington as Tomyhoi Creek; bedrock gorge; falls about 200 m above its mouth [80, 6, p. 19, 26]
Borden Creek	south	—	Named in 1955; local name Silvery Creek [86]
Slesse Creek	south	Selísi (Stótelô) [2]	Rises in Washington as Silesia Creek; graded to the river; hatchery beside its lower reach [87, 81, 6, p. 19, 33]
Pierce Creek	south	—	Joins east of Slesse Creek [88]
Chipmunk Creek	north	—	Bedrock gorge; limestone caves near its mouth; named in 1946 [89, 6, p. 19]
Foley Creek	north	"Oot seet sa" (BC name card, c. 1980); Ets'its'a in Wells's spelling [90, 2]	Graded to the river; Foley Lake lies in its valley; tributaries include Airplane Creek [6, p. 19, 12, 91]
Nesakwatch Creek	south	Lóyeqw'e'áts, "Middle Creek" (probable) [2]	Rises in Washington; about 11 km (7 mi) long in BC and 3 km (2 mi) in Washington; built a fan [82, 6, p. 19]
Centre Creek	south	Sch'iyáq or Stehiyáq, "place of the fish trap" [2]	Built a fan; name proposed by the Geological Survey in 1936; the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations' Stehiyaq property lies here [92, 1]
Post Creek	north	possibly Kwókwelem [2]	Drains Lindeman and Greendrop lakes; joins the river just below Chilliwack Lake [93, 94]
Paleface Creek	east, into Chilliwack Lake	—	Named in 1939 after Paleface Mountain [95]
Depot Creek	south, into Chilliwack Lake	possibly Chechíxem [2]	Rises in Washington below Mount Redoubt; also called Brown Creek and Kokanee Creek [83, 6, p. 17]

"Joins from" is the side of the valley. Facing downstream (west), south-side tributaries enter on the left bank. Halq'eméylem names follow Galloway; question marks in his entries are carried over as "possibly" or "probable."

Sweltzer River. The Sweltzer carries the outflow of Cultus Lake northeast to the Chilliwack River at Vedder Crossing. The name is an early English spelling of Swílhcha, the Halq'eméylem name of Cultus Lake [2]. The Royal Engineers' map of 1862 called the lake "Schweltza Lake." The province adopted Sweltzer River in 1936; in 1873 the surveyor J. Fannin had called the stream "Choowallah River," and the Soowahlie reserve (Th'ewá:lí) straddles it

[84]. Hatchery Creek (Stótelô), a tributary of the Sweltzer, carries one of the few place names that, according to Galloway, survive from Ch'éléxwoqwem, the older language of the valley, which was close to Nooksack ([Chapter 16, p. 66](#)) [2].

Liumchen Creek. Liumchen Creek enters from the south about 4 km (2.5 mi) above Vedder Crossing. Its Halq'eméylem name, Loyú:mthel, also named a village on both sides of its mouth and the mountain at its head. The Elder Bob Joe told Oliver Wells that it means "water swirling out in gushes," and another speaker described a place on the river where water comes out of the rock as a spring [2]. The name took decades to settle on maps: the 1913 boundary sheets wrote Layomesin and Lihumpton, the province adopted Lihumitson in 1936, and the local spelling Liumchen became official only in 1955. An 1895 map even labelled this creek "Sweltzer River" [79]. The upper basin is protected in the 2,300 ha Liumchen Ecological Reserve, which lies on limestone and borders Cultus Lake Park on the west and the Mount Baker National Forest on the south [85].

Tamihi Creek. Tamihi Creek rises in Washington, where it is called Tomyhoi Creek, flows northwest across the boundary and turns north to join the river west of Slesse Park. The boundary survey wrote the name "Tummeahai," and the province adopted "Tamihi Creek (not Tamihy nor Tammeahai)" in 1913 [80]. Its meaning is disputed ([Sources disagree](#)). The provincial record gives the Stó:lō Nation's spelling T'amiyehó:y and the meaning "hollering the ones that are finished" [80]. Galloway's dictionary analyses the related name of Mount McGuire, T'amiyahó:y, as probably built from roots meaning "hermaphrodite" and "finish, end" [2]. Near its mouth the creek drops over falls; fishing is prohibited below them [26].

Slesse Creek. Slesse Creek begins in Washington as Silesia Creek, formed by the East and Middle forks below Egg Lake, and takes its Canadian name at the boundary [87]. The boundary survey of 1860 recorded it as "Selacee Creek," and a Royal Engineers map of 1862 spelled it Slesse. In 1951 the Geographic Board briefly changed it to Silesia Creek to match the American spelling, then restored Slesse that July [81]. The name is borrowed from the mountain, Selísi, "fang" [81, 2]. Slesse Creek is one of only two tributaries graded to the river, and its mouth is the boundary between the lower and upper valley [6]. The Chilliwack River Hatchery stands beside the creek, just past the Slesse Creek bridge on Chilliwack Lake Road [33].

Foley Creek and Airplane Creek. Foley Creek flows southwest to the river through a valley that holds Foley Lake [90, 12]. The Geological Survey suggested the name in 1936 after nearby Mount Foley; a provincial name card of about 1980 records the traditional name "Oot seet sa" [90]. That matches the form uht-ZEET-zah written by Oliver Wells on his 1966 map, which Galloway transcribes as Ets'íts'a [2]. Saunders concluded that the boulders littering the downstream end of the upper-valley outwash plain came mostly from the Mount Barr batholith at the head of Foley Creek, not from the Chilliwack Lake area as earlier workers had assumed [6]. Its tributary Airplane Creek was named in August 1943 by a party sent to the wreck of a Canadian Pacific Air Lines airliner lost in December 1942 [91, 96]. [Chapter 21 \(p. 84\)](#) tells that story.

Nesakwatch Creek. The 1913 boundary sheets call this stream "Middle or En-saw-kwatch Creek." The provincial record, citing Akrigg and Akrigg, says the name comes from a Halkomelem word for a reed that grew thickly along its banks and was used to make fishnets [82]. Galloway's Lóyeqw'e'áts, "Middle Creek," a creek entering from the south above Slesse, probably refers to the same stream [2].

Centre Creek. Centre Creek flows north to the river just west of Chilliwack Lake. Its name was proposed by the Geological Survey of Canada in 1936 and adopted in 1948 [92]. Oliver Wells wrote its Halq'eméylem name as s'tehee-AHK; Galloway, citing the *Stó:lō–Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, gives Stehiyáq or Sch'iyáq, "place of the fish trap" [2]. The Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations' property at Centre Creek bears the name Stehiyaq [1].

Depot Creek. Depot Creek flows northwest from Washington into the south end of Chilliwack Lake. Its name probably comes from a supply depot of the commission that surveyed the boundary between 1858 and 1861. It was also called Brown Creek after Michael Brown, a soldier of Company F, 9th Infantry, United States Army, who escorted the boundary commission, drowned in Chilliwack Lake on 10 October 1858 and was buried beside the creek [83]. Fisheries staff reported in about 1982 that it was known locally as Brown Creek and Kokanee Creek [83]. Its headwaters hold the Depot Glacier, one of only two places in the watershed with moraines from the Neoglacial advances of the last few thousand years [6, p. 17].

Lakes

Table 8.2. Lakes of the Chilliwack watershed and its edges

Lake	Elevation	Size and depth	Notes
Chilliwack Lake (Sxóchaqel)	621 m (2,037 ft) [17]	—	Name adopted 1917, replacing "Chilukweyuk" [97]; see Chapter 7 (p. 30)
Cultus Lake (Swílhcha)	—	6.3 km ² ; mean depth 32 m, maximum 41 m; basin 65 km ² [98]	Drains to the Chilliwack by the Sweltzer River; home of the endangered Cultus sockeye (Chapter 10 , p. 44)
Lindeman Lake (Tl'ikw'ólem)	838 m (2,749 ft) [99]	mean depth 8 m, maximum 20 m [99]	On Post Creek; named for Charles Lindeman, trapper and prospector; possibly once "Silver Lake" [94]
Greendrop Lake	1,021 m (3,350 ft) [100]	mean depth 18 m, maximum 48 m [100]	Above Lindeman Lake in the Post Creek valley [28]
Hanging Lake	1,379 m (4,524 ft) [76]	0.80 km × 0.56 km [76]	Cirque lake on the international boundary
Liumchen Lake (Loyúmthel Xótsa)	—	—	In the Liumchen basin; trail about 5 km [2, 101]

Lake	Elevation	Size and depth	Notes
Ryder Lake (T'ept'ô:p Xótsa)	—	—	On the upland north of the river; name adopted 1950 [2, 102]
Foley Lake	—	—	In the Foley Creek basin; Galloway records Lasisélhp? for the lake and creek [2, 12]
Pierce, Radium and Flora lakes	trail high points 1,375 m, 1,460 m and 1,770 m	—	Reached by trails in and near the provincial park [3]

A dash means that no figure was found in the sources consulted. Wikipedia's figures for Lindeman, Greendrop and Hanging lakes cite no survey. Elevations given for Pierce, Radium and Flora are trail high points, not lake levels.

Several of the high lakes were stocked with rainbow trout about 1980: Lindeman, Flora, Greendrop and Hanging lakes [5, p. 14].

The lakes of Lhílheqey (Mount Cheam). Two small lakes on the south side of Mount Cheam carry Halq'eméylem names. Sqwá:p, "hole in the dirt," is the lake at the foot of Cheam Peak, seen from the blueberry meadows of the long ridge below the final climb. Xwoqwsemó:leqw, said to mean "washing one's head," is a basin lake near the top; Galloway, who climbed the mountain about 1982, described it as 9–12 m (30–40 ft) across and about 300 m (1,000 ft) below the meadows [2]. Galloway notes that the related name of the mountain may come from *lhélqi*, to soak dried fish, meat or berries, since such food could be soaked in the lake near the top, though he gives "glacier" as the literal meaning recorded from an Elder [2].

Layers of names

The names on the modern map record the valley's history in layers. The oldest are Halq'eméylem names, many recorded from Elders in the 1960s and 1970s by Oliver Wells and the linguist Brent Galloway; a few, such as Stótelô for Hatchery Creek, preserve the older Ch'éléxwoqwem language of the valley [2]. The British and American boundary surveys of 1857–1862 wrote some of these names down in their own spellings (Selacee, Tummeahai) and added their own, such as Depot Creek [81, 80, 83]. The boundary resurvey of 1913 and the Geological Survey's mapping of the 1930s fixed many names, including Foley and Centre creeks [82, 90, 92]. Mountaineers of the Alpine Club of Canada named peaks and creeks in the 1940s [89, 103]. In the 1950s, provincial mapping for water licences added names that honour British Columbians killed in the Second World War, such as Borden Creek, named for Private Russell Hamilton Mewburn Borden of Langley Prairie, killed at the Falaise Gap on 11 August 1944 [86]. [Chapter 33 \(p. 113\)](#) and [Chapter 34 \(p. 116\)](#) list the names in full.

The tributaries deliver water and sediment in pulses. Where the river leaves the mountains, those pulses have built a fan, moved the channel and flooded the lowland.

Chapter 9

Floods, wandering channels and groundwater

How the river built a fan across the lowland, changed course, filled and lost a lake, and still threatens the land it feeds, and how its gravels store the water that a city drinks.

A river that moves

Where the Chilliwack River leaves the mountains at Vedder Crossing, it slows, drops its load and spreads out. Over thousands of years it built a broad alluvial fan across the Fraser Lowland. The Geological Survey's map shows floodplain gravel and sand of the Chilliwack River fan, up to 15 m (50 ft) thick, extending into the Sumas Valley [54]. The same map warns that "the Fraser, Chilliwack, and Sumas valleys are all subject to flooding" and that the mountain slopes are prone to landslides [54].

Across its fan the river had more than one outlet. Historically it flowed north to the Fraser through a web of channels and sloughs [29]. Galloway suggests that the Halq'eméylem name Ts'elxwéyeqw itself may refer to the many named sloughs at the river's former mouth on the Fraser [2]. Names of the old channels survive on the lowland: Luckakuck Creek (Lexexég), Atchelitz Creek, and Semmihault Creek (Smiyó:lh), described by Elders as a stream joining "the old Chilliwack River near the Chilliwack airport" [2, 12]. The course to the west, toward Sumas Lake, was Lhewálmel, "wanting to run away" or, in Oliver Wells's gloss, "river that changed its course" [2].

In the late nineteenth century the river shifted west for good.

- **1875.** A log jam diverted the river into two small streams, Vedder Creek and Luckakuck Creek, to the cost of local farmers [29].
- **1882.** A deliberate log jam turned several channels west toward Sumas Lake [29]. A local history records that the diversion was contested between Sumas ranchers, who sent a work crew to redirect the river, and farmers at Sardis, and that a police constable became involved [72].
- **1894.** The great freshet of that year made the westward course permanent and added to the severe flood on the Fraser [29].
- **1920s and 1930s.** The river was dyked, channelized and diverted into the Vedder Canal. Control structures separated the old northern channel, which still flows to the Fraser and was renamed Chilliwack Creek [29, 36].

Sumas Lake

West of the fan lay Sumas Lake, Semá:th in Halq'eméylem; in the Nooksack language it was Semáts Xácho7, "Level Place Lake" [41]. Its size changed with the seasons. At low water it covered about 4,000 ha (9,900 acres) [41]. Each spring, when the Fraser rose 3–4 m (10–12 ft) and backed up into the lowland drainage, the lake spread over 4,000–12,000 ha (10,000–30,000 acres) of the surrounding land [72].

The lake and its wetlands supported sturgeon, trout, salmon, grizzly bears and geese, and were a destination for migrating birds and a breeding ground for fish and waterfowl. They supplied food to the Sumas (Semá:th) people, whose way of life was closely tied to the lake [41].

Settlers saw the lake as a problem. It flooded farmland, cut the road to Chilliwack for weeks each spring, and bred mosquitoes [72]. A 1917 petition asked the province to drain it, and the plan of Fred Sinclair, an engineer, was adopted [72, 41]. Tenders were called in March 1920. Between 1920 and 1924 the Vedder Canal was dug to carry the Chilliwack River past the lake to the Sumas River, dykes were raised, and pumps were installed to drain the lake bed through the Sumas Canal; by 1924 the Chilliwack River had been turned into the new canal [41, 72]. The project overran its costs. The reclaimed land proved less fertile than promised, and much of it was sold to settlers in the 1930s for \$60–120 an acre [41]. The original Sumas pump station was built in 1920, operated from 1923 to 1984, and was replaced by a new station in 1985; the Barrowtown Pump Station controls the level of the Sumas River [72].

For the Sumas First Nation, losing the lake meant losing a source of food and a way of life. As of 2013 the former lake bed was the subject of a specific claim by the Sumas First Nation [41].

Sumas Lake has not entirely gone. In November 2021, overflow from the Nooksack River in Washington and high water on the Fraser refilled the old lake bed, forcing the evacuation of about 1,100 homes, with farms and farm workers, in Abbotsford [41].

Floods

The Chilliwack River has two flood seasons. Snowmelt raises it in May and June, but its largest floods come in autumn and winter, when Pacific storms bring heavy rain, often onto snow. Those floods are short, generally lasting one or two days. The water rises quickly, and warning time is limited because heavy rainfall is hard to forecast [9, 6, p. 21].

Table 9.1. Floods and flood-related events affecting the Chilliwack–Vedder system

Year	Event
1875, 1882	Log jams divert the river westward [29]
1894	Great freshet; the westward course becomes permanent [29]
1894, 1948, 1972	Major spring freshets flood the Sumas area [41]

Year	Event
December 1975	Waterlogged slopes fail throughout the valley in slides and mudflows; flood-control works on the Vedder follow a major flood [6, p. 18, 8]
1989, 1990	Floods trigger clay slides that deliver silt to the river every winter since [14]
November 1990	A Nooksack River flood reaches Sumas Prairie and closes Highway 1 for 26 hours [41]
27 January 1997	A large slump at the Slesse Park clay slide overtops its berm and temporarily blocks the river [14]
May 2007	High water on the Vedder Canal; dyke patrols and moves to higher ground on the floodplain [72]
November 2021	Atmospheric rivers; Sumas Lake refills; about 1,100 homes evacuated in Abbotsford [41]
1 December 2021	Evacuation order for properties on Chilliwack Lake Road because of high flows and bank erosion [42]
December 2025	Evacuation order for eight properties on Wilson Road; properties on Chilliwack Lake Road on alert [43]

Living with the river: dykes and gravel

Below Vedder Crossing the river is confined between dykes. The City of Chilliwack maintains a flood response plan for the Vedder River that it reviews every year. The plan escalates in stages as the river rises; in the later stages, water stands within 2 m and then 1 m of the dyke crest. Two drainage pump stations stand on the Vedder dyke [9].

Gravel is the river's other burden. Sediment from the Chilliwack basin settles in the lower channel at an average of about 50,000 m³ a year, raising the bed and reducing its capacity to carry floods [8]. After a major flood in December 1975, the province built flood-control works on the Vedder River, and a 1983 management plan set the goal of keeping a floodway able to carry the flow expected once in 200 years. Since 1990 the Vedder River Management Area Committee has planned sediment removals, annually until 1997 and every second year since 1998. The committee includes the cities of Chilliwack and Abbotsford, the provincial resource ministry and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the work is funded jointly by the two cities and the province [8]. Removals are scheduled in even-numbered years to avoid the odd-year runs of spawning pink salmon. More than 70 channel cross-sections are surveyed every second winter to feed a hydraulic model, and a registered biologist monitors each removal and assesses the river a year later [8].

Upstream, in the regional district's Electoral Area E, dykes protect parts of the valley floor. In 2026 the district scheduled repairs to the Wilson Road Dike between 17 August and 25 September and considered options for the Osborne Dike [22]. Clay slides on the valley sides, such as the Slesse Park slide, add fine sediment to the river; their history and the work to stabilize them are described in [Chapter 5 \(p. 24\)](#).

Groundwater

Beneath the valley floor and the lowland lie layers of gravel and sand that hold large volumes of water. Provincial mapping identifies five aquifers in and next to the lower valley [51]:

- the **Chilliwack River Subtill Aquifer** (no. 1206), a confined aquifer in sand and gravel laid down by streams in front of the advancing ice early in the Fraser Glaciation, buried beneath up to 60 m (200 ft) of till; it extends at least 18 km upstream of Vedder Crossing;
- the **Upper Chilliwack River Aquifer** (no. 10) on Larsons Bench at the Slesse Creek confluence, which may connect with the subtill aquifer;
- the **Chilliwack River Shallow Aquifer** (no. 9) in the floodplain gravels;
- the **Sardis–Vedder Aquifer** (no. 8) on the lowland north of the Vedder River;
- the **Mount Tom Bedrock Aquifer** (no. 890).

On the valley floor the water table lies 5–10 m below the surface. On the Ryder Upland it is more than 200 m (660 ft) down [51].

The Sardis–Vedder Aquifer is the main source of Chilliwack's drinking water. The city draws from ten production wells, eight in the Sardis–Vedder Aquifer and two in the Marble Hill Aquifer [104]. The aquifer lies immediately north of the Vedder River and extends north to Highway 1. Its water table is only 5–10 m below the surface, and water is pumped from 30–40 m. It is fed mainly by the Vedder River, as well as by rain and snowmelt soaking into the ground [105]. The source water meets drinking-water guidelines without treatment; chlorine is added at the wells to keep a residual of at least 0.2 mg/L at the tap [104]. Because the soils above it are coarse and rainfall is high, the aquifer is particularly vulnerable to contamination, and the city restricts risky activities above it through its zoning bylaw [105, 104]. The river that floods the lowland is, in this sense, also the source of the water its people drink.

The gravels that the river moves are also the spawning beds of its fish, which is why even the timing of gravel removal on the Vedder follows the salmon.

Chapter 10

Salmon, trout and the fisheries

Five species of Pacific salmon, steelhead, trout and char; an endangered lake population next door; a federal hatchery; and what a provincial survey called the most popular steelhead fishery in British Columbia.

The fish of the Chilliwack system

All five species of Pacific salmon return to Chilliwack streams: chinook, coho, chum, pink and sockeye [106]. The Chilliwack–Vedder River is known for its autumn salmon runs and its winter and spring steelhead [78, 29]. Resident and sea-run trout and char share the river and its lakes. BC Parks records more than eleven fish species in Chilliwack Lake Park and the ecological reserve. Chilliwack Lake itself holds suckers, mountain whitefish, steelhead, rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and kokanee, the landlocked form of sockeye, as well as all five salmon species; bull trout are also reported in the lake [5, p. 14].

Table 10.1. Salmon and trout of the Chilliwack–Vedder system

Species	In the system	Notes
Chinook (spring, <i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>)	spring, summer and fall runs	fall run of Harrison River origin, introduced in the early 1980s and sustained mainly by the hatchery [107]
Coho (<i>O. kisutch</i>)	adults October–December; juveniles all year	hatchery-marked fish may be retained in season [33, 27]
Chum (<i>O. keta</i>)	autumn	recorded spawning as far up as Paleface Creek at Chilliwack Lake [5, p. 14]; closed to retention [27]
Pink (<i>O. gorbuscha</i>)	odd-numbered years	recorded at the lake outlet [5, p. 14]; gravel removal on the Vedder is timed to avoid their spawning years [8]
Sockeye (<i>O. nerka</i>)	Chilliwack Lake early-summer run	spawn at the mouths of the lake's tributaries [5, p. 14, 108]
Kokanee (<i>O. nerka</i> , non-migratory)	Chilliwack Lake	spawn in Paleface, Depot and Hanging Lake creeks and the upper river [5, p. 14]
Steelhead (<i>O. mykiss</i> , sea-run)	December to June	hatchery-augmented since 1980; wild fish must be released [109, 26]
Rainbow trout (<i>O. mykiss</i>)	river and lakes	high lakes stocked about 1980 [5, p. 14]
Coastal cutthroat trout (<i>O. clarkii clarkii</i>)	river and side channels	hatchery and wild fish [110, 26]

Species	In the system	Notes
Dolly Varden and bull trout (<i>Salvelinus</i>)	lake and river	bull trout "now reported" in the lake in 2000 [5, p. 14]
Mountain whitefish, suckers	Chilliwack Lake	[5, p. 14]

Timing of adults and juveniles at the hatchery follows its viewing calendar [33]. Scientific names are standard and are given for identification.

Chinook: three runs

The Chilliwack watershed holds two or possibly three distinct groups of chinook [107]:

- a **spring run** that spawns between Slesse Creek and the outlet of Chilliwack Lake, thought to be a mix of indigenous fish and mid-Fraser stocks transplanted between 1985 and 1988;
- a **summer run** that spawns mainly in the upper part of the lower river, bolstered between 1981 and 1985 with white-fleshed chinook from the upper Pitt River;
- a much larger **fall run**, descended from Harrison River chinook transplanted to the Chilliwack in the early 1980s, which spawns below the Slesse Creek confluence and is sustained mainly by continuing hatchery production.

The spring and summer runs are much smaller than the fall run, which has been estimated by counting carcasses since 1985; the Chilliwack serves as the indicator stock for fall chinook on the Fraser [107]. Its scale shows in the sport fishery: between 15 September and 15 November 2006, anglers on the Chilliwack kept 8,233 adult chinook and released 28,469 [107].

Sockeye: one healthy run, one endangered

Two sockeye populations live in the Chilliwack–Vedder system, and their fortunes have diverged.

