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Thorne River

Thorne River is probably the largest drainage on Prince of Wales Island and of approximately 150 sq. mi. It discharges into Thorne Bay and the fix on the mouth is N. Lat. 55°40'50" and W. Long. 132°30'45". The drainage is north of this fix toward the east side of Prince of Wales Island. The river is approximately 25 miles from source to mouth. Flow is 150 c.f.s. nominal, 900 c.f.s. average and in excess of 25,000 in flood. The river is paralleled by the main logging road from Thorne Bay for about 5 miles. The entire watershed lies within the Tongass National Forest. There are a number of lakes in the drainage. The gradient is mostly gradual and the stream bottom is largely gravel except where crossed by bedrock dikes. Grade is approximately 10 ft/mile. Pool-riffle distribution is excellent. Barriers to migratory fish exist only near the headwaters where grade steepens. There is excellent spawning gravel all through the system. Bank cover is largely pristine spruce-hemlock forest. The watershed is of glacial origin and steep sided. Fish hosted by the system include pink, chum, sockeye and coho salmon, cutthroat, Dolly