Chilliwack Lake sockeye return in early summer and rear in Chilliwack Lake. In 2017 the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed this population as Not at Risk. It counted about 36,000 mature fish, an increase of about 64 percent over three generations, although counts only began in 2001 [108].

Cultus Lake sockeye return late, in September to December, and spawn only along the lake shore, recently mainly at Lindell Beach [98]. Before the late 1960s about 20,000 adults returned in an average year; by the early 2000s the average had fallen to about 4,800, and in 2017 COSEWIC counted about 1,500 mature fish. COSEWIC first designated the population Endangered in an emergency assessment in October 2002 and confirmed that status in 2003 and 2017. It is not listed under the federal Species at Risk Act [98, 108]. COSEWIC attributes the collapse primarily to overfishing, including high bycatch in fisheries for other salmon.

Further losses come from parasites that kill adults before they spawn, and from the degradation of one of the most heavily used lakes in the province by septic seepage, agricultural runoff, fertilizers and the invasive Eurasian water-milfoil [98, 108]. Although the two populations share a river, they are genetically distinct and do not interbreed because they spawn at different times [98].

Cultus Lake also holds a fish found nowhere else: the Cultus population of the coastrange sculpin, sometimes called the Cultus pygmy sculpin. It grows to only about 5–6 cm, lives in open water at 10–40 m, and rises to the surface at night to feed on plankton, a case of rapid evolution since the ice age. It has been listed as Threatened under the Species at Risk Act since 2003, and COSEWIC reassessed it as Endangered in 2019. Smallmouth bass, first caught in the lake in May 2018, declining oxygen in deep water and a warming climate are the main threats [111]. [Chapter 14 \(p. 59\)](#) lists the species at risk of the valley and its edges.

Steelhead

The Chilliwack–Vedder has the largest winter steelhead population in the Lower Mainland and what a provincial survey called "the most popular recreational steelhead fishery in British Columbia." Steelhead return between December and June [109, pp. 1, 3]. Anglers reported an average of about 48,000 angler-days a year on the river in the decade to 1999, a figure the survey notes is inflated by over-reporting of 35–40 percent [109, p. 1]. Two decades earlier, the provincial park plan of 1980 recorded more than 36,000 angler-days in a single year on steelhead alone [112].

Since 1980 the province has managed the system as an "augmented" run: hatchery smolts are released in the lower river to provide fish for harvest, and the returning hatchery fish are not intended to add to natural production [109, pp. 1, 3]. Radio-tracking in 2000 showed that some hatchery steelhead nevertheless spawn upstream of Slesse Creek [109, p. 3]. Wild steelhead, recognized by an intact adipose fin, have been catch-and-release since the 1979–80 season and must be kept in the water when released [109, p. 26, 113]. The fishable water runs more than 30 km, from 100 m below the Slesse Creek confluence to the Fraser [113].

The Chilliwack River Hatchery

Fisheries and Oceans Canada built the Chilliwack River Hatchery in 1981 to help restore salmon populations reduced by impacts in the watershed. It maintains salmon populations for commercial, recreational and First Nations fisheries and supports stock assessment, coded-wire tagging, habitat restoration and research; its viewing calendar features chinook, coho and steelhead [33]. The fall chinook run is sustained mainly by its production [107]. The hatchery stands beside Slesse Creek, just past the Slesse Creek bridge about 20 km up

Chilliwack Lake Road. Visitors may walk a self-guided, wheelchair-accessible loop of about 30 minutes, daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) or to 3:30 p.m. (Tourism Chilliwack) [Confirm](#) [33, 3].

Table 10.2. When to see salmon at the Chilliwack River Hatchery

Species and stage	Months
Chinook adults	August–November
Coho adults	October–December
Steelhead adults	March–April
Chinook juveniles	February–April
Coho juveniles	all year

From the hatchery's viewing calendar [33].

Many hatchery fish, steelhead among them, have their adipose fin clipped so that anglers can tell them from wild fish [106, 113]. Downstream, on the lowland, the Sq'ewqéyl (Skowkale) hatchery, run by volunteers, raises up to 20,000 chum salmon a year for release into Chilliwack Creek, the river's original channel [106].

Indigenous fisheries

Salmon were the foundation of Ts'elxwéyeqw life. People fished the river year-round and smoke-cured the catch [7]. Brush weirs were built across streams, and place names record fishing technology: Galloway gives Sch'iyáq or Stehiyáq, "place of the fish trap," for Centre Creek, and the name of the Ch'iyáqtel (Tzeachten) community means a device to trap fish [35, 2]. At Iy'oythel, between Tamihi and Slesse creeks, deep pools and eddies in a bedrock canyon made a prime fishing place, and excavations there recovered slate fish knives [19]. Galloway's field notes of 1978 describe a trail to the site that ended at "good fishing rocks" [2]. [Chapter 16 \(p. 66\)](#) describes the seasonal round in more detail.

The recreational fishery: rules in brief

The river's fisheries are among the most regulated in the province. Rules are set by two governments: the province regulates trout, char, steelhead and kokanee, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada regulates salmon. Both change during the season. The table summarizes the rules in force when this edition was prepared; anglers must check the current synopsis and in-season notices [Confirm](#).

Table 10.3. Fishing rules for the Chilliwack–Vedder system, 2025–2027 synopsis and 2026 salmon rules (summary)

Water	Rule
Chilliwack River above a line 100 m below the Slesse Creek confluence	No fishing [26]
100 m below Slesse Creek to Tamihi Rapids Bridge	No fishing 1 April–30 June [26]
Tamihi Rapids Bridge to Vedder Crossing Bridge	No fishing 1 May–30 June [26]
Below Vedder Crossing Bridge	Fly fishing only, bait ban and catch-and-release of hatchery trout, 1–31 May; no fishing 1–30 June; hatchery rainbow trout up to 50 cm, daily quota 4, 1 July–30 April [26]
Chinook, Chilliwack/Vedder (including the Sumas River)	1 per day, 1 July–31 August; 4 per day, only 2 over 62 cm, 1 September–31 December [27]
Coho	Non-retention 1 July–31 August; 4 hatchery-marked per day, 1 September–31 December [27]
Chum	Non-retention from 1 July until further notice [27]
Steelhead	Wild steelhead must be released; annual limit for B.C. 10 hatchery steelhead [26]
Chilliwack Lake	No wild trout over 50 cm; 1 bull trout over 60 cm [26]
Cultus Lake	No wild trout over 50 cm; 1 bull trout over 60 cm; kokanee catch-and-release; vessel and speed restrictions [26]
Sweltzer Creek	No fishing [26]
Tamihi Creek	No fishing below the falls about 200 m upstream of the Chilliwack River; no fishing above the falls 1 May–30 June [26]
Liumchen Creek	No fishing below the lower falls [26]
All streams in Region 2	Single barbless hook, all year [26]
Near the hatchery	No fishing within 100 m of a government fish-counting or rearing facility [27]

Salmon may be fished only in daylight in Region 2, and an adult chinook on the Chilliwack/Vedder is defined as one over 62 cm [27]. A Steelhead Conservation Surcharge Stamp is required to fish for steelhead [113]. Ecological reserves are closed to fishing (Chapter 30, p. 106).

Anglers are not the only people drawn to the river. Its steep gradient and boulder-strewn channel also make it a whitewater river.

Chapter 11

Paddling the river

Six reaches of whitewater, from a beginner's float below Vedder Crossing to a continuous boulder garden in the upper valley, and the gauge, wood and floods that govern them all.

A whitewater river close to the city

Because of its moderate whitewater and its proximity to Vancouver, the Chilliwack is frequently run by guided rafting parties and by independent kayakers [114]. Its steep gradient, an average of 1.5 percent between Chilliwack Lake and Vedder Crossing, produces long, continuous rapids, and its channel changes with every flood [6, p. 18, 25].

Paddlers divide the river into reaches between road access points. The descriptions below follow the paddling community's own guides, BC Whitewater and the UBC Varsity Outdoor Club, and use their road distances, measured from Vedder Crossing. Difficulty uses the International Scale of River Difficulty, from Class I (easy moving water) to Class V (extremely difficult). It changes with the water level.

Table 11.1. Paddling reaches of the Chilliwack River, upstream order

Reach	Class	Length	Notes
Vedder Bridge to Lickman Road	I+	—	Introduction to moving water; wood collects on these easy sections [115]
Pointa Vista (Osborne Road) to Vedder Bridge	II	8 km; 2–3 h	Put in at road km 7; take out just above the Vedder Crossing bridge; log jams, strainers and sweepers [116]
Tamihi to Pointa Vista	III, one IV– (Tamihi Rapid)	3 km; 2 h	Park at Tamihi, about road km 11; Tamihi Rapid and Campground Rapid [117]
Slesse to Tamihi	III, one IV– (Tamihi Rapid)	12 km; 2–3 h	Put in just below the Slesse confluence (alternatives Allison Pool and Thurston Meadows); take out above the bridge about 11 km from Vedder Crossing [25]
Chilliwack Canyon: Camp Foley to Slesse	III–IV low, IV–medium, IV high; IV+ in the UBC guide	10 km; 2–4 h	Put in at a bridge about 7 km above the take-out; take out just below the Slesse confluence, about 20.5 km from Vedder Crossing [118]
Post Creek to Camp Foley	III+	15 km; 2–3 h	Take out at a bridge on Chilliwack Lake Road 27 km from Vedder Crossing; frequent river-wide log jams near the island below the bridge [119]

Road distances are those given by the paddling guides and may differ from the road log in [Chapter 25](#) (p. 93). BC Whitewater updated the three lower reaches between Slesse Creek and Pointa Vista, and the Canyon, on 3 June 2026; the Post Creek and Pointa Vista–Vedder descriptions were last updated on 31 March 2021 and may be out of date.

The reaches

Post Creek to Camp Foley. The uppermost run begins near Post Creek, just below Chilliwack Lake. It is a Class III+ run of about 15 km whose chief hazard is wood. A short section at the upper put-in slaloms around a couple of ledges of about Class IV– [119, 115].

The Canyon (Camp Foley to Slesse Creek). From the second Chilliwack River bridge down to Slesse Creek the river drops through what paddlers call "the Canyon," although it is not a true canyon [115]. BC Whitewater rates it Class III–IV at low water, IV– at medium and IV at high flows; the UBC guide calls it a "challenging Class IV+ continuous boulder garden" [118, 115]. Its named rapids, in order, are Double Whammy (also called Cocaine), Gun Barrel, Carousel, Pin Ball Alley, Mel's, Godzilla, Pin Ball Alley II, Surprise, the Fish Hatchery intake (Fish Gate), Chaos and Freight Train [118]. The hole at Mel's is "stickier than it looks"; a paddler died there in 1986 and is commemorated by a plaque [118]. The run has been paddled at 3.2 m on the gauge, which the guide calls risky because of moving wood; the highest level recorded is 4.6 m [118]. The reach includes the steep step in the river's long profile near Foley Creek ([Chapter 7, p. 30](#)).

Slesse to Tamihi. The run from below the Slesse confluence to the bridge above Tamihi Rapid is the river's classic. It is Class III, with a play spot at Allison Pool and an interesting rapid at "Trailer Park." Large clay landslides enter from river right [25]. Combined with the take-out at Osborne Road it is known as the "Chilliwack Classic," and it is the home run of a commercial rafting company [25].

Tamihi Rapid. Below the bridge the river drops through Tamihi Rapid, a fairly continuous boulder garden of Class IV– that becomes Class IV at medium and higher flows. It can be seen from the first bridge upstream of the Vedder Crossing bridge [115, 25]. Slalom racers often practise on gates hung in the rapid [25].

Tamihi to Pointa Vista, and Pointa Vista to Vedder Crossing. Below Tamihi the rapids ease to Class III and then Class II over a rock and gravel bed. These reaches are popular for instruction but carry their own hazard: wood hangs up on the easier lower sections, where it is less expected [115, 117, 116]. Paddlers are warned of vehicle break-ins, and of friction with residents, at the Pointa Vista and Osborne Road take-out [117, 116].

Tributaries. Experienced paddlers also run Slesse Creek (Class III with a short Class IV– canyon), Foley Creek (Class III or III+, with possible Class IV moves around wood), and lower and upper Tamihi Creek (Class IV+ to V, with a mandatory portage on the lower creek) [120].

Water levels

Paddlers judge the river by the federal gauge on the Chilliwack River above Slesse Creek (station 08MH103) [78, 118]. For the Slesse to Tamihi run, BC Whitewater treats levels below 0.8 m as too low, 0.8–1.1 m as "enough water," 1.1–1.4 m as low, 1.4–1.7 m as medium and above

1.7 m as high [25]. For the Canyon it treats 1.4–1.7 m as optimal and anything above 2.5 m as too high [118]. On 11 October 2026 the gauge read about 0.52 m, below the recommended range for every reach [25, 118].

The river's seasonal regime ([Chapter 2, p. 14](#)) shapes the paddling year: high, cold snowmelt flows in May and June, low water in late summer and early autumn, and sudden rises during autumn and winter storms.

Hazards particular to the Chilliwack

- **Wood.** Logs, log jams, strainers and sweepers are the main danger on every reach, including the easy lower sections [115, 116].
- **A changing channel.** Floods rearrange the river. The November 2021 floods changed the Slesse to Tamihi run substantially. In the Canyon, the rapid known as Freight Train formed in November 2021 and was washed out in December 2025, when Chaos also steepened [25, 118].
- **Clay slides.** Slides on river right in the lower valley deliver clay and silt and can change the channel [25, 14].
- **Cold water.** Much of the spring and early-summer flow is snowmelt [6, p. 21].
- **Remoteness.** Cellular service is absent through most of the valley [3, 28] ([Chapter 29, p. 104](#)).

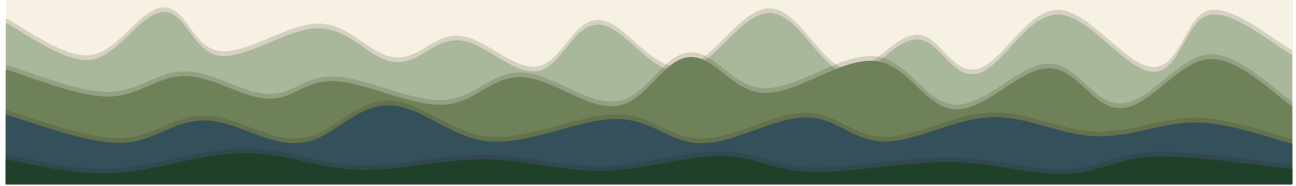
Sharing the river

Paddlers share the lower river with one of the busiest sport fisheries in the province ([Chapter 10, p. 44](#)). When salmon are running and anglers crowd the banks, BC Whitewater suggests paddling the upper reaches, where fishing is prohibited [25]. Fishing is closed above a line 100 m below the Slesse Creek confluence [26].

Part IV

Life

Water, height and disturbance together decide what lives where. Part IV climbs from the floodplain forests of the valley floor, through mountain hemlock and subalpine parkland, to alpine tundra, and visits the ecological reserves that protect record-sized trees and a rare orchid. It then turns to the valley's animals and to the species that Canada has assessed as at risk, among them a salamander whose entire Canadian range lies in this drainage. It ends with the plants and fungi of forest and meadow, including those that supplied food and materials to the Ts'elxwéyeqw.



Chapter 12

Forests and ecological reserves

A coastal rainforest that turns subarctic toward the lake, climbs through mountain hemlock to alpine parkland, and in one floodplain grows trees of record size.

Forest zones

British Columbia classifies its ecosystems into biogeoclimatic zones, each named for its characteristic climax tree and subdivided into subzones and variants by climate. The Chilliwack River Valley spans the full range, from coastal rainforest on the valley floor to treeless alpine on the summits [7, 10].

At the scale of the whole watershed, Schaepe summarizes three zones [7]:

- the **Coastal Western Hemlock** zone below about 1,200 m (3,900 ft), with western hemlock, western redcedar, grand fir and Douglas-fir;
- the **Mountain Hemlock** zone from about 1,200 to 1,600 m (3,900–5,250 ft), with mountain hemlock, subalpine fir, amabilis fir, yellow-cedar and Pacific yew, opening into subalpine parkland;
- the **Alpine Tundra** zone above about 1,600 m (5,250 ft).

The province's detailed ecosystem mapping of the upper valley, completed in 2002 for Chilliwack Lake Park and the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, refines this picture [10]:

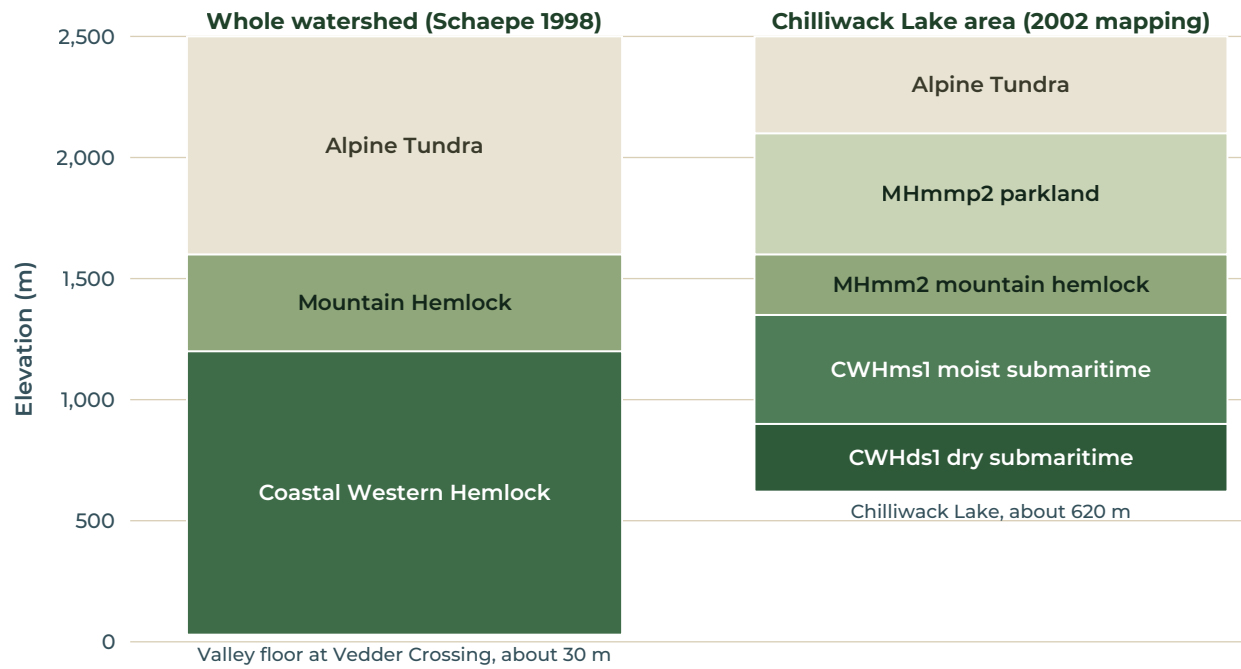
Table 12.1. Biogeoclimatic units mapped in the Chilliwack Lake area

Unit	Name	Elevation	Character
CWHds1	Southern Dry Submaritime Coastal Western Hemlock variant	valley floor to about 900 m	warm, dry summers; moist, cool winters with moderate snow; western hemlock, Douglas-fir, western redcedar and Sitka spruce sites; mainly on the north and east shores of Chilliwack Lake
CWHms1	Southern Moist Submaritime Coastal Western Hemlock variant	about 900–1,350 m	cool summers, heavy winter snow; amabilis fir and Alaskan blueberry distinguish it; reaches the lake on its south and west shores
MHmm2	Leeward Moist Maritime Mountain Hemlock variant	about 1,350–1,600 m	long, cold, moist winters; mountain hemlock and amabilis fir with black huckleberry and white-flowered rhododendron
MHmmp2	Leeward Moist Maritime Mountain Hemlock parkland	about 1,600–2,100 m	open forest and meadow; subalpine fir
AT	Alpine Tundra	above about 2,100 m	treeless; shrubs, herbs, mosses and lichens; much cliff and permanent snow

From the 2002 terrestrial ecosystem mapping [10]. Field sampling was limited to areas below about 1,250 m; the higher units are described partly from the literature.

The two sets of figures differ because they describe different areas at different scales

Sources disagree. Schaepe's generalized boundaries apply to the whole watershed; the 2002 mapping applies to the upper valley around Chilliwack Lake, where the alpine begins higher. Both agree on the essential pattern: a coastal forest that becomes drier and more continental toward the head of the valley, and a rapid succession of zones with height.



Boundaries are approximate; the alpine is cut at 2,500 m.

Figure 12.1. Forest zones by elevation: the generalized watershed scheme [7] beside the detailed mapping of the Chilliwack Lake area [10].

A meeting place of coast and interior

The upper valley lies where the wet coastal forests begin to give way to the drier forests of the interior. BC Parks describes the Chilliwack Lake area as holding the southernmost example in British Columbia of the dry maritime variant of the Coastal Western Hemlock zone [5, pp. 6, 13]. Lodgepole pine grows on flats north of the lake [5].

The mixing shows in the trees themselves. Spruce in the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve are hybrids between coastal Sitka spruce and interior Engelmann spruce [5, p. 13]. The reserve is also believed to be a zone of hybridization between grand fir and amabilis fir [121].

Lower in the valley, the forest is coastal. The 1980 master plan for Chilliwack River Park, near the valley mouth, placed the park in the wet subzone of the Coastal Douglas-fir zone as then classified, with floodplain channels used by spawning and rearing salmon and beaver ponds north of the road [112]. BC Parks now places the lower valley, at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve near Vedder Crossing, in the Coastal Western Hemlock zone [122]. Saunders describes the valley's vegetation generally as closed coniferous forest of hemlock, cedar and fir, which on steep slopes often breaks directly into bare rock and snow [6].

The Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve

At the head of Chilliwack Lake, between the lake and the international boundary, lies Ecological Reserve No. 98. It was established on 27 March 1980 and covers 86 ha of the river's floodplain at 610–760 m (2,000–2,500 ft) elevation, where the flat valley bottom is about 500 m wide. North Cascades National Park borders it to the south [121]. Its purpose is to set aside productive floodplain forest for research and for the improvement of tree stocks [121, 32].

The reserve is mainly rich old-growth coniferous forest of "exceptional growth." On young, active alluvial sites near its north boundary grow black cottonwood, red alder and western redcedar, with red-osier dogwood and salmonberry. Older, better-drained sites carry western redcedar and western hemlock with vine maple, devil's club, ferns and mosses. Engelmann and Sitka spruce, grand fir, amabilis fir, Douglas-fir, bigleaf maple and Pacific crab apple also occur. Redcedars reach 2.75 m (9 ft) in diameter and true firs 60 m (200 ft) in height [121]. BC Parks' management plan of 2000 states that "the largest grand fir ever measured in British Columbia" grows in the reserve, and that western redcedar and Douglas-fir there reach near-record dimensions [5, p. 13]. A 2023 feature in the *Fraser Valley Current*, "The search for the Chilliwack Giant," describes a record grand fir near Chilliwack that went unrelocated for twenty years [123].

The reserve's management statement records several pressures. Ferns, salal, moss, mushrooms, firewood and cedar shakes are harvested illegally. People camp at the front of the reserve without permission and dump garbage. The main trail crosses the habitat of the blue-listed leafy mitrewort, and, because the reserve lies on the international boundary, smuggling and illegal border crossings are suspected [121]. Like all ecological reserves it is open for non-destructive activities such as hiking and nature observation, but hunting, fishing, camping, foraging and motor vehicles are prohibited, and research requires a permit [32].

Liumchen and Katherine Tye ecological reserves

Two smaller reserves protect other parts of the valley's living diversity.

Liumchen Ecological Reserve (No. 143) covers 2,300 ha of the upper Liumchen Creek basin about 9 km southeast of Chilliwack, bordered by Cultus Lake Park to the west and the Mount Baker National Forest to the south. It protects mid- and upper-elevation forests on limestone, including old-growth subalpine fir and a "very rare complex of ecosystems on limestone based soils." Almost a quarter of it had been logged before it was protected. At least one nesting pair of northern spotted owls was believed to use it in 2001, and its management statement lists the Pacific giant salamander and the rare plants Fendler's waterleaf and spotted touch-me-not among its species [85]. Hunting, fishing, trapping, horses and motor vehicles are not permitted [85].

Katherine Tye (Vedder Crossing) Ecological Reserve (No. 116) was established on 10 December 1986. It covers 3 ha at about 300 m elevation on Thornton Road, about 3 km southeast of Vedder Crossing. The reserve sits in the Coastal Western Hemlock zone, on a ridge of glacial outwash whose southern slopes face the Chilliwack River valley [124, 125]. It protects a population of Austin's phantom orchid, a plant without chlorophyll that the reserve's description calls "very likely the rarest orchid in British Columbia" [124]. Katherine Tye discovered the orchids at the site in 1964 and watched over them until her death in 1987. Yearly counts between 1964 and 1978 ranged from none to more than 100 plants and averaged about 35 [124]. The reserve combines land she donated with a parcel bought by the Nature Trust of British Columbia. Its forest is second-growth red alder and bigleaf maple, and it also shelters the endangered Oregon forestsnail and the blue-listed fox sedge [124, 125].

Old growth and logging

Logging has shaped the valley's forests for a century. Most of the old-growth forest on the valley bottom and lower slopes was cut, beginning with railway logging in the 1920s; the history is told in [Chapter 20 \(p. 81\)](#) [7]. Old growth survives in the protected areas, such as the floodplain forest of the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve and the old-growth subalpine fir of Liumchen Ecological Reserve, around which the land has for the most part been logged [121, 85]. Some forest plants of the valley depend on old and mid-aged forest: tall bugbane and the phantom orchid both grow mainly in older stands, and logging is a recorded threat to both [126, 127]. [Chapter 14 \(p. 59\)](#) describes them.

The forest zones are habitats as well as vegetation types, and the valley's animals sort themselves along the same gradient of height.

Chapter 13

Wildlife

Bears, deer, cougars and goats; birds of the old forest; salamanders of cold streams; and a large carnivore that has almost vanished from the range.

A diversity shaped by elevation

In little more than 2,000 m of height, the valley offers river and floodplain, lowland and montane forest, avalanche track, subalpine parkland, cliff and alpine meadow. Each supports its own animals. Within Chilliwack Lake Park and the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve

alone, BC Parks records more than 40 species of mammals, more than 20 reptiles and amphibians, and more than 130 birds [5, p. 14]. The valley's fish are described in [Chapter 10 \(p. 44\)](#), and the species most at risk in [Chapter 14 \(p. 59\)](#).

Mammals

Schaepe's survey of the watershed lists black bear, black-tailed deer, elk, wolf and cougar among the large mammals, with beaver, porcupine, marten and muskrat among the smaller ones, and marmots in the alpine [7]. Mountain goats range through the alpine [7], and Trails BC lists them among the wildlife of the Trans Canada Trail route through the upper valley [30]. In the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, black bear, black-tailed deer, beaver and porcupine are recorded [121].

Several large mammals are much reduced. Schaepe notes that elk and wolves were historically hunted to or near extinction in the watershed, and that grizzly bears are now rarely found [7]. BC Parks describes mountain goat, grizzly bear and Roosevelt elk as rare visitors to Chilliwack Lake Park whose needs require special consideration [5, p. 14].

Smaller and less familiar mammals include Trowbridge's shrew, which BC Parks lists among the rare species of the park [5, p. 14], and the mountain beaver, a burrowing rodent with a very limited Canadian range ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)).

The grizzly bear of the North Cascades

The Chilliwack watershed lies within the province's North Cascades Grizzly Bear Population Unit, a 9,807 km² area bounded by the international boundary on the south and by the Fraser River between Chilliwack and Lytton on the west [128, pp. i, 6]. When the provincial recovery plan was written in 2004, the unit held fewer than 25 grizzly bears, and the population was classed as Threatened [128, p. i]. The plan traces the decline to commercial trapping and persecution in the mid-nineteenth century, citing a record of 425 grizzly hides taken from the Cascades area between 1846 and 1851, a loss from which the population never recovered [128, pp. 7-8]. Its goal is a viable population of about 150 bears, which it did not expect to reach before about 2050, even with animals brought in from elsewhere [128, p. 14].

South of the boundary the situation is similar. The last confirmed sighting of a grizzly in the American part of the North Cascades ecosystem was in 1996. On 25 April 2024, the U.S. National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service decided to restore the species there. The plan is to move three to seven bears a year, for five to ten years, from the Rocky Mountains or interior British Columbia, with an initial goal of 25 bears designated as a "nonessential experimental population" [129]. Whether any bears have since been moved was not established for this edition ([Confirm](#)).

Birds

More than 130 bird species are recorded in the Chilliwack Lake area [5, p. 14]. The old floodplain forest of the ecological reserve supports winter wren, brown creeper, pileated woodpecker, blue grouse, kinglets and chickadees [121]. The northern spotted owl, an endangered owl of old forests, is described in [Chapter 14 \(p. 59\)](#). The Chilliwack Field Naturalists lead birding trips in the valley and run the Chilliwack Christmas Bird Count in mid-December [110].

Amphibians and reptiles

More than 20 species of amphibians and reptiles are recorded in Chilliwack Lake Park [5, p. 14]. Among them is the coastal giant salamander, which reaches 35 cm in length and whose entire Canadian range lies within the Chilliwack drainage ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)) [130].

Invertebrates

Few of the sources consulted for this edition describe the valley's invertebrates. The Oregon forestsnail, a large land snail endemic to western North America that COSEWIC assessed as Endangered in 2002 and again in 2013, is recorded in Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve near Vedder Crossing [125, 131].

Living with wildlife

Guidance on bears, cougars and other wildlife is given in [Chapter 29 \(p. 104\)](#), and hunting rules in [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#).

Several of the valley's animals, and some of its plants, have declined to the point that Canada has assessed them as at risk.

Chapter 14

Species at risk

A salamander found in Canada only in this watershed, a burrowing "living fossil," an owl reduced to a handful of birds, a tall forest herb and a chlorophyll-less orchid, and two fish found in one lake next door.

Why the valley matters

For several species of the Pacific Northwest, southwestern British Columbia is the northern edge of a range that lies mostly in the United States: less than 1 percent of the global range of the coastal giant salamander, and of tall bugbane, lies in Canada [130, 126]. In Canada, several such species occur only in the Fraser Valley and the mountains south of it, and some only in the Chilliwack drainage or beside it. The valley's forests, cold streams and lakes therefore carry national responsibilities out of proportion to their size.

In Canada, species at risk are assessed by the independent Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and may then be listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The two lists do not always match: a species can be assessed by COSEWIC and not yet listed, or listed under SARA at a different category. British Columbia also ranks species through its Conservation Data Centre.

Table 14.1. Species at risk recorded in the Chilliwack River Valley and its immediate edges

Species	COSEWIC status	SARA status	Connection to the valley
Coastal giant salamander (<i>Dicamptodon tenebrosus</i>)	Threatened (2014)	listed (Schedule 1)	entire Canadian range in the Chilliwack drainage [130]
Mountain beaver (<i>Aplodontia rufa</i>)	Special Concern (confirmed 2022)	Special Concern (Schedule 1, 2003) [132]	Canadian range confined to southwestern BC, including Chilliwack Lake Park, Cultus Lake Park and Liumchen Ecological Reserve [133, 134]
Northern spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>)	Endangered (1986; confirmed 2008)	Endangered (Schedule 1, 2003) [135]	recorded in Chilliwack Lake Park and the Chilliwack River and Liumchen ecological reserves [5, p. 14, 121, 85]
Tall bugbane (<i>Actaea elata</i>)	Endangered (confirmed 2018)	Endangered (Schedule 1)	Canadian range confined to the Abbotsford–Chilliwack area; populations on Vedder and Elk mountains, Mount Thom and the OPSEE (Vedder Crossing) area [126]

Species	COSEWIC status	SARA status	Connection to the valley
Phantom orchid (<i>Cephalanthera austini</i>)	Endangered (2014)	Threatened (Schedule 1)	protected at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve near Vedder Crossing [127, 122]
Oregon forestsnailed (<i>Allogona townsendiana</i>)	Endangered (confirmed 2013)	Endangered (Schedule 1, 2005) [136]	recorded at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve and northwest of Cultus Lake [125, 136]
Sockeye salmon, Cultus Lake population	Endangered (2002, confirmed 2017)	not listed	spawns only in Cultus Lake, drained by the Sweltzer River to the Chilliwack [108]
Coastrange sculpin, Cultus Lake population	Endangered (2019)	Threatened (Schedule 1, since 2003)	found only in Cultus Lake [111]
Grizzly bear, North Cascades population	—	—	provincial North Cascades population unit, Threatened; fewer than 25 bears in 2004 [128]

Statuses are as published by COSEWIC and the cited sources at the dates shown; SARA listings change by order of the federal government and should be checked on the Species at Risk Public Registry ([Confirm](#)). Other rare species named in local management documents include Trowbridge's shrew [5, p. 14], leafy mitrewort [121], fox sedge [125], and Fendler's waterleaf and spotted touch-me-not [85].

Coastal giant salamander

The coastal giant salamander is a stream-dwelling amphibian of the Pacific Northwest whose Canadian range is "restricted to the Chilliwack drainage system in southwestern British Columbia," south of the Fraser River. Less than one percent of its global range lies in Canada [130]. Adults can reach 35 cm including the tail. Larvae hatch at about 3.5 cm and live in cool, clear mountain streams. Some transform into land-dwelling adults that seldom stray more than about 50 m from a stream; others remain aquatic for life, breeding in their larval form [130].

COSEWIC first assessed the species as Special Concern in 1989 and as Threatened in 2000 and again in 2014. No reliable population count exists; earlier estimates suggested about 22,400 mature salamanders, and the true number is probably more than 10,000. The most widespread threat is forestry, mainly through silt washed into breeding streams from logging and roads. More localized threats include residential development and run-of-river power projects, along with introduced fish, disease and changing flows and droughts linked to climate [130].

Mountain beaver

The mountain beaver is not a beaver. It is a burrowing rodent that COSEWIC describes as a "living fossil" because of its primitive physiology and skull [133]. In Canada it lives only in southwestern British Columbia, mainly within the Cascade Mountains south of the Fraser River, from Abbotsford east to the Princeton and Hedley areas and north to the Lytton and Merritt areas. Two small isolated subpopulations live on Chilliwack and Sumas mountains on the lowland [133, 132]. One subspecies occurs here, and Canada holds only about 5 percent of the species' global range, which extends south through western Washington and Oregon to northern California [133]. Protected areas in its Canadian range include Chilliwack Lake Park, Cultus Lake Park and Liumchen Ecological Reserve [133]. It is not found only in this valley.

COSEWIC assessed the mountain beaver as Special Concern in 1999 and confirmed that status in 2012 and December 2022; it has been listed as Special Concern under SARA since 2003 [132]. Its Canadian range contracted by 29 percent in the fifty years before 2012 [132]. COSEWIC counts five subpopulations, an extent of occurrence of 12,990 km², at least 1,500 dens or occupied sites, and probably more than 10,000 mature animals. Forestry, through the compaction of the soils in which the animals burrow, is the most important current threat, with roads, pipelines and a warming, drying climate as further concerns [134]. The British Columbia Conservation Data Centre ranks it S3, vulnerable [137].

Northern spotted owl

The northern spotted owl is an owl of old coniferous forest. It has been assessed as Endangered in Canada since 1986 and listed as Endangered under SARA since 2003 [135]. Its numbers have collapsed. Globally the population has fallen by about 75 percent since 1985, and in the spring of 2022 only one spotted owl was known to be living wild in British Columbia [138]. Since 2007 the province has run a captive breeding program near Langley, the first in the world for this owl [135, 138]. In August 2022 three captive-bred males were released into protected forest in the Fraser Canyon, in the territory of the Spô'zêm First Nation [139]. One was later found injured and returned to the facility, and the other two died of unknown causes; two more males followed in June 2023. In March 2024 the federal government counted 37 known owls, 34 of them in the breeding facility [135]. The province has set aside more than 280,000 ha of habitat in the Cascades, aims for a population of 250 owls, and controls barred owls, a competing species, in release areas [139, 138].

In the Chilliwack valley, BC Parks lists the spotted owl among the rare species of Chilliwack Lake Park and notes protected habitat for it in the park [5, pp. 5, 14]. In 2001 at least one nesting pair was believed to use Liumchen Ecological Reserve, which is managed as a spotted owl conservation area [85]. The Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve also lists the species [121]. These records predate the owl's near-disappearance from the wild in British Columbia.

Tall bugbane

Tall bugbane is a tall herb of moist forest with small white flowers on long spikes. In Canada it grows only in the Abbotsford–Chilliwack area, between the Fraser River and the international boundary, and the Canadian range is less than 1 percent of the species' global extent [126]. It grows in old and mid-aged coniferous and mixed forests, usually of Douglas-fir and bigleaf maple, where it needs sunlit gaps in the canopy [126].

COSEWIC designated it Endangered in 2001 and confirmed the status in 2018; it is listed as Endangered under SARA. In 2018 COSEWIC counted six extant subpopulations (north and south Vedder Mountain, Elk Mountain, Mount Thom, and east and west OPSEE, the military training area at Vedder Crossing) and about 250 flowering or fruiting plants. It considered the Upper Tamihi, Chipmunk Creek and Cheam Peak subpopulations presumed extirpated [126]. The federal recovery strategy of 2017 had still identified critical habitat at Upper Tamihi and Chipmunk Creek ([Sources disagree](#)) [140]. The main threats are invasive plants, roadside clearing and maintenance, trail construction and herbicide drift [126].

Phantom orchid

The phantom orchid is white and has no chlorophyll. It obtains its food through a three-way partnership with a soil fungus and a tree, flowers irregularly, may stay dormant for years, and rarely sets seed in British Columbia [127]. In Canada it is known only from the lower Fraser Valley between Mission and Chilliwack and from a few sites on southern Vancouver Island and Saltspring Island. Its localities include the foot of Vedder Mountain and Teapot Hill in Cultus Lake Park. In 2013 surveyors counted about 344 flowering stems in 20 subpopulations [127]. COSEWIC raised its status to Endangered in 2014; it is listed as Threatened under SARA [127]. Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve was established in 1986 to protect one population ([Chapter 12, p. 52](#)) [124].

Two fish of Cultus Lake

Cultus Lake drains to the Chilliwack River through the Sweltzer River, and two of its fish are among the most endangered in Canada. The **Cultus Lake sockeye** has fallen from about 20,000 spawners before the late 1960s to about 1,500 mature fish in 2017 and is assessed as Endangered, though not listed under SARA. The **Cultus pygmy sculpin**, a dwarf, open-water form of the coastrange sculpin found nowhere else, is listed as Threatened and was reassessed as Endangered in 2019. [Chapter 10 \(p. 44\)](#) describes both [98, 108, 111].

Rare species are only a small part of the valley's flora, much of which people have long used for food and materials.

Chapter 15

Plants, berries and fungi

The understorey of the rainforest, the berry meadows of the high country, the plants that supplied food and materials, and the rarities that need protection.

The forest understorey

Beneath the conifers of the Coastal Western Hemlock zone grows a dense understorey. Schaepe's survey of the watershed lists shrubs such as thimbleberry, salmonberry, black huckleberry, oval-leaved blueberry, devil's club, Sitka alder, highbush cranberry, red elderberry and Sitka mountain-ash; herbs such as lady fern, sword fern, clasping twisted-stalk, false lily-of-the-valley, stinging nettle, queen's cup, bracken and green false hellebore; and plants with edible roots such as desert-parsley (*Lomatium*), tiger lily and wild onion [7]. Along the Trans Canada Trail through the valley, Trails BC notes Douglas-fir, western hemlock, western redcedar, red alder, paper birch and black cottonwood, with salal, sword fern, devil's club, Alaskan blueberry, thimbleberry and wild ginger beneath them [30]. Tourism Chilliwack gives the Halq'eméylem name of wild ginger as *thaletel*, meaning "like a heart" [3].

On the floodplain at the head of Chilliwack Lake, young alluvial sites carry black cottonwood, red alder and western redcedar over red-osier dogwood and salmonberry, while older sites have a ground layer of devil's club, vine maple, lady fern, oak fern and mosses [12]. The 2002 ecosystem mapping lists skunk cabbage in the wetter forest types of the dry submaritime zone near the lake [10].

The high country

Above the closed forest, the Mountain Hemlock zone opens into subalpine parkland: clumps of mountain hemlock, subalpine fir and yellow-cedar separated by meadows [7, 10]. In the alpine, dwarf blueberry, oval-leaved blueberry, black huckleberry, wild strawberry and black gooseberry grow, and the alpine berries ripen in early autumn [7]. The long ridge below the summit of Mount Cheam carries blueberry meadows, which Galloway described from a visit about 1982 [2].

Plants and the Ts'elxwéyeqw

Plants supplied much of what people needed. Schaepe lists the roots of camas, bracken fern and tiger lily, and a long season of berries: huckleberries, strawberries, salmonberries, salal, blueberries, cranberries and saskatoons [7]. Western redcedar was the most versatile material of all. Its wood, bark and roots made baskets, mats, nets, clothing, cordage, bowls, boxes,

canoes, planks, house posts, masks and poles [7]. Cedars from which strips of bark were removed, leaving long scars, are a common archaeological feature of the valley; the 1997 survey recorded 17 bark-stripped trees [7].

Place names record plant knowledge [2]:

- **Slhílhets'**, the old lake above Smith Falls and its creek near Cultus Lake, means "place for cutting (of bulrushes for mats)."
- **Tl'íkw'ólem**, Galloway's preferred form of Oliver Wells's name for Lindeman Lake, is probably related to *tl'íkw'el*, kinnikinnick berries, and to *Tl'íkw'elem*, "place to get kinnikinnick berries," the name of Silver Hope Creek.
- **T'ept'ô:p**, the village at the mouth of Ryder Lake Creek, was glossed by Oliver Wells as "where vine maples grow."
- **Lasisélhp**, Wells's name for Foley Lake and Creek, ends in the suffix for "tree."

The provincial name record for Nesakwatch Creek adds that its name comes from a Halkomelem word for a reed that grew along its banks and was used to make fishnets [82].

Some of these meanings are uncertain, and Galloway marks them so. Plant knowledge is described further in published Stó:lō sources, including the *Upper Stó:lō Ethnobotany* curriculum of 1982 cited by Schaepe [7].

Rare plants

Two plants assessed as Endangered in Canada grow in or beside the valley ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)). Tall bugbane, a tall herb of moist forest gaps, grows in Canada only in the Abbotsford–Chilliwack area [126]. The phantom orchid, which has no chlorophyll, grows in older forest between Mission and Chilliwack and is protected at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve [127, 122]. Leafy mitrewort, a blue-listed plant, grows beside the main trail through the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, where trampling degrades its habitat [121]. Fendler's waterleaf and spotted touch-me-not are named among the rare plants of Liumchen Ecological Reserve, and fox sedge among those of the Katherine Tye reserve [85, 125].

Invasive plants are a recorded threat. COSEWIC ranks invasive and other problematic species as the greatest threat to tall bugbane, and invasive plants are also listed among the threats to the phantom orchid [126, 127]; at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve, the spread of chervil is named as a risk to the orchid population [124]. In Cultus Lake, the invasive Eurasian water-milfoil has become established [98, 108].

Fungi

Fungi fruit in the wet autumn forests, and the Chilliwack Field Naturalists hold fungi forays in October, including outings to the Angel Wing channel and the Centennial Trail [110]. In the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, illegal harvesting of mushrooms, along with ferns, salal and moss, is recorded as depleting the forest floor [121].

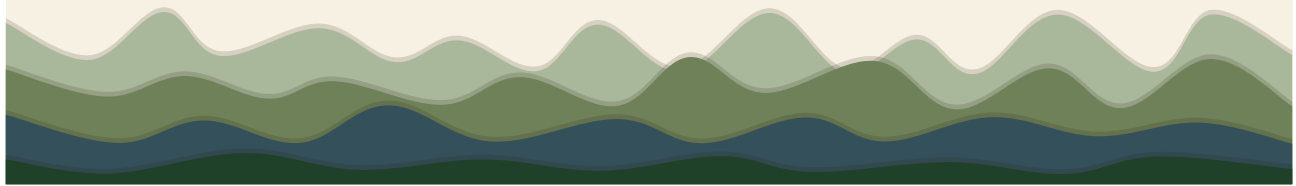
Picking and harvesting

Foraging of any kind is prohibited in ecological reserves [32, 122]. In provincial parks, BC Parks asks visitors not to damage or remove flowers, trees or shrubs [28]. Rules on Crown land outside protected areas are summarized in [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#).

Part V

People and History

People have been part of this system for thousands of years. Part V begins with the Ts'elxwéyeqw, the people of the river, whose oral history places their origins at Chilliwack Lake and whose villages lined the river. It follows the archaeological record from the valley floor to the alpine, then the arrival of fur traders, surveyors and settlers; the logging, mining and military eras; the air disasters on the surrounding peaks; the creation of the parks; and the community that lives in the valley today. A single timeline closes the part.

**Chapter 16**

The Ts'elxwéyeqw

The people of the Chilliwack River: their origins at Chilliwack Lake, their language, the seasonal round from river to alpine, the upheavals of the nineteenth century, and the seven First Nations today.

About this chapter

This chapter summarizes what Stó:lō and Ts'elxwéyeqw knowledge keepers, ethnographers and archaeologists have published, with each statement credited. It is not an account written by the Ts'elxwéyeqw, whose history belongs to them. Readers should turn to the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre for authoritative accounts

Stó:lō knowledge.

A people of the river

The Ts'elxwéyeqw are one of the Stó:lō peoples, the People of the River, and part of the wider Coast Salish world. The Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations describe themselves as the First People of the Chilliwack River watershed, and the valley as their ancestral home and spiritual realm, with original villages around Sxótsaqel, Chilliwack Lake [1]. Evidence of thousands of years of

continuous occupation, they note, comes from oral history, written history, ethnography and archaeology [1]. The Elder Bob Joe told Oliver Wells: "we have lived here since time immemorial, thousands of years" [7, 37].

The name Ts'elxwéyeqw belongs both to the people and to the river, and is the source of the English *Chilliwack* ([Chapter 1, p. 10](#)) [2, 1].

Language

The language of the Ts'elxwéyeqw today is Halq'eméylem, the upriver dialect of Halkomelem [2, 35]. Oral tradition records an older language. Galloway's dictionary notes traditions that the people once lived along the river from Chilliwack Lake to Soowahlie, their headquarters, and spoke a language closer to Nooksack than to Halkomelem, which one of the speakers recorded by Oliver Wells called Ch'élexwoqwem. Around the 1790s, according to the same traditions, they began to mix with Upriver Halkomelem speakers and adopt their language. Only a few place names in the old language survive, among them Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie), T'ept'ô:p and Stótelô [2]. Ch'élexwoqwem was either a language midway between Halkomelem and Nooksack or a dialect of Nooksack [2]. Smith regarded the evidence for an earlier language as suggestive but "not fully convincing" [35] [Sources disagree](#).

Origins at the lake and the move downriver

Ts'elxwéyeqw oral history places the people's beginnings at the head of the valley. The Elder Bob Joe told Oliver Wells that the people's main headquarters was at Chilliwack Lake, at Sxóchaqel. Over time the headquarters moved downriver under four brothers who governed the people, Wililéq, Th'eláchiyatel, Yexwéylem and Siyámches, who "used the Chilliwack River down as far as the stone house, Lóxewey" [7, 19, 37]. A fuller version, "History of a People," was recorded from Bob Joe by Norman Lerman in 1950–51 [7].

When the move to the Fraser lowland took place is debated [Sources disagree](#) [7, 19]:

- **After contact.** The anthropologist Wilson Duff proposed that the Ts'elxwéyeqw moved out onto the Fraser Valley only after Europeans arrived and the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Langley in 1827. Allan Smith, following Duff, wrote that the river changed course before 1830 to reach the Fraser just west of present Chilliwack. In his account, the people left their canyon homeland above Vedder Crossing only in the 1830s or later, once the lowland bog had filled in and the fort offered protection from raiders [35].
- **Displacement.** Marian Smith (1950) suggested that the Ts'elxwéyeqw may have displaced a Nooksack-speaking people from the lowland [7].
- **Long occupation.** Gordon Mohs (1990), on archaeological grounds, argued that the stretch of the river between Vedder Crossing and the Fraser had been occupied by the Ts'elxwéyeqw for a long time before contact, a view that Bob Joe's testimony supports [7].

Whatever its timing, the outcome is documented. At the time of European contact the Ts'elxwéyeqw occupied the lower Chilliwack River valley, and by 1870 they lived mainly on reserves established near Vedder Crossing [7, 37]. [Chapter 17 \(p. 71\)](#) describes the villages.

Houses and settlements

Ts'elxwéyeqw settlement followed the seasons. Winter, the main ceremonial season, was spent in pithouse villages; summer villages had houses of cedar planks; and at hunting and fishing camps people lived in temporary lodges covered with woven reed mats [7]. Villages were small. Schaepe quotes Keller's estimate of "never more than 50 people, or half a dozen houses," and Elders described villages moving as resources were used up: "just drifting like" [7]. Galloway records a famous house just above Vedder Crossing: Qoqoláxel, "Watery Eaves," a longhouse whose V-shaped roof collected rainwater that could be drawn by pulling a rope attached to a raisable plank [2].

The seasonal round

Salmon were the foundation of life, fished through the year and smoke-cured for storage [7]. Smith, drawing on Duff, records a small July run of chinook up the Chilliwack that was too fat to keep well, brush weirs supported on pole tripods (a method the Wren taught, in one story), and, after the 1830s, weirs placed in the river's meandering mouths. Eulachon ascended the Chilliwack in May and were dip-netted in large numbers, and small streams were fished with weirs fitted with two conical traps [35]. [Chapter 10 \(p. 44\)](#) describes the fisheries further.

Black bear was the favoured meat, followed by mountain goat, and autumn hunting expeditions into the mountains were common [35]. Deer, goat and bear were all taken [7]. Roots and berries came from valley and mountain alike ([Chapter 15, p. 63](#)). The high country was part of the round. Heavy snow limited use of the alpine basins below Mount Cheam to the four months from July to October, and in spring men and boys collected mountain goat wool on the alpine ridges for the women to weave into blankets [11, pp. 88, 90]. Dried food was soaked in the lakes near the top of Mount Cheam, a practice that may lie behind one interpretation of the mountain's name [11, pp. 87–88, 2].

The Chilliwack made yarn from mountain goat wool and wove it into blankets. Among the Upper Stó:lō more generally, dog hair was also cut or plucked in spring, spun on large spindles and woven on a loom [35]. Salt came from Cheam Peak and was used sparingly; serviceberries were obtained from the Thompson people of the interior [35].

Travel, trade and defence

Mountain and riverside trails linked the valley to the Nooksack and Skagit valleys and up and down the Fraser. Ridgetop routes were often preferred, partly because they reduced exposure to raiders [7]. Small shovel-nose canoes worked the sloughs, and large freight canoes carried goods [7, 37]. Trade reached both the coast and the interior [7]. [Chapter 19 \(p. 79\)](#) describes the trail network.

Raiders posed a danger. On a high rocky ridge at Vedder Crossing the Ts'elxwéyeqw kept a pole tower with a platform, from which one could see west down the river to Sumas Lake and warn of approaching visitors or raiders [35]. Galloway records the place as Stitó:s, the Promontory above Vedder Crossing, where tradition says a lookout was posted to watch for war canoes [2].

Stories in the land

The landscape is full of transformed beings and powerful places. A few of those that have been published are summarized here.

- **Lhílheqey (Mount Cheam).** Lhílheqey was the wife of Mount Baker. After a quarrel she came to the banks of the Fraser with her daughters and her dog, and all were transformed into mountains [2]. In the version told by Amy Cooper of Soowahlie to Oliver Wells, she had three sons, who became volcanic peaks in Washington, and three daughters. She chose to return to her people, saying "I'll stand and guard," so that no harm would come to her people or to the fish that came up the river to feed them. Her smallest child is held in her hand, and her dog's head shows when the snow melts [11]. Neighbouring peaks are her sisters or daughters: Oló:xwelwet, Ts'símteló:t and Xemó:th'iya, the youngest, who cries in streams because she cannot see the Fraser; the baby is Óyewòt [2]. Versions differ on whether these are sisters or daughters [Sources disagree](#).
- **The lakes.** Cultus Lake (Swílhcha) was avoided except by those training for spiritual power, because of the *stl'dleqem* creatures said to live in it; seeing them could cause a fatal sickness. "Cultus" is a Chinook Jargon word meaning "bad" [2, 3]. Chilliwack Lake is home to the *S'ó:lmexw*, powerful spiritual beings called "water babies" [3].
- **T'xwelátse.** T'xwelátse, the first male ancestor of the Ts'elxwéyeqw, was turned to stone by the Transformer as a reminder that people "have to learn to live together in a good way." The stone figure, about 1.2 m tall and weighing about 180 kg (400 lb), was taken by farmers in 1892 and sold to a museum in Washington. It came to the Burke Museum in Seattle in 1904 and was repatriated in October 2006, after 114 years [141, 142]. Schaepe identifies T'xwelátse as a transformed ancestor from the Chilliwack Valley [11, p. 92].
- **Black bear** is an ancestral being for the Ts'elxwéyeqw [11, p. 92].

Epidemics and upheaval

Introduced diseases reached the Stó:lō before most of them had met a European. Smith records smallpox in 1782; an epidemic around 1800 that reportedly killed about three-quarters of the population; a "fever" in 1830; and smallpox again from 1862 [35]. The name of Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie) is translated "dissolved people," and Galloway's consultants explained it by a great famine [2]. Smith notes a village name rendered "melting away" by Hill-Tout and "to dissolve" by Duff, and attributes it to a severe epidemic [35]. If these are the same name, the explanations differ [Sources disagree](#).

The population was larger before the 1830s and declined after 1839. Fort Langley counted 151 Chilliwack people in 1839, a figure Duff thought too low; Charles Wilson estimated 200 about 1860; and a census of 1879 counted 296, perhaps including some Pilalt [35]. A manuscript by Denys Nelson of 1927 lists eight Chilliwack village groups with their populations in 1904 and 1911 [36]. Traditional social structure and practices were severely disrupted by epidemics and by the economic upheaval that came with European settlement [7].

The Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations today

Under the Indian Act, the Ts'elxwéyeqw were organized as seven separate bands, today the seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations [1]:

Table 16.1. The seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations (bands)

Halq'eméylem name	English name
Áthelets	Aitchelitz
Sq'ewqéyl	Skowkale
Shxwhá:y	Skway
Th'ewá:lí	Soowahlie
Sxwoyehá:lá	Squiala
Ch'iyáqtel	Tzeachten
Yeqwyeqwí:ws	Yakweawkwoose

Names as published by the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations [1].

The Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations describe their shared territory as covering 95,000 ha of southwestern British Columbia, including land across the border in the United States, over which they exercise Aboriginal rights and title. Their stated vision is to sustain "our culture, our lands, and our families," and their six core values are unity, harmony, family, culture, nature and respect [1]. In early January 2013 the Chiefs and Councils of the seven bands gathered at Stehiyaq, their property at Centre Creek, to renew their connection with their ancestral lands; the outcome was a joint declaration of Aboriginal rights and title [1].

How this history is known

Much of what is written about the Ts'elxwéyeqw comes from Elders who chose to share their knowledge with recorders. Beginning in the 1950s, Oliver Wells of Edenbank Farm at Sardis recorded Chief Albert Louie, the storyteller Dan Milo, the historian Bob Joe, Mrs. August Jim and others; his notes and tapes underlie *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors* (1987) and his 1966 map of the territory in 1858 [43, 144, 4]. Galloway's *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem* draws on the Elders Group and on individual speakers such as Amy Cooper of Soowahlie [2]. Ethnographers including Hill-Tout, Duff and Smith, and the Stó:lō Nation's own researchers, have added further layers [35, 7]. Each of these sources reflects the circumstances in which it was recorded, and not all agree.

The Ts'elxwéyeqw lived in villages along the river, and many of their names and locations have been recorded.

Chapter 17

Villages of the Ts'elxwéyeqw

How many villages stood along the river, what they were called, where they lay, what became of them, and how the record was assembled from Elders, maps, dictionaries and the ground itself.

Sensitive places

Former village sites are places of deep importance to the Ts'elxwéyeqw, and many hold houses, burials and other remains protected by law. Archaeological sites in British Columbia that predate AD 1846 are protected automatically, on Crown or private land, and burial sites are protected regardless of age [145]. This chapter describes the villages for understanding, not for visiting. Speak with the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations before entering any former village site.

How many villages?

Sources disagree on the number of villages because they count different things at different times **Sources disagree**.

- **Nine villages.** BC Parks says the trail cut up the valley by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1855 improved an ancient trail that joined nine Indigenous villages between Vedder Crossing and Chilliwack Lake [28, 75].

- **Seven, nine or more.** Oral accounts shared with ChilliwackRiverValley.com by local First Nations members in 2026 put the number of villages in the valley at seven or nine, or more [146] Stó:lō knowledge.
- **Eleven numbered sites.** Oliver Wells's 1966 map of the territory in 1858 numbers 31 Chilliwack sites: 14 on the lowland, 6 at Vedder Crossing and 11 in the valley between Vedder Crossing and Chilliwack Lake. Eight of the valley sites carry the map's symbol for pithouse villages. The map gives numbers but not names; Wells intended it for publication with "other supplementary material" [4].
- **Ten named villages above Vedder Crossing.** Galloway's dictionary records the names of about ten villages on the river above Vedder Crossing and two more at the crossing itself, together with Oliver Wells's note of an eleventh, called Ts'elxwéyeqw, below Centre Creek, which was destroyed by a slide [2].
- **Eight village groups.** Denys Nelson's 1927 manuscript lists the Chilliwack people in eight village groups, by then mostly on the lowland [36].

These counts do not contradict one another as much as they appear to. Villages moved, merged and were abandoned over generations; some were destroyed by slides; and the counts span different eras and reaches of the river.

The villages of the valley

The table lists the villages in upstream order, as Galloway's dictionary records them, with the corresponding entries on Oliver Wells's map and in the Stó:lō Nation's 1997 archaeological inventory.

Table 17.1. Ts'elxwéyeqw villages on the Chilliwack River, Vedder Crossing to Chilliwack Lake

Village	Location	Meaning and notes	Other records
Skw'iykw'íylets	confluence of the Sweltzer with the Chilliwack, Vedder Crossing	"something that climbs or rises many times on the bottom"	Wells map, Vedder Crossing group
Th'ewá:lí (Soowahlie)	where the Sweltzer met the Chilliwack	"dissolved people"; now Soowahlie Reserve	Wells map; Schaepe "Suwa'le (?)"
Xwôxwá:ye	east bank of the Sweltzer, above Squiala	"black flies" or "blow-flies"	Wells 1965
Qoqoláxel	flat about 0.4 km (¼ mile) above Vedder Crossing	"Watery Eaves," after a famous longhouse with a rain-collecting V-shaped roof	Duff 1952; Wells
Th'óth'emels	small flat a little above Vedder Crossing, north side	"steep" (Wells)	Duff 1952
Xéylés	north bank opposite the mouth of Liumchen Creek	"slide, steep slope"; the village now lies under a slide	Schaepe "Xe'las (?)"

Village	Location	Meaning and notes	Other records
Loyú:mthel	both sides of Liumchen Creek, about 4 km (2.5 mi) above Vedder Crossing	"water swirling out in gushes" (Bob Joe); also the creek and mountain	Wells map site 21 nearby; Schaepe "Layu'mas (?)"
T'ept'ô:p	junction of Ryder Lake Creek and the Chilliwack	"sand-flea ridge" or "where vine maples grow"; name from the old language	Wells map sites 20–22; Schaepe "T'apt'o'p"
T'emiyéq(w)	mouth of Tamihi Creek	spelling uncertain; known only from Wells 1965	Wells map site 23; Schaepe "T'amiyehó:y"
Iy'óythel	deep water between Tamihi and Slesse creeks, a little above Anderson Flat and Allison's	"both sides (of the rock wall)" (Bob Joe); excavated 1999 (Chapter 18, p. 75)	Schaepe and Rousseau 2017
Selísi	mouth of Slesse Creek	"fang," the name of the mountain	Wells map site 25
Swóyel	across from or a little above the mouth of Centre Creek	possibly from the root "warn"	Wells map ("SWIY-ihl")
Ts'elxwéyeqw	below Centre Creek	an old village destroyed by a slide, according to Wells	Schaepe "Ts'élxweyeqw" site
Sxóchaqel	Chilliwack Lake	"lake at the head (of the river)"; the original headquarters	Wells map site 27 at the outlet; Schaepe "Sxóchaqel"

Names, locations and meanings from Galloway [2] unless stated; question marks in Galloway's and Schaepe's entries indicate uncertain forms. Wells map site numbers from the 1966 map [4]; Schaepe's names from the 1997 inventory [7]; Iy'óythel from [19].

Galloway adds a story to the entry for Swóyel. All the villages on the Chilliwack River, he notes, "were wiped out by avalanches at one point or other," and there is a story of a boy who saw a crack widening in the rocks above his village and tried to warn the people. Only his grandfather believed him, and the two of them alone survived because they moved away in time [2]. Ts'elxwéyeqw oral history recorded by Myles identifies at least two village sites and a burial area covered by landslides [7], and Smith, citing Duff, records a village "wiped out by a slide" [35].

Wells's map of 1858

In 1966 Oliver Wells compiled a map of the territory as it stood in 1858, with technical topography by Tunbridge and Tunbridge [4]. It shows the Chilliwack territory alongside those of the Pilalt, Sumas and Nooksack peoples; village sites with symbols for pithouses, plank houses and ceremonial houses; fifteen trails; Hudson's Bay Company sites, including a fish weir on the lowland; cairns; and the animals of particular importance to Indigenous people. Names are given in a phonetic respelling, labelled "P.P.S." on the map, with the English name beside them [4].

In the valley the map numbers eleven sites, listed here moving upstream [4]:

- site 21, at the mouth of Liumchen Creek, where a trail leaves for Liumchen Mountain;
- sites 20 and 22, on the north bank between Liumchen and Tamihi creeks, near the label for T'ept'ô:p;
- site 23, on the south bank at the mouth of Tamihi Creek, and site 24 opposite it;
- site 25, at the mouth of Slesse Creek, with a trail to the headwaters of the Nooksack;
- site 29, marked with a cairn, on the north bank just above Slesse Creek;
- site 26, about 2 km farther up, where a creek Wells called SKwyh-AWP (Cheam) Creek enters;
- site 30, a small square, opposite the mouth of Nesakwatch Creek;
- site 31, a cairn, opposite the mouth of Centre Creek;
- site 27, at the outlet of Chilliwack Lake beside Post Creek.

The key to these numbers was not printed on the map; it is expected to be found in Wells's supplementary material and will be sought for the 2027 edition.

Villages at Vedder Crossing and on the lowland

Wells's map numbers six sites at Vedder Crossing and fourteen on the lowland beyond it, where the Ts'elxwéyeqw lived after they moved downriver [4]. Galloway's dictionary records the names and stories of many of them [2]:

- **Láxewey** (Lackaway), between the Sumas River and Chilliwack Mountain: the "stone house" to which, in Bob Joe's account, the people moved down the river.
- **Qwemí:lits** (Cameleats), on the west end of Chilliwack Mountain, the mountain of the same name.
- **Áthelets** (Aitchelitz), at the junction of the Chilliwack River and Atchelitz Creek, "bottom (of Chilliwack Mountain)."
- **Shxwhá:y** (Skway), at the old outlet of the Chilliwack River on the Fraser, "place to make canoes."
- **Sq'ewqéyl** (Skowkale), "a turn or bend in the head."
- **Yeqwyeqwí:ws** (Yakweakwioose), the next village above Skowkale on the old river course; Elders told Galloway it was repeatedly burnt out.
- **Sxwoyehá:lá** (Squiala), at the junction of the old Chilliwack River and Koquapilt Slough, named, according to the Elders Group, because many people killed together by canoe raiders were buried there in one pit.
- **Ch'iyáqtel** (Tzeachten), "device to trap fish," a more recent settlement on the upper part of the lower river.

- **Slhálqi**, on the west bank of the old course near Tzeachten, where dried salmon was soaked.
- **Sekw'sekw'emá:y**, "birch grove place," at the junction of Semmihault Creek and the old Chilliwack River.
- **Syéq̓w**, a burned village site on Atchelitz Creek.

Smith records that after the 1830s the principal villages lay at the river's mouth and about halfway between the Fraser and Vedder Crossing [35]. By 1870 most Ts'elxwéyeq̓w people lived on reserves near Vedder Crossing [7]. Several of these village names are carried today by the Ts'elxwéyeq̓w First Nations ([Chapter 16, p. 66](#)) [1].

What remains

Of the villages in the valley, little shows on the surface. The Stó:lō Nation's 1997 inventory found that several previously recorded village sites had no surviving surface evidence, lost to development, logging, landslides and the shifting river [7]. Logging railways and roads built along the valley-bottom terraces may have damaged or destroyed sites, and housing has likely affected sites on the valley floor in the western quarter of the valley [7]. Other sites survive as house depressions, cache pits and mounds, and one, Iy'óythel, has been excavated ([Chapter 18, p. 75](#)).

Oral history and recorded names locate the villages. Archaeology adds evidence from the ground, and dates.

Chapter 18

Archaeology from plain to peak

What the ground has revealed: a valley used from the river's edge to the alpine, pithouses at Iy'oythel occupied 4,800 years ago, and the traces of the logging era and the air disasters of the twentieth century.

Archaeological sites are protected

In British Columbia, the *Heritage Conservation Act* automatically protects all archaeological sites that predate AD 1846, whether on Crown or private land, and protects burial sites and rock art sites regardless of age. Altering a protected site requires a permit [145, 147]. Artifacts must be left where they lie. Report finds and disturbances to the provincial Archaeology Branch and to the Ts'elxwéyeq̓w First Nations.

A late start

Systematic archaeology came late to the Chilliwack valley. Before 1997, only 13 archaeological sites had been recorded in the watershed, 85 percent of them in its lowest quarter, from surveys by Wilson Duff in 1949 and by the National Museum in the 1960s. Fladmark recorded a site at the foot of Chilliwack Lake in 1968, and in 1994 Millennia Research documented the historic crash site on Slesse Mountain. No survey had looked above the forests of the valley floor [7].

In 1997 the Stó:lō Nation carried out the first archaeological inventory of the whole watershed, for the Ministry of Forests and Forest Renewal BC. The fieldwork was done by crews from Soowahlie, Shxw'ow'hamel and Skway First Nations, and was reported by David Schaepe in *From Plain to Peak* (1998) [7].

From plain to peak

The 1997 survey covered 550 ha and recorded 24 new sites: 14 archaeological sites, 6 historic sites and 4 sites of traditional use [7]. Together with earlier records, the watershed then held 25 archaeological sites, 7 historic sites and 5 traditional-use sites. The kinds of sites found included [7]:

- scatters of stone tools and the flakes left from making them;
- cultural depressions: the remains of pithouses, 4–7 m across, and cache pits, 1–2 m across;
- culturally modified trees, mainly cedars from which bark had been stripped (17 such trees were recorded);
- earthworks, including mounds and cairns, some of them burials;
- rock art (pictographs and petroglyphs).

The survey's main finding gave the report its title. Previously recorded sites lay overwhelmingly on the valley floor, below 500 m. The new survey found sites at every elevation, with concentrations below 500 m and again in the subalpine between 1,000 and 2,000 m, and it recorded the first archaeological sites ever found above 1,500 m in the watershed. People used the valley "from plain to peak" [7]. The survey also showed the value of Indigenous knowledge in archaeology: spot checks guided by Elders and by the ethnographic record found sites almost every time [7].

The survey judged the valley floor the most disturbed part of the watershed and the subalpine and alpine the least. Logging, railways, roads, housing, landslides and the shifting river have removed many sites from the valley floor, so the surviving record is biased toward the higher ground [7].

Iy'oythel: a pithouse settlement

In 1999 the Stó:lō Nation and Antiquus Archaeological Consultants carried out the first systematic excavation in the Chilliwack valley, at Iy'oythel (site DgRk-10). The site lies on a river terrace at the base of Mount McGuire, where the river runs through a bedrock canyon about 25 km upstream of its old confluence with the Fraser. Bob Joe called the place Iy'oythel, "the opposite side, both sides (of the rock wall)." Deep pools and eddies in the canyon made it an ideal place to fish for salmon, and ethnographers describe it as "a good fishing site with deep fishing pools" [19, pp. 79–81]. The site is near Allison Pool recreation site [19, p. 79].

Three house depressions were identified, and two were excavated. They showed two periods of occupation [19, pp. 83–85]:

Table 18.1. Radiocarbon dates from Iy'oythel

Sample	Context	¹⁴ C age (BP)	Calibrated, as published (cal BP)	Recalibrated with IntCal20, 95% (cal BP)
Beta-128607	hearth charcoal, house 3	4,110 ± 40	4,825–4,525	4,820–4,451
Beta-128241	hearth, house 1	2,620 ± 60	2,835–2,715; 2,565–2,540	2,862–2,496
Beta-128242	floor, house 1	2,190 ± 110	2,365–1,905	2,462–1,875

Dates and published calibrations from [19, p. 83]. Recalibrated for this guide with IntCal20 [18, 53]; the small differences reflect the newer calibration curve.

The smaller house, house 3, was occupied about 4,800–4,500 years ago; the larger, house 1, between about 2,800 and 2,000 years ago. A red chert biface from house 3 resembles bifaces made between 5,500 and 3,500 years ago. A ground slate knife from house 1, of a type used to process salmon, marks a change in fish-processing technology after about 3,000 years ago, and obsidian in the younger deposits shows trade with places beyond the region [19, pp. 84–85]. The authors conclude that the houses and fish knives support Ts'elxwéyeqw oral history of Iy'oythel as a settlement and fishing place, and that it grew between 4,800 and 2,000 years ago [19, p. 85].

The mountains: Lhílheqey and the high country

Schaepe's later study of the high country around Mount Cheam (Lhílheqey) places the alpine sites in their cultural setting [11]. Only eleven pre-contact archaeological sites were known in the Canadian North Cascades in 2017, all recorded since 1997; they include small scatters of stone tools, a couple of roasting trenches and a campsite [11, p. 89]. At Williamson Lake, a cirque basin at 1,680 m at the eastern end of the Cheam Range, a cultural depression was identified in 1997 [11, pp. 89–90]. Heavy snow restricted the high basins to the four months from July to October [11, p. 90].

Stone for tools came from far afield: Hozameen chert from the upper Skagit and "obsidian" from Mount Rahm in the Silver Creek watershed. Oral tradition reports native copper and quartz crystal on Foley Peak; Schaepe notes that this remains unconfirmed [11, p. 91, 7]. Schaepe's 1998 report describes a quartz-crystal outcrop near the Lucky Four Glacier, on the north side of Foley Peak [7].

Schaepe frames the mountain through "cognitive ecology," a way of understanding that integrates "people, knowledge, agency, resources, and place." Lhílheqey is not only a source of goats, berries and stone but a transformed ancestor who stands guard over her people, and from her summit, Schaepe writes, the route of the Transformers can be seen in its entirety [11, pp. 91–93].

The historic record

The 1997 survey also recorded the archaeology of the twentieth century [7]:

- **Logging railways.** On the slopes of Mount McGuire are the remains of a logging-railway trestle built by B & K Logging in 1932–33. The line climbed the mountainside in seven switchbacks and was worked by two Climax locomotives. A log footing at the river's edge probably belonged to the valley-bottom logging railway built about 1928 [7].
- **Camps and traps.** Hearths and canning jars from about 1920–1950, a collapsed log bear trap on a subalpine ridge, and blazed and incised trees.
- **The Slesse crash site.** The wreck of Trans-Canada Air Lines Flight 810 on Slesse Mountain is recorded as the only historic burial site in the watershed ([Chapter 21, p. 84](#)).

Chronology of the region

No long archaeological sequence has yet been excavated in the valley itself. The nearest is in the Fraser Canyon, where the Milliken site near Yale has yielded evidence of occupation about 9,000 years ago. Archaeologists divide the later millennia of the region into named phases: Milliken and Mazama, then Eayem, Baldwin and Skamel, and finally Emery and Esilao [7]. The Iy'oythel houses, at 4,800 and 2,800–2,000 years ago, fall within the Middle Pre-Contact Period of the Lower Fraser region [19, p. 85].

The archaeological record gives way to the written one in the nineteenth century, when fur traders, surveyors and miners began to use the valley's ancient routes.

Chapter 19

Trails, contact and the boundary survey

An ancient network of mountain trails; the first European visitors; a Hudson's Bay Company trail and a gold-rush route; and the survey that drew the international boundary across the head of the valley.

The trail network

Long before Europeans arrived, trails linked the Chilliwack valley to its neighbours. Mountain and riverside routes ran to the Nooksack and Skagit valleys and up and down the Fraser, and ridgetop routes were often preferred to the valley floor, in part because they were safer from raiders [7]. Oliver Wells's 1966 map shows fifteen trails as they were remembered for 1858 [4]:

- along the north bank of the valley from the Fraser to Chilliwack Lake, and along the south bank from Vedder Crossing;
- up Liumchen Creek to Liumchen Mountain;
- up Slesse Creek to the headwaters of the Nooksack, and from the Nooksack to Chilliwack Lake over Hannegan Pass and down the upper Chilliwack valley;
- from the Nooksack over the mountains to Cultus Lake and to Sumas;
- from Chilliwack Lake to Hope, by Post Creek and Lindeman Lake to Hicks Creek and the Silver Hope, and by the separate "Sepass Trail";
- from Chilliwack Lake to the Fraser by the Klesilkwa and the Silverhope;
- from Chilliwack Lake to the Skagit by the Maselpalik, and to the Skagit by Little Beaver Creek in the United States.

A fuller summary of known trails is given by Myles (1995), cited by Schaepe [7]. Several of these routes are followed today by the Trans Canada Trail through the valley and over Paleface Pass to the Silverhope ([Chapter 27, p. 98](#)).

First European visitors

The first Europeans to pass through Ts'elxwéyeqw territory were Simon Fraser and his party, who descended the Fraser on 30 June 1808 [7]. Fraser's journal records nothing about the Chilliwack people [35]. Contact then lapsed until the Hudson's Bay Company built Fort Langley in 1827 [7].

In December 1828 a party from Fort Langley, with the clerk François Annance, travelled up the Fraser and into the Chilliwack River, the first recorded European visit to the valley. They turned back after about 16 km (10 miles), having seen canoes cached along the river but no

people [7, 35]. In 1846 Fort Langley sent men to establish a salmon fishery on the Chilliwack [35]; Wells's map marks a "Fish-weir H.B.Co." on the lowland [4]. Forts Yale and Hope followed in 1848 [35].

The Hudson's Bay Company trail and the gold rush

In 1855 the Hudson's Bay Company cut the first recorded trail up the Chilliwack River, improving the ancient trail that joined the villages between Vedder Crossing and Chilliwack Lake [28, 75].

During the Fraser River gold rush of 1858, some miners used the "Whatcom Trail," probably an Indigenous route, which reached the Skagit by way of the Chilliwack River valley [7]. The trail followed much of the river's course [29].

The boundary survey, 1857–1862

The international boundary follows the 49th parallel across the head of the valley. Between 1857 and 1862 British and American survey commissions found and marked it on the ground. The Chilliwack River was their road to the 49th parallel in this part of the Cascades, and both parties set up base camps at Chilliwack Lake [29].

The British party camped at the south end of Chilliwack Lake, west of the inlet, in 1858 and 1859 [7]. Its secretary, Charles Wilson, kept a journal that is the main record of the valley at that time [35]. On 27 July 1859 he left the mouth of the Chilliwack River on horseback for the lake. Near his first halt he met a chief and his family fishing; the chief's wife painted his face and hands with vermilion to soothe mosquito bites, and the chief's son Charley joined the party. On 29 July the party rode through a forest fire that extended "right across the valley & up the mountains," passable only because there was no wind, and then crossed about 8 km (5 miles) to Haig's camp at the lake in a boat built by Wilson's men [35]. Ts'elxwéyeqw people were employed by the British surveyors in 1859, which may have drawn them away from their usual summer camps [35].

The survey left its mark on the map and the land:

- **Depot Creek**, at the south end of the lake, is probably named for a supply depot of the commission. It was also called Brown Creek after Michael Brown, a soldier of the United States Army escort, who drowned in Chilliwack Lake on 10 October 1858 and was buried beside the creek [83].
- **Names in survey spellings**: the commission's records of 1860 call Slesse Creek "Selacee Creek," and survey records spell Tamihi Creek "Tummeahai" [81, 80]. A Royal Engineers map of 1862 labels Cultus Lake "Schweltza Lake" [84].

- **Survey points:** Wells's map marks "Look-out C.W. Wilson Aug. 28 1859" and "Darrah's Camp" on the American side [4].
- **The Royal Engineers' log building** at Vedder Crossing dates from 1860 and housed Royal Engineers surveying the 49th parallel; it was moved in 2000 [34].

The boundary itself crosses the head of the valley just south of Chilliwack Lake. Today it has no crossing point in the watershed; [Chapter 30 \(p. 106\)](#) explains the law.

Settlement and the reserves

Significant European settlement around the valley began in the 1860s and early 1870s [7]. The Vedder family, after whom the lower river is named, arrived in the Hope district around 1860, and Adam Vedder settled near Chilliwack in 1870 [69]. By 1870 the Ts'elxwéyeqw lived mainly on reserves established near Vedder Crossing, among them Soowahlie, which straddles the Sweltzer River [7, 84]. By the late 1880s settlers had established ranches and homesteads in the valley itself, but its development was much slower than that of the lowland beyond Vedder Crossing. As late as 1920, travel in the valley was by trail and wagon road [7].

Settlement reached the valley itself slowly, and when it arrived in the twentieth century it brought railways, logging camps and, later, the army.

Chapter 20

Logging, mining, the military and the road

Railway logging and a fire that ended it, prospectors in the high country, gold dredges on the lower river, an army camp at Vedder Crossing, and the road that opened the valley.

Railway logging

Large-scale change came to the valley with commercial logging in the 1920s. Between the mid-1920s and 1928, Campbell River Timber ran an extensive railway logging operation on 12 miles (19 km) of track laid between Vedder Crossing and Tamihi Mountain, now Mount McGuire [7, 2]. In the 1930s railways and roads gave access to much of the valley floor, and most of the old-growth forest on the valley bottom and the lower and middle slopes was cut. Large logging camps stood at Tolmie Flats, on the Tamihi Bench, and at Bowdenville, on the north side of the river opposite Slesse Creek [7]. In 1932–33 B & K Logging pushed a railway up the side of Mount McGuire in seven switchbacks, worked by two Climax locomotives; the remains of a trestle survive ([Chapter 18, p. 75](#)) [7].

BC Parks summarizes the period: logging began in the valley early in the twentieth century and had grown considerably by the 1920s, when a logging railway was built. A large fire in 1938, which BC Parks attributes to a logging-railway accident, destroyed the line, and trucks replaced the railway [28, 75]. Logging remained the main form of resource extraction in the watershed in 1998 [7].

Mining

Gold, silver and copper were mined in the valley from the 1910s to the 1960s. Lode mines were opened in the high country, among them the Red Mountain Mine on Border Peak [7]. The eastern peaks of the Cheam Range are known as the Lucky Four group after the abandoned Lucky Four Mine, and Foley, Welch and Stewart peaks are named for the partners of the contracting firm of Foley, Welch and Stewart [50, 57]. On the lower river, placer dredges worked the gravels between Vedder Crossing and Tamihi Creek until fisheries habitat legislation ended river dredging in the 1960s [7].

The road

Logging railways and roads opened the valley floor in the 1930s, and by 1998 a paved road ran all the way to the north end of Chilliwack Lake, with a gravel road to the south end. Housing had spread east along the north side of the river past Tamihi Creek, and unimproved resource roads climbed many of the mountainsides [7]. Chilliwack Lake Road and the forest service roads are described in [Chapter 25 \(p. 93\)](#).

The military at Vedder Crossing

The Second World War brought the army to the mouth of the valley. Camp Chilliwack was established at Vedder Crossing on 15 February 1942 [34]; another account dates the camp to about 1941 [Sources disagree](#) [148]. In 1942 rifle ranges were established on the road to Chilliwack Lake [75].

The camp grew into the home of Canada's military engineers. It housed No. 112 Basic Training Centre and the A6 Canadian Engineering Training Centre, which moved from Dundurn and became the Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering. The 58th Field Engineer Squadron arrived in 1957; the camp became Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack, home of the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering, in 1968; the Officer Candidate School came in 1970, 1 Combat Engineer Regiment in 1977 and the 3rd Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 1994 [34]. The base closed in 1997, when Area Support Unit Chilliwack was established on 2 September. Much of its land passed to Canada Lands Company and became the Garrison Crossing neighbourhood, and its training grounds now form the Canada Education Park campus of the University of the Fraser Valley [34, 148]. The Department of

National Defence kept a training area and ranges; the Chilcotin Training Area, known as the OPSEE Area, remains in use by reserve units, cadets and 39 Canadian Brigade Group, and the old quartermaster warehouse houses the Canadian Military Education Centre Museum [34, 148]. Two of the six surviving Canadian subpopulations of the endangered tall bugbane are named for the OPSEE area ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)) [126].

Military engineers left their mark at the head of the valley too. In 1971, 50 Field Squadron of the Royal Engineers built two bridges, named Victoria and Invicta, and a beach and park for the people of Chilliwack. The park, at the south end of Chilliwack Lake, was officially named Sapper Park that year, and a monument was erected there [149]. BC Parks likewise records that Sappers Park was built by a visiting British engineering company [28]. The Canadian Military Engineers Association reports that the monument has since been damaged and overgrown, and that the site is closed to camping and no longer reachable by road [149]. A Department of National Defence area lies on the south side of Chilliwack Lake Road near km 22 [13].

Correctional facilities

The province has operated correctional facilities in the middle valley for decades. In 1998 Schaepe noted "a number of provincial correctional facilities" between Slesse and Centre creeks [7], and in 1999 an inmate crew from Mount Thurston Correctional Centre worked on the Slesse Park slide stabilization [14]. Ford Mountain Correctional Centre stands on the north side of Chilliwack Lake Road at about km 26 [13] Local note. The provincial hunting regulations maintain a no-shooting area around "Provincial Jail Camp No. 1" in management unit 2-3 [150]. Correctional facility grounds are not open to the public.

Fish, gravel and visitors

Later economies have centred on the river itself. The federal Chilliwack River Hatchery opened in 1981 ([Chapter 10, p. 44](#)), the Vedder River sediment program has removed gravel from the lower river since before 1990 ([Chapter 9, p. 40](#)), and recreation has grown steadily. Schaepe observed in 1998 that hunting and fishing had been common in the valley since the 1920s and that hiking and camping had increased greatly over the previous two decades with the opening of Forest Service recreation sites and provincial parks [7]. Today a general store, a commercial rafting company and private campgrounds operate along Chilliwack Lake Road [13, 25].

The mid-twentieth century also brought aircraft over the valley's peaks, and with them a series of disasters.

Chapter 21

Air disasters and search and rescue

Three aircraft lost in the mountains around the valley between 1942 and 1956, the searches that followed, and the volunteer rescue service that grew out of them.

Three major air disasters occurred on the peaks around the valley in the fourteen years between 1942 and 1956.

Canadian Pacific Air Lines, December 1942

On 20 December 1942 a Canadian Pacific Air Lines Lockheed 14-H2 Super Electra, registration CF-CPD, crashed in the Cheam Range on a peak reported as Mount William Knight. The flight had come from Whitehorse by way of Prince George, and all 13 people aboard, 3 crew and 10 passengers, were killed [96]. About 500 hours of flying and extensive ground searches, hampered by weather, failed to find it. The search resumed in June 1943, and an aircraft spotted the wreck on 9 August 1943; a ground party reached it on 16 August. A coroner's jury called the crash "an accident, the causes of which are unknown," and the passengers' remains were buried at the site in October 1943 [96]. The party that cut a trail up the Foley Creek valley to the wreck named Airplane Creek [91, 96].

RCAF Liberator KK241, June 1945

On 1 June 1945 a Consolidated B-24 Liberator of No. 5 Operational Training Unit, Royal Canadian Air Force, took off from Abbotsford on a navigational training flight and vanished about half an hour later. All eleven men aboard, members of the Royal Air Force, were killed [151]. The wreck was sighted from the air on 16 June after a search of more than 600 flying hours, and a ground party confirmed it on 20 June. Contemporary reports placed it on Mount Foley, and later on Mount Welch, with wreckage spread down the mountainside; the crew were buried at a grave marked by a white cross on the crest between Welch Peak and The Still [151, 96]. In 1983 air cadets built a memorial cairn on one of the aircraft's engines on an island in Airplane Creek; it was probably damaged by floods in 1988 and 1989, and a new memorial was unveiled in Thompson Regional Park in the Chilliwack River Valley on 26 September 2015 [151]. The accounts differ on details of the times, the burial and the exact site Sources disagree [151].

Trans-Canada Air Lines Flight 810, December 1956

On the evening of 9 December 1956, Trans-Canada Air Lines Flight 810, a Canadair North Star, left Vancouver at 6:10 p.m. for Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg and Toronto [152]. About 45 minutes later, at 19,200 ft (5,850 m), a fire warning on the No. 2 engine led the crew to shut it down. At

7:10 p.m. they reported passing Hope and were cleared to descend to 8,000 ft; a minute later radar lost the aircraft. Flying with one engine shut down into severe icing and turbulence, it struck the third peak of Slesse Mountain. All 62 people aboard were killed: 3 crew and 59 passengers, of whom 47 were Canadian, 9 American, 4 from Hong Kong and 2 from Japan [152].

Among the passengers were five Canadian Football League players returning from the East–West all-star game in Vancouver: Mel Becket, Mario DeMarco, Gordon Sturtridge and Ray Syrnyk of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, and Calvin Jones of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers [152].

The wreck was not found until May 1957, when the mountaineers Elfrida Pigou, Geoffrey Walker and David Cathcart came upon it at about 2,300 m (7,600 ft) on Slesse, with more wreckage on a snowfield 600 m (2,000 ft) below [152, 153]. The wreckage and the victims' remains were left on the mountain, and body parts recovered during the coroner's inquiry were buried in two common graves on the mountainside [152]. The investigation attributed the crash mainly to icing and the loss of an engine; why the aircraft turned off its route and why the crew did not catch the error remain unclear. It was the deadliest airline crash in Canada to that date, and it remains the sixth-worst air disaster in Canadian history [152].

The crash site is recorded as an archaeological burial site and is protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*; disturbing or removing anything from it is illegal [7, 154]. The Slesse Memorial Trail, reached from the Nesakwatch Creek forest service road, passes a memorial plaque to the victims and leads toward the foot of the mountain, where a "Propeller Cairn" holds part of one of the aircraft's propellers [155, 3].

Search and rescue

The search for Flight 810 enlisted experienced mountaineers and skilled local volunteers alongside the official agencies, and it showed the need for a trained, organized rescue group. The result was the Chilliwack Emergency Rescue Corps [153]. In the 1970s, after the Provincial Emergency Program was formed, the corps was revitalized as Chilliwack Volunteer Rescue, and a few years later it became Chilliwack Search and Rescue [153].

The organization grew from about ten callouts a year in the 1980s to more than 75 a year today. Its area of about 1,100 km² is bounded by the Vedder Canal on the west, Chilliwack Lake on the east, the international boundary on the south and the Fraser River on the north. Its volunteers are trained in ground search, technical rope rescue, fixed-line rescue, swiftwater and lake rescue, avalanche response, recoveries and dog search. It works under the direction of the

RCMP, Emergency Management BC, Emergency Health Services and the coroner, in coordination with the Chilliwack Fire Department [153]. Its website offers a trip-planning form that gives rescuers the information they need to find an overdue party ([Chapter 29, p. 104](#)) [3].

While the valley was being logged, settled and searched, parts of it were being set aside for protection.

Chapter 22

Parks and protected areas

How a 160-hectare campground at the lake grew into a 9,258-hectare park, how ecological reserves came to protect a floodplain, a limestone basin and an orchid, and how the valley joined a protected landscape of a million hectares.

The protected areas

Table 22.1. Parks, ecological reserves and recreation sites in and beside the valley

Area	Manager	Size	Established	Purpose and notes
Sxótsaqel/ Chilliwack Lake Park	BC Parks	about 9,258 ha	1973; expanded 1974 and 1997; renamed 2021	lake, campground, backcountry; see below [20, 5]
Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve (No. 98)	BC Parks	86 ha	27 March 1980	floodplain forest for research and tree-stock improvement [121]
Liumchen Ecological Reserve (No. 143)	BC Parks	2,300 ha	after the 1996 Lower Mainland protected-areas recommendations	forests on limestone; spotted owl habitat [85]
Katherine Tye (Vedder Crossing) Ecological Reserve (No. 116)	BC Parks	3 ha	10 December 1986	Austin's phantom orchid [124, 125]
Chilliwack River Park	BC Parks	26 ha in 1980	1961	floodplain park in the lower valley [112]
Thompson Regional Park	Fraser Valley Regional District	—	—	community park in the lower valley; memorial to the crew of Liberator KK241 [22, 151]
Eight recreation sites	Recreation Sites and Trails BC	4–116 campsites each	1981–1993	camping along the river (Chapter 26, p. 96) [24]

Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park

The park began in 1973 as a small Class A park at the north end of Chilliwack Lake. It was established by Order in Council 2544 on 24 July 1973 with an area of 384 acres (about 160 ha) [20], a 100-site campground, a small day-use area and a boat launch [5, p. 2]. Wikipedia gives the date as 23 July 1973 and the original area as 384 hectares; the provincial name record and the management plan both indicate an original park of about 160 ha (384 acres) Sources disagree [75, 20, 5].

The park was enlarged in 1974 by Order in Council 2247 [20]. Its great expansion came in 1997, when the province accepted the recommendations of the 1996 Lower Mainland Protected Areas Strategy. Legislation passed on 23 July 1997 enlarged it to about 9,258 ha [20, 5]. In 2000 the park and the ecological reserve together covered more than 9,000 ha, zoned about 87 percent natural environment, 8 percent special features, 4 percent wilderness recreation and 1 percent (about 100 ha) intensive recreation, where the campground and day-use areas lie [5].

In 2021, under the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act* (Bill 17), the park was renamed Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park [20, 75]. The name pairs the Halq'eméylem name of the lake with its English one ([Chapter 7, p. 30](#)).

BC Parks manages the park as part of a transboundary complex of more than a million hectares of protected land, including the Mount Baker Wilderness and North Cascades National Park in Washington and Skagit Valley and E.C. Manning parks in British Columbia [5, pp. vi, 5].

The ecological reserves

Ecological reserves are the most strictly protected areas in British Columbia. They are set aside for research and education; most are open for non-destructive activities such as hiking, nature observation and photography, but hunting, fishing, camping, foraging and motor vehicles are prohibited and research requires a permit [32, 122].

- **Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve** was established on 27 March 1980 to protect productive floodplain forest at the head of Chilliwack Lake for research and tree-stock improvement. It covers 86 ha and borders North Cascades National Park ([Chapter 12, p. 52](#)) [121].
- **Liumchen Ecological Reserve** protects 2,300 ha of the upper Liumchen Creek basin. It followed the government's acceptance of the 1996 Lower Mainland protected-areas recommendations. Its 2001 management statement called for closing it to hunting and to motorized access [85].

- **Katherine Tye (Vedder Crossing) Ecological Reserve** was established on 10 December 1986. Its 3 ha protect a population of Austin's phantom orchid, on land donated by Katherine Tye and a parcel bought by the Nature Trust of British Columbia [124, 125].

Chilliwack River Park

Chilliwack River Park, about 10 km southeast of Chilliwack, was established as a Class A park in 1961. Its 1980 master plan described an undeveloped park of 26 ha on the floodplain, with side channels important to salmon and beaver ponds north of the road. The plan proposed parking, a picnic site at the mouth of Ryder Creek, a canoe launch, trails, and a groundwater spawning channel for chum and coho to be built with Fisheries and Oceans Canada [112].

Recreation sites

Recreation Sites and Trails BC manages eight recreation sites along the river, established between 1981 and 1993, from Tamihi Creek, the largest, to Riverside near Nesakwatch Creek (Chapter 26, p. 96) [24]. Several are operated under contract [156].

Across the border

South of the international boundary the protected landscape continues. The upper Chilliwack River flows through North Cascades National Park [29], and Liumchen Ecological Reserve borders the Mount Baker National Forest [85]. The Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve and North Cascades National Park share a boundary [121].

Between the parks and reserves lives a rural community whose residents have also become stewards of the river.

Chapter 23

The valley community today

A rural district of about 1,600 people, the services that support it, and the residents, anglers and volunteers who have worked to restore the river.

Electoral Area E

Outside the City of Chilliwack at its western end, the valley is governed as Electoral Area E of the Fraser Valley Regional District, which the district describes as "known as the Chilliwack River Valley." The area had 1,568 residents in the 2021 census and covers 652 km² [22]. The

regional district provides fire protection, dykes, water service and transit, publishes an evacuation guide and a community wildfire resiliency plan for the area, and sends emergency alerts through its Alertable notification system [22]. The district lists Chilliwack Lake Park, Chilliwack River Park and Thompson Regional Park among the parks of the area [22].

Settlement is concentrated along Chilliwack Lake Road in the lower valley. In 1998 Schaepe noted that housing on the north side of the river had spread east past Tamihi Creek [7]. Slesse Park and Ryder Lake are recognized communities in the provincial gazetteer [12]. The upper valley above Slesse Creek is mostly Crown land, parks and ecological reserves, with correctional facilities, a Department of National Defence area and scattered private holdings ([Chapter 20, p. 81](#)) [13, 7].

Community organizations

The regional district lists several community groups active in the area: the Chilliwack River Valley Residents Association, the Chilliwack Vedder River Cleanup Society and the Fraser Valley Illegal Dumping Alliance. The district also publishes a line for reporting illegal dumping, 1-877-952-7277 [22]. The Chilliwack Field Naturalists lead nature outings in the valley [110].

Restoring the river: the Slesse Park slide

The clearest example of community restoration is the work on the clay slides of the middle valley. After the floods of 1989 and 1990, three clay slides, at Slesse Park, Upper Tolmie and Willow Run, delivered silt to the river every year between November and March [14]. A berm built at the Slesse Park slide in 1991 failed to hold it: on 27 January 1997 a large slump overtopped the berm and temporarily blocked the river. Local people formed the Chilliwack River Action Committee in response [14].

In 1999 the committee raised the berm by 2.5–3.5 m using donated gravel, removed 2,744 m³ of clay, and installed culverts. Between October 1999 and April 2000 the project stabilized the slope with willow wattles and live stakes, planted 1,000 cedars and hydroseeded the bare ground. The project was valued at \$215,009, of which 53.7 percent was contributed in kind. A Stó:lō Nation archaeologist first surveyed the area, which proved archaeologically sensitive [14]. In a February 2000 survey of 200 anglers, 85.5 percent reported clearer water and 95.5 percent supported further work [14].

The committee's report lists the groups that took part, including residents' and ratepayers' associations, fish and game clubs, drift fishers' and salmon societies, and a river habitat committee; an inmate crew from a provincial correctional centre also worked on the site [14].

Living in the valley

Life in the valley is shaped by its setting. There is no cellular service on most of the valley floor [28, 3], floods and slides threaten the road and homes along the river ([Chapter 9, p. 40](#)), and the regional district ordered evacuations of riverside properties in December 2021 and December 2025 [42, 43].

The timeline that follows gathers the events of the preceding chapters, from the advance of the ice to the present, into a single sequence.

Chapter 24

Timeline

The valley's history in one table, from the advance of the ice to the present.

Ages before AD 1000 are approximate calendar ages; see [Chapter 4 \(p. 19\)](#) and [Chapter 18 \(p. 75\)](#) for the radiocarbon dates on which they rest.

Table 24.1. A timeline of the Chilliwack River Valley

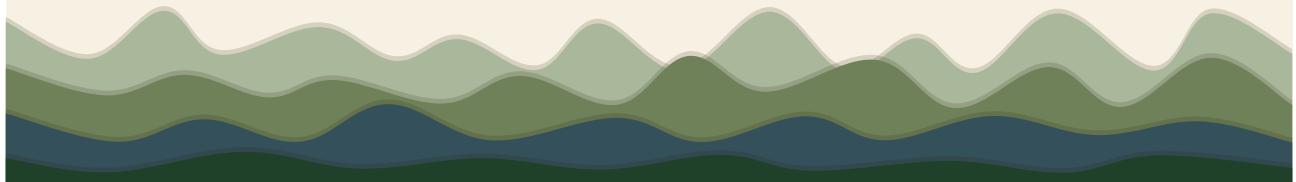
Date	Event
about 27,000–25,700 years ago	The advancing Chilliwack valley glacier builds an outwash plain; mammoth tusks are buried in its gravels [51, 6]
about 24,000 years ago	Lowland ice dams the valley mouth; a glacial lake forms [6]
about 13,800–12,900 years ago	Late-glacial lake fills the lower valley; two Sumas readvances; the ice leaves [17]
about 4,800 years ago	A debris flow builds the Tamihi Bench and dams the river [6]
about 4,800–4,500 years ago	First dated pithouse at Iy'oythel [19]
about 2,800–2,000 years ago	Second, larger pithouse occupied at Iy'oythel [19]
time immemorial	Ts'elxwéyeqw headquarters at Sxóchaqel (Chilliwack Lake), later moved downriver under four brothers [7, 37]
1782	Smallpox epidemic [35]
about 1790s	The Ts'elxwéyeqw begin to adopt Upriver Halkomelem [2]
about 1800	Epidemic reportedly kills about three-quarters of the people [35]
30 June 1808	Simon Fraser passes through Ts'elxwéyeqw territory on the Fraser [7]
1827	Hudson's Bay Company builds Fort Langley [7]

Date	Event
December 1828	A Fort Langley party with François Annance enters the Chilliwack River, the first recorded European visit [7, 35]
before 1830 to 1830s	River course changes; the people move onto the lowland (date debated) [35, 7]
1839	Fort Langley counts 151 Chilliwack people [35]
1846	Hudson's Bay Company sets up a salmon fishery on the Chilliwack [35]
1855	Hudson's Bay Company cuts the first recorded trail up the valley [28]
1857–1862	British and American boundary surveys; base camps at Chilliwack Lake [29]
1858	Fraser River gold rush; some miners use the Whatcom Trail through the valley [7]
10 October 1858	Michael Brown of the U.S. Army escort drowns in Chilliwack Lake; buried by Depot Creek [83]
29 July 1859	Charles Wilson's party rides through a forest fire spanning the valley [35]
1862	Smallpox again [35]; Royal Engineers map names "Slesse" and "Schweltza Lake" [81, 84]
1870	Ts'elxwéyeqw mainly on reserves near Vedder Crossing [7]; Adam Vedder settles near Chilliwack [69]
1873	Chilliwack Township incorporated [31]
1875, 1882	Log jams divert the river west toward Sumas Lake [29]
1879	Census counts 296 Chilliwack people [35]
1892	The stone T'xwelátse is taken from the Ts'elxwéyeqw [141]
1894	Great freshet; the river's westward course becomes permanent [29]
1910s–1960s	Gold, silver and copper mining; placer dredging on the lower river [7]
1913	Tamihi Creek name adopted; boundary resurvey maps [80, 82]
1917	Chilliwack Lake name adopted [97]
1920–1924	Vedder Canal dug and Sumas Lake drained [72, 41]
31 March 1924	Chilliwack River name adopted [36]
mid-1920s–1928	Railway logging between Vedder Crossing and Tamihi Mountain [7]
1927	First ascent of Slesse Mountain [154]
1932–1933	B & K Logging railway on Mount McGuire [7]
1938	Fire ends railway logging [28]
15 February 1942	Camp Chilliwack established at Vedder Crossing [34]
20 December 1942	Canadian Pacific Air Lines CF-CPD lost in the Cheam Range; 13 killed [96]
August 1943	Wreck found; Airplane Creek named [96, 91]
1 June 1945	RCAF Liberator KK241 lost near Foley and Welch peaks; 11 killed [151]

Date	Event
1954	British Empire and Commonwealth Games rowing on the Vedder Canal [29]
9 December 1956	Trans-Canada Air Lines Flight 810 strikes Slesse Mountain; 62 killed [152]
May 1957	Flight 810 wreck found by mountaineers [152]; the search leads to the formation of the Chilliwack Emergency Rescue Corps [153]
1961	Chilliwack River Park established [112]
1963	First ascent of the northeast buttress of Slesse [154]
1966	Oliver Wells compiles his map of the territory in 1858 [4]
1968	Camp Chilliwack becomes CFB Chilliwack [34]
1971	Royal Engineers build two bridges and a beach and park; the park, at the south end of Chilliwack Lake, is named Sapper Park [149]
1973	Chilliwack Lake Park established [20]
December 1975	Slides and mudflows throughout the valley; flood works on the Vedder follow [6, 8]
27 March 1980	Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve established [121]
1980	Steelhead managed as a hatchery-augmented run [109]
1981	Chilliwack River Hatchery opens [33]
10 December 1986	Katherine Tye (Vedder Crossing) Ecological Reserve established [124]
1989–1990	Floods start chronic clay slides [14]
27 January 1997	Slesse Park slide blocks the river; Chilliwack River Action Committee formed [14]
1997	Chilliwack Lake Park enlarged to about 9,258 ha; CFB Chilliwack closes; first watershed archaeological inventory [20, 34, 7]
1999	Excavation at Iy'oythel [19]
2000	Park and reserve management plan [5]
2002	Cultus Lake sockeye assessed as Endangered [98]
October 2006	T'xwelátse repatriated after 114 years [142]
January 2013	Ts'elxwéyeqw Chiefs and Councils gather at Stehiyaq and issue a joint declaration of Aboriginal rights and title [1]
2018	<i>Being Ts'elxwéyeqw</i> published for the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations [157]
November–December 2021	Atmospheric rivers; Sumas Lake refills; evacuation order on Chilliwack Lake Road [41, 42]
2021	Park renamed Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park [20]
December 2025	Atmospheric river; Wilson Road evacuation; forest road washouts [43, 23]
2026	Wilson Road Dike repairs [22]; first edition of this guide

Part VI**Places**

The earlier parts explain the valley; this one helps readers find their way through it. Part VI follows Chilliwack Lake Road kilometre by kilometre, summarizes the forest service roads, and describes the campgrounds and recreation sites, the trails and the climbing history of the surrounding peaks. It ends beyond the watershed, in the neighbouring landscapes whose histories are bound up with the valley's: Cultus Lake, Ryder Lake and Promontory, the Sardis lowland and the American headwaters.

**Chapter 25****Chilliwack Lake Road and the forest roads**

A kilometre-by-kilometre log of the valley's one public road, and the status of the forest service roads that branch from it.

About these distances

The road log below is compiled from a published log of 2015 [13] and cross-checked against distances given by Tourism Chilliwack, BC Whitewater, Recreation Sites and Trails BC and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. It predates the floods of 2021 and 2025, and distances vary with vehicles and odometers by several hundred metres. All distances are approximate [Confirm](#). The road will be re-measured with a trip odometer for the 2027 edition.

Getting there

Chilliwack Lake Road begins at the roundabout on Vedder Road at Vedder Crossing, just before the Vedder Crossing bridge. From Highway 1, take exit 119 (Vedder Road) and drive south about 5.4 km to the roundabout; turn left onto Chilliwack Lake Road and set the odometer to zero [3, 33]. The road is paved to the provincial park entrance at the north end of Chilliwack Lake, about 39–40 km from Vedder Crossing. Beyond it, the gravel Chilliwack River

forest service road runs along the east side of the lake to a barricaded bridge near the south end, about 50 km from the start [13, 5, p. 17]. Cellular service ends near the store at about km 2 [28, 13].

The road log

Table 25.1. Chilliwack Lake Road and the Chilliwack River forest service road, road kilometres from Vedder Crossing

km	Side	Feature	Other published distances
0.0	—	Vedder Road roundabout, Vedder Crossing	km 0 in all sources [3]
2.1	S	store; last cellular service	"past the On the Way store" [28]
3.5	S	Wilson Road	—
6.6	S	Thompson Regional Park	—
6.8	N	fire hall	—
6.9	S	Osborne Road (Pointa Vista take-out)	km 7 [116]
9.2	N	Slesse Road	—
10.0	—	Tamihi bridge over the Chilliwack; slalom course just upstream	km 11 [117]
10.1	SW	Liumchen Creek forest road; Tamihi Creek recreation site	about km 12 [24]
13.5	N	Allison Pool recreation site	about km 15 [24]
14.2	—	Anderson Creek bridge; Trans Canada Trail	—
16.7	N	Thurston Meadows recreation site	about km 16 [24]
18.0	—	Borden Creek bridge	—
19.8	—	Slesse Creek bridge; Borden Creek forest road (S)	—
20.0	N	Chilliwack River Hatchery	about km 20 [33, 3]
20.7	S	Slesse Creek forest road	—
22.0	S	Department of National Defence area	—
22.2	S	Pierce Lake trailhead	km 22 [3]
23.2	—	Pierce Creek bridge	—
25.3	N	Chipmunk Caves access road	—
26.0	N	Ford Mountain Correctional Centre	—
26.3	—	bridge over the Chilliwack River	about km 27 [119]
26.4	N	Foley Creek forest road; Camp Foley recreation site	km 28 [3]; about km 26.5 [24]
28.4	N	Ford Mountain forest road and trail	km 28.4 [3]

km	Side	Feature	Other published distances
29.4	SE	Riverside recreation site	about km 30 [24]; second entrance km 31 [3]
29.6	S	Nesakwatch Creek forest road (Slesse Memorial Trail)	km 31 [3]
31.8	—	Centre Creek camp entrance (gated)	—
32.2	N	Williams Ridge trailhead	km 32 [3]
39.0	N	Post Creek trailhead for Lindeman, Greendrop and Flora lakes	km 40 [3]
39.4	S	Chilliwack Lake Park entrance; end of pavement	km 42 [3]; 40 km [28]
47.0	NE	Paleface Creek forest road and bridges	—
49.7	SE	Depot Creek forest road	—
50.1	—	end of road; barricaded bridge; Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve trail	—

Road log after [13], with side of road (N, S, E or W) as given there. Private holdings and businesses are not listed individually.

The discrepancies are typical of road logs. Tourism Chilliwack's figures for the upper valley run 1–3 km longer than the 2015 log, and BC Parks gives the distance to the park as 40 km

Sources disagree [3, 28, 13].

Forest service roads

Forest service roads branch from Chilliwack Lake Road into most tributary valleys: among them the Liumchen Creek, Tamihi, Borden Creek, Slesse Creek, Foley Creek, Airplane Creek, Bench, Ford Mountain, Nesakwatch Creek, Paleface Creek and Depot Creek roads [13, 3, 24]. They are industrial roads built for logging, and they are maintained, deactivated or closed according to forestry needs. Many require high-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicles; Tourism Chilliwack describes the final kilometres of the Mount Cheam access as rough and steep, requiring "a high-clearance 4x4 and an experienced backroad driver" [3].

The Chilliwack Natural Resource District publishes current road conditions. When this edition was prepared, its page (last updated 22 September 2026) listed the following [23] [Confirm](#):

Table 25.2. Forest service road status, as published 22 September 2026

Road	Status	Date of notice
Foley Creek FSR	closed at km 0.0 by a washout	16 December 2025
Tamihi FSR	closed at km 3.0 by a fill-slope failure; rockfall "No Stopping" zone near km 3.0	16 December 2025; 20 April 2026
Liumchen East FSR	caution: tension cracks at km 3.9 and 4.7	22 December 2025

Road	Status	Date of notice
Bench FSR	closed between km 3.9 and 13 by washouts, unstable ground and a damaged bridge; a separate notice reports a closure near km 16	16 and 10 December 2025
Radium FSR	retired	7 January 2019

The district asks road users to report problems to 604-702-5700 and publishes radio channel maps and a resource road safety guide [23].

The Foley Creek closure cuts the usual road access to the Mount Cheam, Baby Munday and Airplane Creek areas, which Tourism Chilliwack's guide describes from the Foley Creek road [3].

The road also leads to the valley's campgrounds: the provincial park at the lake and the recreation sites along the river.

Chapter 26

Campgrounds and recreation sites

The provincial park campground at the lake, eight recreation sites along the river, backcountry camps, and the rules that go with them.

Check before you go

Site numbers, gate hours, seasons, fees and reservation rules change from year to year, and sites close after floods. The details below are as published when this edition was prepared [Confirm](#).

Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park

The park's frontcountry campground at the north end of Chilliwack Lake now has 182 campsites [28]. It has grown steadily: the original park of 1973 had a 100-site campground, the management plan of 2000 counted 131 sites, and the 2008 park brochure 146 [5, pp. 2, 19, 39].

- **Gates** are locked from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily [28].
- **Reservations** are made through BC Parks' reservation service (1-800-689-9025); phone bookings, changes and cancellations carry a \$5 fee, and the call centre is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Pacific time [28].
- **Operator.** The park is operated for BC Parks by Sea to Sky Park Services Ltd. (1-604-986-9371) [28].
- **Pets** must be on a leash at all times in the park [28].

- **The lakeshore.** No camping and no fires are permitted on any part of the Chilliwack Lake shoreline [28].

Backcountry camps lie at Greendrop, Lindeman, Flora and Radium lakes. Backcountry registration is required for all of them, and fires are not permitted in the backcountry [28]. In 2000 the park had 15 wilderness sites at Lindeman Lake and 10 at Greendrop Lake [5, p. 19].

Recreation sites

Recreation Sites and Trails BC manages eight recreation sites along the Chilliwack River, all within the Chilliwack Natural Resource District [24].

Table 26.1. Recreation sites of the Chilliwack River Valley (status as published October 2026)

Site	Campsites	Access (approximate road km)	Notes	Established
Tamihi Creek	116	about km 12; east and west entrances near the Liumchen Creek road	East (16 sites, shelter, open all year) and West (88 sites); off-road vehicle staging area, no overnight use	1981
Tamihi Rapids	11	about km 12, after the Tamihi bridge	small group site; closed because of flooding	1983
Allison Pool	7	about km 15	small group site; gravel access for smaller vehicles; reservable in season	1992
Thurston Meadows	76	about km 16	open meadow; RV-accessible; gates locked 10 p.m.	1988
Rapids	28	about km 26.5, then 6.1 km on the Bench road	off-road vehicle staging area and beginner loop; seasonal closure	1992
Chipmunk Peninsula	22	about km 26.5, then 4.3 km on the Bench road	mature timber; seasonal closure	1992
Camp Foley	4	about km 26.5, just past the bridge	private group site booked as a unit	1993
Riverside	15	about km 30	gates locked 11 p.m.; seasonal closure, reopening spring 2027	1993

From the provincial recreation-site dataset and site descriptions [24]. Distances are those published for each site and differ from the road log in [Chapter 25 \(p. 93\)](#).

Four of these sites, Camp Foley, Chipmunk Peninsula, Rapids and Tamihi West, are run by a contractor that locks the gates from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. and provides no drinking water or garbage service. Sites can be reserved online or paid for in cash on arrival [156]. Note that the Bench forest service road, which leads to Rapids and Chipmunk Peninsula, was reported closed beyond km 3.9 in December 2025 [23].

Other camping

On the lowland, the regional district's Vedder River Campground is open from 1 April to 31 October [29]. Private campgrounds operate along Chilliwack Lake Road [13]. Camping is prohibited in ecological reserves [32], and ecological reserve and park rules are summarized in Chapter 30 (p. 106).

From the campgrounds and the road, trails climb to the lakes, ridges and peaks.

Chapter 27

Trails, peaks and climbing history

The hiking trails of the valley with their distances and climbs, the Trans Canada Trail from Cultus Lake to the Silverhope, and the ascents that opened the peaks.

Trail data

Trail distances and elevations differ between sources, and access roads wash out. Figures below are as published; check current conditions with BC Parks, Recreation Sites and Trails BC and the Chilliwack Natural Resource District before setting out [Confirm](#). Complete a trip plan before any hike (Chapter 29, p. 104).

Trails of the valley

Table 27.1. Selected hiking trails, upstream order

Trail	Return distance	Elevation gain	High point	Access
Hatchery loop	1 km	flat	—	Chilliwack River Hatchery, about km 20 [3]
Pierce Lake	16 km	1,040 m	1,375 m	trailhead at km 22 [3]
Mount MacFarlane (via Pierce Lake)	21 km	1,760 m	2,100 m	as above; "a long haul with strenuous and challenging terrain" [3]
Ford Mountain	14.6 km	1,005 m	1,410 m	Ford Mountain FSR at km 28.4; 4WD [3]
Mount Cheam	9.5 km	665 m	2,112 m	via the Foley Creek road; high-clearance 4x4; sheer drops near the top [3]
Baby Munday Peak	10.5 km	1,407 m	2,250 m	via the Foley Creek and Airplane Creek roads [3]
Slesse Memorial	8 km	460 m	1,100 m	Nesakwatch Creek FSR, about 5.6 km to a washout [3]

Trail	Return distance	Elevation gain	High point	Access
Williams Ridge	11 km	1,435 m	1,880 m	km 32; gains about 1,000 m in 1.7 km [3]
Lindeman Lake	3.4 km	215 m	825 m	Post Creek trailhead, km 39–40 [3, 28]
Greendrop Lake	10.4 km	365 m	1,010 m	as above [3, 28]
Flora Lake	14 km	1,585 m (to the ridge)	1,770 m	as above; full Lindeman–Greendrop–Flora loop 20 km [3]
Radium Lake	15–16 km	910 m	1,460 m	Chilliwack Lake Park; best June to October [3, 28]

Distances are return. Cheam, Baby Munday and Airplane Creek access depends on the Foley Creek road, closed at km 0 in September 2026 (Chapter 25, p. 93).

Sources disagree: trail figures

- **Radium Lake:** 15 km return and 910 m of climbing (Tourism Chilliwack) [3]; 16 km return (BC Parks web page) [28]; 12 km return and 900 m from the footbridge (BC Parks brochure, 2008) [39].
- **Flora Lake:** 1,585 m of climbing to the ridge (Tourism Chilliwack) [3]; 1,050 m (BC Parks brochure, 2008) [39].
- **Mount Cheam:** high point 2,112 m (Tourism Chilliwack) [3]; summit 2,104 m (Wikipedia) [60]; 2,080 m (Schaepe 2017) [11, p. 87].

Cautions published by the managers. BC Parks warns that the route from Greendrop to Flora Lake is overgrown and crosses slides, and should be travelled only by experienced backpackers with good footwear [28]. It advises against the route to Hanging Lake, which is not maintained and has no safe crossing of the Chilliwack River [75]. Tourism Chilliwack notes that the Lindeman Lake trail can be crowded on summer weekends [3]. Break-ins have been reported at the Post Creek parking lot [28].

The Trans Canada Trail

The Trans Canada Trail follows the valley for most of its length on its way from Chilliwack to Hope. The route between Chilliwack and Hope is 114 km long; it passes Cultus Lake, follows the Chilliwack valley, crosses Paleface Pass (1,270 m) and descends the Silverhope, using parts of the old Centennial Trail and former logging-railway grades [30]. Elevations along the way include Cultus Lake at 60 m, Tamihi at 120 m, Borden Creek at 180 m, Larsons Bench at 330 m, the Post Creek bluff at 660 m and Chilliwack Lake at 625 m. Snow can cover Paleface Pass until mid-June, and there are no supplies beyond Cultus Lake [30].

Table 27.2. Trans Canada Trail segments through the valley

Segment	Length
Liumchen	9.5 km
Tamihi	2.5 km
Tolmie	6 km
Thurston	5 km
Slesse	2 km
Larsons Bench	7.3 km
Nesakwatch	7.1 km
Centre Creek	6.6 km
Radium	3.2 km
Chilliwack Lake	8 km
Paleface Pass	about 7 km
Upper Silverhope	16.8 km

From Trails BC [30]. Staging areas: Tamihi, Thurston Meadows, Riverside, the hatchery at Slesse Creek and Chilliwack Lake.

Climbing history

The peaks around the valley were climbed first by surveyors and then by mountaineers from Vancouver and Chilliwack.

Table 27.3. Recorded first ascents of selected peaks

Peak	First recorded ascent	Party
Cheam Peak (Lhílheqey)	1888	A.O. Campbell, Ebe B. Knight and party [60]
Mount McGuire	1906	J.J. McArthur's survey party, by the southeast ridge [61]
Williams Peak	July 1908	James J. McArthur and E.T. de Coeli, by the southwest ridge [46]
Welch Peak	1924	A. Cooper, F. Smith and F. Spouse [57]
Slesse Mountain	10 August 1927	Stan Henderson, Mills Winram and Fred Parkes, from Slesse Creek [16, 154]
Canadian Border Peak	1932	T. Fyles and a companion [55]
Mount Rexford	July 1951	Genschorek and Sparling, by the south face [45]
Slesse Mountain, northeast buttress	26–28 August 1963	Fred Beckey, Steve Marts and Eric Bjornstad [154]

Wikipedia reports that Mount Webb and Mount Lindeman may have been climbed in 1859 by members of the American boundary survey; this could not be confirmed Unverified [58, 56]. The first winter ascent of Slesse's southwest route was made in February 1955 by Fips Broda and John Dudra [154].

Mountaineers named many features. W.H. Mathews of the Alpine Club of Canada submitted Chipmunk Creek and Knight Peak in 1946; Knight Peak probably honours E.R. Knight, prominent in ascents in the area from 1888 to 1892 [89, 103]. Neal Carter of the BC Mountaineering Club proposed the name Foley Glacier, adopted in 1979 [62]. Crossover Peak, named in 1981, takes its name from the cross-over hike between Pierce Lake and Slesse [59]. The initials of Knight differ between the two sources (E.R. Knight; Ebe B. Knight)

Sources disagree.

The trails do not stop at the edge of the watershed, and neither does its history.

Chapter 28

Neighbouring landscapes

Cultus Lake and the Columbia Valley, the Ryder Lake upland and Promontory, the Sardis lowland, the American headwaters and the routes east to the Skagit and the Silverhope.

Cultus Lake and the Columbia Valley

Southwest of Vedder Crossing, Cultus Lake fills a basin dammed by a glacial delta, the Cultus Bench, which the Chilliwack River built when stagnant ice briefly diverted it into the basin at the end of the last glaciation ([Chapter 4, p. 19](#)) [6]. The lake covers 6.3 km², has a mean depth of 32 m and a maximum of 41 m, and drains a basin of 65 km² [98]. Its outlet, the Sweltzer River, joins the Chilliwack at Vedder Crossing [84]. South of the lake, the Columbia Valley slopes south to the international boundary; during the last glaciation meltwater from an ice-marginal lake drained that way to the Nooksack [6].

The lake's Halq'eméylem name, Swílhcha, was given to the Sweltzer and to the nearby ridge, Swílhcha Smá:lt, now Mount Amadis or International Ridge. Smith records that Cultus Lake and its outlet belonged to a separate Cultus Lake people in early times, and Galloway that Nooksack people had a settlement on the lake before contact [2, 35]. The lake was avoided because of the *stl'álegem* creatures said to live in it ([Chapter 16, p. 66](#)) [2]. COSEWIC describes it as one of the most heavily used lakes in the province, and its endangered sockeye and pygmy sculpin are described in [Chapter 10 \(p. 44\)](#) [108]. Liumchen Ecological Reserve adjoins Cultus Lake Park to the east [85].

Ryder Lake and Promontory

North of the lower river, the Ryder Upland rises above Vedder Crossing. Its thick glacial deposits record the advance of the lowland ice ([Chapter 4, p. 19](#)), and its water table lies more than 200 m below the surface [6, 51]. Ryder Lake, the lake and the community on the upland, were named on provincial maps by 1946 and adopted in 1950 and 1983 [102, 12]. The upland's creek reaches the Chilliwack at the old village of T'ept'ô:p [2].

At the western end of the upland, Promontory overlooks Vedder Crossing. Its Halq'eméylem names are Stitó:s, for the mountain by Vedder Crossing, where tradition places the Ts'elxwéyeqw lookout, and Lexwtamílem, "place of calling," for Promontory Point [2]. Promontory is now a neighbourhood of the City of Chilliwack [158].

Vedder Crossing and the Sardis lowland

Below Vedder Crossing the river runs out onto the Fraser Lowland, where the Ts'elxwéyeqw lived after they moved downriver and where the seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations are today ([Chapter 17, p. 71](#)). The lowland is crossed by the river's former channels, among them Chilliwack Creek, its original course to the Fraser, and Luckakuck, Atchelitz and Semmihault creeks ([Chapter 9, p. 40](#)) [36, 2]. Beneath it lies the Sardis–Vedder Aquifer, the city's water supply [105].

At Sardis stood Edenbank, the pioneer farm of the Wells family, where Oliver Wells was born in 1907; he died in 1970. The farmhouse of 1913 survives [144, 143]. Wells's interviews with Elders and his map of 1858 are central sources for this guide.

The American headwaters

South of the boundary, the Chilliwack River rises at Hannegan Pass and flows north through North Cascades National Park to Chilliwack Lake ([Chapter 7, p. 30](#)) [29]. Four tributaries of the Canadian river also begin in Washington: Slesse Creek (Silesia Creek in Washington), Tamihi Creek (Tomyhoi Creek), Nesakwatch Creek and Liumchen Creek [87, 80, 82, 79]. Depot Creek flows from Washington into the south end of Chilliwack Lake [83]. The American side holds the Northwest Boundary Survey's names and camps of 1859 and, on Wells's map, Darrah's Camp and Wilson's lookout [4].

There is no legal crossing of the boundary in the valley. Anyone entering Canada must report to an official port of entry, however remote their location; the minimum fine for failing to report is \$1,000 [159].

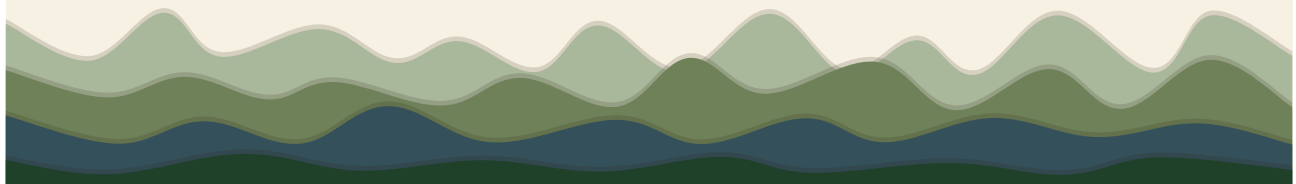
East to the Skagit and the Silverhope

From the head of Chilliwack Lake, old Indigenous trails led east to the Skagit, by the Maselpanik and by Little Beaver Creek, and north to Hope by the Silverhope [4]. The Trans Canada Trail follows the northern route today, climbing from the lake over Paleface Pass at 1,270 m and descending the Silverhope [30].

Part VII

Safety and Stewardship

The forces that shaped the valley also make it hazardous. Steep slopes, fast and cold water, sudden floods, late snow and the absence of cellular service all follow from the geography described in the earlier parts. Part VII sets out those hazards and how to call for help, the rules that apply on each kind of land, and the pressures on the valley that the cited sources identify, from floods and a changing climate to logging, recreation and invasive species.



Chapter 29

Hazards and emergencies

No cell service, cold and fast water, sudden floods, slides, avalanches, wildfire, wildlife and washed-out roads, and how help is called.

In an emergency

Call 911. To report a wildfire, call 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on a cell phone [3]. There is no cell phone reception on Chilliwack Lake Road beyond the store at about km 2, so plan how you would call for help before you go [28, 13].

Plan before you go

With no cellular service on most of the valley floor, a way to call for help must be planned in advance. Coverage on ridges and summits depends on elevation and line of sight and cannot be relied on **Local note**. Chilliwack Search and Rescue provides an online trip-plan form so that rescuers know where to look if a party is overdue; Tourism Chilliwack recommends completing one before every trip [3]. In winter, check the avalanche forecast before going into the mountains [160].

Water

- **Cold water and currents.** The water of Chilliwack Lake is very cold, and BC Parks warns of dangerous currents at the lake's outflow and for several kilometres downstream [28].
- **Wind.** Severe afternoon winds are frequent on Chilliwack Lake and can arise unpredictably; the boat launch is not suitable for large craft [28].
- **Wood and changing channels.** Logs and log jams are the main danger on the river, and floods rearrange the channel ([Chapter 11, p. 49](#)) [25, 115].
- **Sudden floods.** The largest floods on the lower river come in autumn and winter, last one or two days and rise quickly with little warning [9]. The regional district issues evacuation orders and alerts through its Alertable system and publishes an evacuation guide for Area E [22].

Slopes and roads

The Geological Survey's map of the lower valley warns that "the mountain slopes are all subject to landslides" [54]. Slides and debris flows reach the valley floor in heavy rain, as they did throughout the valley in December 1975 and on the forest service roads in December 2025 ([Chapter 9, p. 40](#)) [6, 23]. Clay slides in the lower valley deliver silt to the river every winter [14]. Forest service roads are industrial roads: they wash out, close without warning, and often require high-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicles ([Chapter 25, p. 93](#)) [23, 3].

Snow and avalanches

Snow lingers late at height: Paleface Pass can be snow-covered until mid-June, and the Radium Lake trail is best from June to October [30, 3]. The high country is avalanche terrain, and Chilliwack Search and Rescue maintains an avalanche-response capability [153].

Fire

Dry summers bring wildfire. A fire crossed the whole valley in July 1859, and another in 1938 ended railway logging ([Chapter 2, p. 14](#)) [35, 28]. Fires are not permitted in the backcountry of Chilliwack Lake Park, or anywhere on the shore of Chilliwack Lake [28]. Check current fire restrictions before lighting a campfire ([Confirm](#)). The regional district has prepared a community wildfire resiliency plan for Area E [22].

Wildlife

Black bears and cougars live in the valley ([Chapter 13, p. 56](#)). BC Parks asks visitors always to be aware of bears and other wildlife and never to feed or approach them [28, 7].

People and property

Vehicle break-ins have been reported at trailheads and river access points, including the Post Creek parking lot and the Pointa Vista take-out [28, 117]. Illegal dumping is a persistent problem on back roads, and the regional district publishes a reporting line ([Chapter 23, p. 88](#)) [22]. Near the international boundary, smuggling and illegal border crossings are suspected [121].

Search and rescue

Searches and rescues in the valley are carried out by Chilliwack Search and Rescue, a volunteer organization called out more than 75 times a year, under the direction of the RCMP and Emergency Management BC ([Chapter 21, p. 84](#)) [153]. Rescue is requested by calling 911.

Many of these hazards are managed through rules, which differ with the kind of land.

Chapter 30

Rules by kind of land

The valley is a patchwork of parks, ecological reserves, and Crown, private, First Nations and federal land, each with its own rules.

Rules change

This chapter summarizes rules published when this edition was prepared. It is not legal advice. Confirm current rules with the agencies listed in [Chapter 32 \(p. 111\)](#) before you go [Confirm](#).

Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park

Table 30.1. Selected rules in Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park

Topic	Rule
Gates	locked 11 p.m.–7 a.m. daily [28]
Pets	on leash at all times [28]
Off-road vehicles	ATVs and other off-road vehicles not permitted in the park [28]
E-bikes	not permitted on trails [28]
Backcountry	registration required at all backcountry campgrounds; no fires in the backcountry [28]
Lakeshore	no camping and no fires anywhere on the shore of Chilliwack Lake [28]
Boating	10 km/h within 100 m of shore; 25 km/h elsewhere on the lake; launch unsuitable for large craft [28]

Topic	Rule
Plants and wildlife	do not damage or remove flowers, trees or shrubs; never feed or approach wildlife [28]
East-side road	ATVs and dirt bikes not permitted beyond the park's south boundary; the road there has been decommissioned [74]

Ecological reserves

The Chilliwack River, Liumchen and Katherine Tye ecological reserves are open for non-destructive activities such as hiking, nature observation and photography. Hunting, fishing, camping, foraging and motor vehicles are prohibited, and research and educational activities require a permit [32, 122]. The 2001 management statement for Liumchen Ecological Reserve also listed horses, trapping and aircraft access as not permitted [85].

Archaeological sites and burials

All archaeological sites in British Columbia that predate 1846 are protected by the *Heritage Conservation Act*, on Crown and private land, and burial sites and rock art are protected regardless of age. No one may alter a protected site without a permit [145, 147]. This includes the crash site of Flight 810 on Slesse Mountain, which is a recorded burial site ([Chapter 21, p. 84](#)) [7, 154]. Leave artifacts where they lie and report finds to the Archaeology Branch.

Fishing

Fishing in the Chilliwack–Vedder system is closely regulated by the province (trout, char, steelhead and kokanee) and by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (salmon). The main closures and limits are summarized in [Chapter 10 \(p. 44\)](#). Key points: the river above a line 100 m below the Slesse Creek confluence is closed to fishing; streams in Region 2 require a single barbless hook all year; wild steelhead must be released; and a steelhead stamp is required [26, 27, 113].

Hunting

The valley lies in provincial wildlife management units 2-3 and 2-4 [26, 150]. The 2026–2028 hunting regulations map a "Chilliwack Valley — Firearms Using Shot Only Area" in unit 2-3, and a no-shooting area around "Provincial Jail Camp No. 1" in the same unit. No mountain goat season is listed for units 2-3 or 2-4, and hunters in unit 2-4 require a Fraser Valley Special Area Hunting Licence [150]. Hunting is prohibited in ecological reserves [32]. The maps in the synopsis define the exact boundaries [Confirm](#).

The international boundary

There is no border crossing in the valley. Anyone entering Canada must report to an official port of entry, no matter how remote their location, and the minimum fine for failing to report is \$1,000 [159]. Hikers on the American Chilliwack River trail and in the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve should treat the boundary as closed.

Other land

- **First Nations land**, including reserves and the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations' Stehiyaq property at Centre Creek, belongs to its owners [1].
- **Department of National Defence land** at Vedder Crossing and in the valley is not open to the public ([Chapter 20, p. 81](#)) [148, 13].
- **Correctional facility grounds** are not open to the public [13, 7].
- **Private land** lines much of Chilliwack Lake Road in the lower valley [7].
- **Recreation sites** have their own gate hours, which vary from site to site ([Chapter 26, p. 96](#)) [24, 156].

Rules govern individual conduct. Larger pressures act on the valley as a whole.

Chapter 31

Current pressures

Floods and sediment, a changing climate, a century of logging, heavy recreation, species in decline and invasive arrivals: the forces acting on the valley now, as the cited sources describe them.

This chapter brings together pressures described in the sources used throughout the guide. It does not rank them or recommend policy.

Water, sediment and floods

The river carries a heavy load of gravel and sand. About 50,000 m³ of sediment settles in the lower channel each year, reducing its capacity to carry floods, and gravel is removed every second year to maintain a floodway sized for the 200-year flood [8]. Clay slides in the lower valley have added silt every winter since the floods of 1989 and 1990 [14]. The atmospheric rivers of November 2021 and December 2025 brought evacuation orders, reshaped the river

channel and closed forest service roads [42, 43, 118, 23]. The Sardis–Vedder Aquifer, recharged mainly by the Vedder River and supplying the city's water, is particularly vulnerable to contamination because of its coarse soils and high rainfall [105].

A changing climate

Several of the sources reviewed for this guide identify climate change as a threat. The management description of the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve notes that increased flooding may affect the floodplain shrubland and that projected drier conditions could eventually change it [121]. COSEWIC lists warming and drought, which reduce cool deep-water refuges, among the main threats to the Cultus pygmy sculpin; droughts and floods linked to climate among those to the coastal giant salamander; and a warming, drying climate as a possible new threat to the mountain beaver [111, 130, 134]. The description of Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve adds that changing conditions may affect the distribution, life history and reproductive success of its phantom orchids [124].

Forestry and roads

As [Chapter 12 \(p. 52\)](#) describes, most of the old forest of the valley floor and lower slopes has been cut, and the land around Liumchen Ecological Reserve has for the most part been logged [7, 85]. COSEWIC identifies forestry as the most widespread threat to the coastal giant salamander, through silt from logging and roads, and as the most important current threat to the mountain beaver, through soil compaction; logging is also a threat to tall bugbane and the phantom orchid [130, 134, 140, 127]. Roadside clearing ranks second among the threats to that species [126].

Recreation

The valley lies within about 100 km of Vancouver [6], and the sources record the effects of heavy use. Popular trails are crowded on summer weekends [3]. In the Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve, illegal camping, dumping, and the harvesting of ferns, salal, moss, mushrooms, firewood and cedar shakes are recorded, and the main trail degrades the habitat of a blue-listed plant [121]. Illegal dumping on back roads has led to a regional alliance against it [22]. Vehicle break-ins and friction between paddlers and residents are reported at river access points, and the river is crowded with anglers in the salmon season [25, 117]. Off-road vehicles are channelled to staging areas at the Tamihi Creek and Rapids recreation sites and are excluded from the park [24, 28]. Recreation trails on Vedder and Elk mountains are a recorded threat to tall bugbane [140].

Species in decline

Several species of the valley and its edges have declined sharply ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#)). In the spring of 2022 only one northern spotted owl was known in the wild in British Columbia [138]. The North Cascades grizzly population numbered fewer than 25 bears in 2004 [128]. Cultus Lake sockeye fell from about 20,000 spawners to about 1,500 mature fish, mainly through overfishing, with prespawning deaths and the degradation of the lake [98, 108]. Tall bugbane has lost almost half its Canadian subpopulations in three generations [126]. By contrast, Chilliwack Lake sockeye increased by about 64 percent over three generations to 2017 [108].

Invasive species

Smallmouth bass were first caught in Cultus Lake in May 2018 and are a serious concern for the Cultus pygmy sculpin [111]. Eurasian water-milfoil has become established in the lake [98]. Invasive and other problematic species are the greatest threat to tall bugbane, and invasive plants, including spreading chervil at Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve, also threaten the phantom orchid [126, 127, 124].

Development

On the lowland and the lower valley, residential development is the main threat to the phantom orchid and continues to fragment the habitat of the Oregon forestsnail [127, 131]. Katherine Tye Ecological Reserve now has residential development on two sides [124]. Housing, logging, roads, landslides and the river have destroyed or damaged many archaeological sites on the valley floor [7].

Stewardship

Responses to these pressures include:

- the protected areas ([Chapter 22, p. 86](#));
- species recovery programs ([Chapter 14, p. 59](#));
- the hatchery and the Vedder River sediment program ([Chapter 10, p. 44](#); [Chapter 9, p. 40](#));
- community restoration, such as the Slesse Park slide project ([Chapter 23, p. 88](#));
- the stewardship of the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations over their territory, guided by the principle "Don't ruin, waste, destroy everything; just take what you need" [1].

Part VIII

Reference

The final part gathers the reference material: contacts and sources of current information, the Halq'eméylem place names, the register of official names, further reading, and the numbered references for every source cited in the guide.

Chapter 32

Contacts and information sources

Who to call, and where to find current information, as published when this edition was prepared.

Telephone numbers and addresses are given only where the organization publishes them. Check them before relying on them [Confirm](#).

Table 32.1. Contacts

Organization	Role	Contact
Emergency services	police, fire, ambulance, search and rescue	911 [3]
BC Wildfire Service	report a wildfire; fire information	1-800-663-5555 or *5555 (cell); information line 1-888-336-7378 [3]
Chilliwack Search and Rescue	volunteer search and rescue; online trip planner; river levels	chilliwacksar.org [160]
Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe Management Ltd.	organization of the seven Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations	Building 10, 3rd floor, 7201 Vedder Road, Chilliwack; 604-824-2692; ttml.ca [1]
BC Parks: Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park	park operator, Sea to Sky Park Services Ltd.	1-604-986-9371 [28]
BC Parks reservations	campground reservations	1-800-689-9025 [28]
Chilliwack River Hatchery (Fisheries and Oceans Canada)	hatchery and visitor trail	55205 Chilliwack Lake Road; 604-858-7227 [33]

Organization	Role	Contact
Chilliwack Natural Resource District	forest service road conditions; report road problems	604-702-5700 [23]
Fraser Valley Regional District, Electoral Area E	local government; evacuation guide; Alertable notifications; illegal dumping reports	fvr.d.ca; dumping line 1-877-952-7277 [22]
City of Chilliwack	Vedder River flood response; drinking water	chilliwack.com [9, 104]
Archaeology Branch, Province of British Columbia	protection of archaeological sites	PO Box 9816 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9W3 [147]
Canada Border Services Agency	reporting on entry to Canada	report at an official port of entry [159]
Province of British Columbia	freshwater fishing and hunting regulations	regulations synopses [26, 150]
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	salmon fishing rules for Region 2	[27]
Recreation Sites and Trails BC	recreation sites	[24]
Tourism Chilliwack	hiking guide	[3]
ChilliwackRiverValley.com	corrections and new information for this guide	hi@chilliwackrivervalley.com

Current information

- **River levels:** Water Survey of Canada gauges 08MH103 (Chilliwack River above Slesse Creek), 08MH056 (Slesse Creek near Vedder Crossing) and 08MH001 (Chilliwack River at Vedder Crossing) [78].
- **Road conditions:** the Chilliwack Natural Resource District's road safety page [23].
- **Park advisories:** the BC Parks page for Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park [28].
- **Fishing:** the provincial synopsis and Fisheries and Oceans Canada's in-season notices [26, 27].

Chapter 33

Halq'eméylem place names

A glossary of Indigenous place names of the valley and its edges, with their meanings as recorded, and Oliver Wells's 1966 spellings as historical forms.

About this glossary

The names below are drawn mainly from Brent Galloway's *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*, which records names given by Elders in the 1960s and 1970s and by Oliver Wells, with Galloway's analysis of their meanings [2]. Spellings follow Galloway except where the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations or the province use another form, such as Sxótsaqel [1, 20]. Wells's spellings are from his map of 1966, written in his own phonetic respelling, and are shown as historical forms [4]. Question marks and the words "possibly" and "probably" reflect Galloway's own uncertainty. Many meanings are interpretations, and some are disputed; the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre are the authorities on these names (Stó:lō knowledge). Village names are listed in Chapter 17 (p. 71).

Table 33.1. Halq'eméylem place names of the Chilliwack River Valley and its edges

English name	Halq'eméylem name	Meaning or note	Wells 1966 form
Chilliwack River; the Chilliwack people	Ts'elxwéyeqw	"slough, backwater, quieter water at the top of the head" (Galloway); "as far as you can go upstream in a canoe" (Albert Louie; Tourism Chilliwack) [2, 3]	chihl-KWAY-uhk
Chilliwack Lake	Sxóchaqel; Sxótsaqel	"lake at the head (of the river)" [2]; "sacred lake" [3]	s'HAW-ch.uhk-uhl
Old course of the river, now the Vedder	Lhewálmel	"wanting to run away"; "river that changed its course" (Wells) [2]	thoo-WEHL-men
Fraser River	Stó:lō	the river of the Stó:lō, the People of the River [78, 1]	STAW-LOH
Cultus Lake	Swílhcha	from roots meaning "warn" and "unclear water" (Galloway) [2]; "an empty basin that quickly filled with water," or "somebody died" [3]	SWEE-ehl-chah
Sweltzer River	Swílhcha Stótelô	"Cultus Lake creek"; "Sweltzer" is an early spelling of Swílhcha [2]	—
Hatchery Creek	Stótelô	a name from the old Nooksack-related language [2]	s'toh-TAH-loh

English name	Halq'eméylem name	Meaning or note	Wells 1966 form
Promontory (mountain at Vedder Crossing)	Stító:s	lookout place [2]	stee-TAWS
Promontory Point	Lexwtamílem?	"place of calling" [2]	—
Liumchen Creek, Mountain and village	Loyú:mthel	"water swirling out in gushes" (Bob Joe) [2]	lix-OHM-thul
Liumchen Lake	Loyúmthel Xótsa	[2]	—
Ryder Lake Creek; Ryder Lake	T'ept'ô:p Stótelô; T'ept'ô:p Xótsa	after the village T'ept'ô:p [2]	t'uhp-T'OH.P
Tamihi Creek	T'ami(ye)hóy Stótelô	Galloway: probably roots meaning "hermaphrodite" and "finish"; Stó:lô Nation, via the provincial record: "hollering the ones that are finished" Sources disagree [2, 80]	t'ehm-ee-HIY
Mount McGuire	T'amiyahó:y	"Tamihi Mountain" (Bob Joe) [2]	t'ehm-ee-HIY or McGuire Mt.
Slesse Mountain; Slesse Creek	Selísi; Selísi Stótelô	"fang"; probably borrowed from Nooksack [2, 81]	sel-EE-see
Iy'óythel	Iy'óythel	"both sides (of the rock wall)" (Bob Joe); "rock wall to rock wall" (Wells) [19, 2]	—
Middle Creek (probably Nesakwatch Creek)	Lóyeqw'e'áts	possibly related to the word for sucker fish [2, 82]	—
Nesakwatch Creek	—	from a Halkomelem word for a reed used to make fishnets [82]	ne-SA-Kwatch
Centre Creek	Sch'iyáq; Stehiyáq	"place of the fish trap" [2]	s'tehee-AHK
Foley Creek	Ets'íts'a; "Oot seet sa"	uncertain [2, 90]	uht-ZEET-zah (Ford)
Foley Lake	Lasisélhp?	ends in the suffix for "tree" [2]	lah-see-SIHtP
Cheam Creek (north side, below Foley Creek)	Sqwe'óp (?)	probably "crabapple" [2]	SKwyh-AWP
Post Creek	Kwókwelem?	possibly "place to get hidden" (Galloway) or "echo" (Stó:lô atlas) [2]	KOHK-oh-lum
Lindeman Lake	Tl'ikw'ólem; also Schewíts	probably related to kinnikinnick berries [2]	Kleh-Kah-WA-lum

English name	Halq'eméylem name	Meaning or note	Wells 1966 form
Depot Creek	Chechíxem (possibly)	[2]	Chu-ch-CHEE-hum
Mount Cheam	Lhílheqey	"glacier" (recorded from an Elder); possibly related to soaking dried food [2, 3]	THEETH-uhl... (probable)
Peaks beside Mount Cheam	Oló:xwelwet; Ts'símteló:t; Xemó:th'iya; Óyewòt; S'óyewòt	Lhílheqey's sisters or daughters, and her baby [2]	—
Lake at the foot of Cheam Peak	Sqwá:p	"hole in the dirt" [2]	—
Basin lake near the top of Cheam Peak	Xwoqwsemó:leqw	"washing one's head" [2]	—
Smith Falls lake and creek	Slhílhets'	"place for cutting (bulrushes for mats)" [2]	slah-LEET-lihts
Mount Amadis or International Ridge	Swílhcha Smá:lt	"Cultus Lake mountain" [2]	—
Chilliwack Mountain	Qwemí:líts	also a village at its west end [2]	Kum-AY-leets
Luckakuck Creek	Lexexéq	"always straddled," after a slippery log crossing [2]	uhK-UHK
Semmihaul Creek	Smiyó:lh	[2]	smee-AWtTH
Elk Creek falls	Chelchálíth?	"water falling or rolling" (Wells) [2]	chal-cha-LEETH
Silver Hope Creek	Tl'íkw'elem	"place to get kinnikinnick berries" [2]	KLEH-Kwum-num

Wells's forms are as transcribed from the 1966 map for this guide; his crossed-t (t) appears to represent the sound written lh in modern spelling [4, 2].

Chapter 34

Register of official place names

The official and former geographical names recorded by BC Geographical Names in and around the Chilliwack River watershed, with their positions and status.

This register lists the names returned by the BC Geographical Names database for the area between 122.00° and 121.30° W and 49.00° and 49.22° N, retrieved on 11 October 2026 [12]. The area is a rectangle, so it includes some features outside the watershed, such as names on the Fraser side of the Cheam Range, and about forty names on the Fraser Lowland in the City of Chilliwack were omitted. Positions are those of the database: the approximate centre of a feature, or the mouth of a stream. Status is as recorded: *adopted* names are official; *rescinded* names are former official names; *recorded* names are noted but not official. Name records, including origin notes for many features, can be consulted at the BC Geographical Names website. Halq'eméylem names are given in [Chapter 33 \(p. 113\)](#).

Table 34.1. Official names in and around the Chilliwack River watershed (BC Geographical Names, retrieved 11 October 2026)

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Airplane Creek	Creek	49°07'21"N	121°36'09"W	adopted
Aitchelitch 9	Reserve	49°08'59"N	121°59'04"W	adopted
Mount Amadis	Mount	49°01'15"N	121°57'24"W	adopted
Anderson Creek	Creek	49°12'20"N	121°44'29"W	adopted
Mount Archibald	Mount	49°09'32"N	121°43'12"W	adopted
Ascaphus Creek	Creek	49°03'43"N	121°59'27"W	adopted
Atchelitz Creek	Creek	49°09'26"N	121°59'32"W	adopted
Baby Munday Peak	Peak	49°09'59"N	121°37'42"W	adopted
Borden Creek	Creek	49°04'37"N	121°43'55"W	adopted
Calkins Creek	Creek	49°07'59"N	121°52'24"W	adopted
Camp Slough	Slough	49°11'59"N	121°48'37"W	adopted
Canadian Border Peak	Peak	49°00'14"N	121°40'46"W	adopted (Border Peak rescinded)
Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack	CFB	49°05'59"N	121°57'59"W	adopted
Cantelon Creek	Creek	49°12'33"N	121°25'18"W	adopted
Centre Creek	Creek	49°06'10"N	121°32'11"W	adopted

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
CFB Chilliwack	Post Office	49°06'29"N	121°58'04"W	adopted
Cheam	Settlement	49°10'59"N	121°53'04"W	rescinded
Cheam 1	Reserve	49°11'59"N	121°46'04"W	adopted
Cheam Lake	Lake	49°11'34"N	121°45'15"W	reinstated
Cheam Peak	Peak	49°11'10"N	121°40'56"W	adopted
Cheam Ridge	Ridge	49°10'18"N	121°39'27"W	adopted (Cheam Range rescinded)
Chilliwack	City	49°09'27"N	121°57'02"W	adopted
Chilliwack Lake	Lake	49°03'24"N	121°24'50"W	adopted
Chilliwack River	River	49°05'49"N	121°57'49"W	adopted
Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve	Ecological Reserve	49°00'19"N	121°24'49"W	adopted
Chilliwack River Park	Provincial Park	49°04'44"N	121°53'08"W	adopted
Chipmunk Caves	Caves	49°06'18"N	121°38'42"W	adopted
Chipmunk Creek	Creek	49°06'20"N	121°38'44"W	adopted
Church Mountain	Mountain	49°01'53"N	121°51'13"W	adopted
Clear Creek	Creek	49°02'52"N	121°58'33"W	adopted
Clerf Lake	Lake	49°06'07"N	121°19'42"W	adopted
Conway Peak	Peak	49°10'29"N	121°33'48"W	adopted
Mount Cope	Mount	49°00'10"N	121°30'01"W	adopted
Mount Corriveau	Mount	49°03'49"N	121°29'46"W	adopted
Crossover Peak	Peak	49°02'37"N	121°36'21"W	adopted
Cultus Lake	Lake	49°03'15"N	121°59'05"W	adopted
Cultus Lake Park	Provincial Park	49°02'10"N	121°58'27"W	adopted
Cupola Creek	Creek	49°05'25"N	121°26'35"W	adopted
Custer Ridge	Ridge	49°04'22"N	121°19'12"W	adopted
Depot Creek	Creek	49°01'45"N	121°24'06"W	adopted
Dolly Varden Creek	River (former name, upper Chilliwack R)	49°05'49"N	121°57'49"W	recorded
East Liumchen Creek	Creek	49°02'16"N	121°54'21"W	adopted
Mount Edgar	Mount	49°01'45"N	121°20'39"W	adopted
Elk Creek	Former Post Office	49°08'24"N	121°50'27"W	recorded
Elk Creek	Creek	49°10'37"N	121°51'07"W	adopted

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Elk Mountain	Mountain	49°06'46"N	121°48'13"W	adopted
Evans	Former Railway Point	49°07'23"N	121°59'02"W	recorded
Fin Creek	Creek	49°04'00"N	121°59'22"W	adopted
Flora Lake	Lake	49°06'49"N	121°24'53"W	adopted
Foley Creek	Creek	49°06'21"N	121°38'08"W	adopted
Foley Glacier	Glacier	49°09'44"N	121°35'21"W	adopted
Foley Lake	Lake	49°07'37"N	121°34'38"W	adopted
Foley Peak	Peak	49°09'35"N	121°35'05"W	adopted
Ford Creek	Creek	49°09'15"N	121°50'27"W	adopted
Four Brothers	Mountain	49°12'59"N	121°38'49"W	adopted
Frances Creek	Creek	49°05'24"N	121°26'17"W	adopted
Goetz Peak	Peak	49°08'56"N	121°30'23"W	adopted
Grass 15	Reserve	49°07'59"N	121°53'04"W	adopted
Mount Green	Mount	49°13'09"N	121°19'18"W	adopted
Greendrop Lake	Lake	49°08'30"N	121°25'48"W	adopted
Hanging Lake	Lake	49°00'01"N	121°27'08"W	adopted
Hatchery Creek	Creek	49°04'36"N	121°58'47"W	adopted
Hicks Creek	Creek	49°12'10"N	121°22'20"W	adopted
Mount Holden	Mount	49°08'39"N	121°22'23"W	adopted
Illusion Peaks	Peaks	49°02'28"N	121°32'27"W	adopted
International Ridge	Ridge	49°01'15"N	121°57'24"W	adopted
International Ridge Park / Recreation Area	Provincial Park	49°01'59"N	121°58'00"W	rescinded
Isar Mountain	Mountain	49°00'03"N	121°58'16"W	adopted
Jeffrey Peak	Peak	49°11'38"N	121°27'37"W	adopted
Katherine Tye (Vedder Crossing) Ecological Reserve	Ecological Reserve	49°05'36"N	121°55'44"W	adopted
Klesilkwa Mountain	Mountain	49°05'45"N	121°20'55"W	adopted
Knight Peak	Peak	49°10'06"N	121°38'16"W	adopted
Lady Peak	Peak	49°10'34"N	121°39'53"W	adopted
Larsons Bench	Bench	49°05'29"N	121°39'54"W	adopted
Mount Laughington	Mount	49°08'30"N	121°39'47"W	adopted

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Laurel Creek	Creek	49°03'51"N	121°59'29"W	adopted
Mount Lindeman	Mount	49°00'47"N	121°27'14"W	adopted
Lindeman Lake	Lake	49°06'54"N	121°27'24"W	adopted
Mount Ling	Mount	49°12'23"N	121°30'54"W	adopted
Ling Lake	Lake	49°12'01"N	121°31'59"W	adopted
Little Chilliwack River	River	49°08'23"N	121°56'33"W	adopted
Little Tamihi Creek	Creek	49°04'24"N	121°50'59"W	adopted
Liumchen Creek	Creek	49°04'43"N	121°55'22"W	adopted
Liumchen Ecological Reserve	Ecological Reserve	49°05'44"N	121°55'14"W	adopted
Liumchen Lake	Lake	49°01'09"N	121°52'42"W	adopted
Liumchen Mountain	Mountain	49°00'01"N	121°50'57"W	adopted
Lookout Ridge	Ridge	49°06'35"N	121°50'50"W	adopted
Luckakuck Creek	Creek	49°08'58"N	121°58'26"W	adopted
Lucky Four Glacier	Glacier	49°09'39"N	121°34'34"W	adopted
Macdonald Peak	Peak	49°02'14"N	121°27'44"W	adopted
Mount MacFarlane	Mount	49°03'09"N	121°37'30"W	adopted
Marblehill Creek	Creek	49°08'36"N	121°52'26"W	adopted
Mount McGuire	Mount	49°02'00"N	121°46'22"W	adopted
Mount Mercer	Mount	49°06'55"N	121°43'15"W	adopted
Mount Meroniuk	Mount	49°03'45"N	121°23'01"W	adopted
Midgley Creek	Creek	49°04'56"N	121°55'57"W	adopted
Nesakwatch Creek	Creek	49°05'24"N	121°35'43"W	adopted
Mount Northgraves	Mount	49°09'59"N	121°28'49"W	adopted
Mount Nowell	Mount	49°10'21"N	121°24'20"W	adopted
Nursery Creek	Creek	49°04'35"N	121°43'33"W	adopted
Paleface Creek	Creek	49°02'42"N	121°24'15"W	adopted
Paleface Mountain	Mountain	49°04'26"N	121°23'14"W	adopted
Mount Parkes	Mount	49°02'06"N	121°36'27"W	adopted
Mount Pierce	Mount	49°03'50"N	121°36'47"W	adopted
Pierce Creek	Creek	49°05'39"N	121°40'10"W	adopted
Pierce Lake	Lake	49°03'50"N	121°37'43"W	adopted

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Post Creek	Creek	49°05'29"N	121°28'45"W	adopted
Promontory	Community	49°05'59"N	121°56'04"W	adopted
Radium Creek	Creek	49°05'14"N	121°28'16"W	adopted
Mount Rexford	Mount	49°02'00"N	121°31'27"W	adopted
Ryder Creek	Creek	49°04'42"N	121°52'43"W	adopted
Ryder Lake	Community	49°06'26"N	121°53'37"W	adopted
Ryder Lake	Lake	49°06'37"N	121°52'41"W	adopted
Sardis	Community	49°07'50"N	121°57'37"W	adopted
Seedling Creek	Creek	49°04'32"N	121°44'58"W	adopted
Skagit Range	Range	49°09'59"N	121°30'04"W	adopted
Slesse Creek	Creek	49°04'40"N	121°42'31"W	adopted
Slesse Creek Cave	Cave	49°04'36"N	121°42'35"W	adopted
Slesse Mountain	Mountain	49°01'31"N	121°35'52"W	adopted
Slesse Park	Community	49°04'34"N	121°49'49"W	adopted
Smith Falls Creek	Creek	49°03'34"N	121°57'45"W	adopted
Soowahlie 14	Reserve	49°04'59"N	121°57'04"W	adopted
Spencer Peak	Peak	49°00'51"N	121°42'56"W	adopted
Stewart Glacier	Glacier	49°10'05"N	121°36'40"W	adopted
Stewart Peak	Peak	49°10'14"N	121°36'41"W	adopted
Sweltzer River	River	49°05'45"N	121°57'48"W	adopted
Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park	Provincial Park	49°04'19"N	121°26'25"W	adopted (Chilliwack Lake Park rescinded)
Tamihi Creek	Creek	49°04'13"N	121°50'25"W	adopted
Teapot Hill	Hill	49°01'49"N	121°59'43"W	adopted
The Still	Peak	49°09'44"N	121°36'38"W	adopted
Thompson Peak	Peak	49°03'12"N	121°18'00"W	adopted
Mount Thurston	Mount	49°06'24"N	121°46'04"W	adopted
Mount Tom	Mount	49°06'14"N	121°54'44"W	adopted
Tzeachten 13	Reserve	49°06'59"N	121°56'04"W	adopted
Vedder Crossing	Community	49°06'08"N	121°57'45"W	adopted
Wahleach Glacier	Glacier	49°09'53"N	121°36'04"W	adopted
Mount Webb	Mount	49°03'03"N	121°27'23"W	adopted

Name	Feature type	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Welch Peak	Peak	49°09'35"N	121°36'03"W	adopted
Wells Creek	Creek	49°03'59"N	121°59'04"W	adopted
Williams Peak	Peak	49°07'45"N	121°30'19"W	adopted
Williamson Creek	Creek	49°07'39"N	121°34'39"W	adopted
Williamson Lake	Lake	49°09'01"N	121°35'43"W	adopted
Windfall Creek	Creek	49°03'26"N	121°57'52"W	adopted
Wingfield Creek	Creek	49°04'40"N	121°52'15"W	adopted
Mount Wittenberg	Mount	49°07'34"N	121°24'12"W	adopted
Young Creek	Creek	49°04'24"N	121°50'29"W	adopted

From [2]. Some status notes are abbreviated; for example, "Cheam Range" was rescinded in favour of Cheam Ridge, "Border Peak" in favour of Canadian Border Peak, and "Chilliwack Lake Park" in favour of Sxótsaqel/Chilliwack Lake Park.

Chapter 35

Further reading

The key published works on the valley, and the sources this edition could not yet consult.

Essential works

- **Galloway, Brent D.** 2009. *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*. University of California Publications in Linguistics. The fundamental source for Halq'eméylem place names and their meanings; open access [2].
- **Wells, Oliver N.** 1987. *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors*, edited by Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway and Marie Weeden. Vancouver: Talonbooks. Elders' accounts recorded in the 1960s [37, 143].
- **Rousseau, Mike K., ed.** 2017. *Archaeology of the Lower Fraser River Region*. Burnaby: SFU Archaeology Press. Includes the Iy'oythel excavation and the study of Lhílheqey; open access [19, 11].
- **Saunders, Ian R.** 1985. *Late Quaternary Geology and Geomorphology of the Chilliwack River Valley, British Columbia*. MSc thesis, Simon Fraser University; with Saunders, Clague and Roberts 1987 in the *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences* [6, 17].
- **Smith, Allan H.** 1988. *Ethnography of the North Cascades*. Washington State University, for the U.S. National Park Service; the Chilliwack chapter is online [35].

- **BC Parks.** 2000. *Chilliwack Lake Provincial Park and Chilliwack River Ecological Reserve Management Plan* [5].

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- Wilson, Charles. 1970. *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858–1862, while Secretary of the British Boundary Commission*, edited by G. Stanley. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada. Cited by Schaepe [7].
- Schaepe, David M., ed. 2018. *Being Ts'elxwéyeqw: First Peoples' Voices and History from the Chilliwack-Fraser Valley, British Columbia*. Harbour Publishing, for the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations. 304 pp. The publisher describes it as illustrated with more than 700 historic and current photographs and maps, and as covering 85 place names in the region [157].

Recordings and archives

- The BC Archives hold a 1964 interview with Oliver Wells by Imbert Orchard, recorded for CBC, about Chilliwack history, place names and the course of the Chilliwack and Vedder rivers [163].
- The Chilliwack Museum and Archives and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre hold collections on the valley; they will be consulted for the 2027 edition.

Reference

References

- [1] Ts'elxwéyeq̓w Tribe. 2026. "Who we are." *Ts'elxwéyeq̓w Tribe Management Ltd.* <https://ttml.ca/who-we-are> (accessed 2026-10-11). cited p. 3
- [2] Galloway, Brent Douglas. 2009. *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem, Volume I*. University of California Publications in Linguistics. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/65r158r4> (accessed 2026-10-11). cited p. 3
- [3] Tourism Chilliwack. 2022. *Chilliwack Hiking Guide*. Chilliwack: Tourism Chilliwack (web edition, c. 2022). https://tourismchilliwack.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WEB20VERSION20CHWK_HikingGuide_2022.pdf (accessed 2026-10-11). cited p. 3
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Colophon

Chilliwack River Valley PDF Guide (2026). First annual edition, current to 12 October 2026.

Method

The guide was compiled in October 2026 from published scientific, historical and government sources; from Indigenous knowledge recorded in print by Stó:lō and Ts'elxwéyeqw authors and by scholars working with them; and from documents, scans, oral accounts and local knowledge shared directly with the publisher. Every factual statement is tied to a numbered source in the References and was checked against it. Where reputable sources disagree, the guide shows each version rather than choosing silently. Statements that circulate but could not be traced to a reliable source are labelled unverified or omitted. Web sources were read on the dates given; where a site could not be reached, the text says so. Errors may remain, and corrections are welcome.

Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous names, histories and stories are credited to the people and publications through which they were shared. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement by any First Nation, and the Ts'elxwéyeqw First Nations and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre remain the authorities on Ts'elxwéyeqw history and language. Oliver Wells's 1966 map is described but not reproduced. The unpublished Stó:lō Nation report *From Plain to Peak* (1998) is paraphrased and cited, not reproduced.

Data and calculations

Radiocarbon ages were calibrated with the IntCal20 curve using the IOSACal software, and ranges are given at 95.4 percent probability [18, 53]. Conversions and percentages were calculated from the cited data and rounded; maps and diagrams were drawn from the same data, and are schematic and not for navigation.

Design

Body text is set in Source Serif 4, headings in Zilla Slab, labels and captions in Montserrat, and display type in Oswald, all open-source typefaces under the SIL Open Font License. The PDF was typeset with WeasyPrint. It is tagged for screen readers, carries bookmarks and linked cross-references for on-screen navigation, and gives page numbers for print.

Licence and citation

The licence and the citation are set out in [About this guide \(p. 2\)](#).

The 2027 edition

The guide will be revised every year. Planned for the 2027 edition: road distances measured by trip odometer; review by specialists; the books and archives listed as not yet consulted in [Chapter 35 \(p. 121\)](#); the key to Oliver Wells's numbered village sites; and photographs. The final page explains how to send corrections and suggestions.

Help shape the 2027 edition

This guide is revised every year, and the 2027 edition will be better for what its readers know.

EMAIL

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Send your thoughts, suggestions, feedback, additions and improvements for the 2027 edition.

What helps most

- **Corrections**, with the page number and, where possible, a source.
- **Additions**: books, reports, maps, photographs and archival records not yet used, especially the works listed as not yet consulted in [Chapter 35 \(p. 121\)](#).
- **Local knowledge** of places, names, routes and events, including where it differs from the written record.
- **Suggestions** for topics, maps, figures or chapters to add, and anything that was hard to find, read or use.

Knowledge shared by Stó:lō and Ts'elxwéyeqw people will be included only with permission, and credited only as they wish. Every contribution is checked before it is used.

Thank you for reading.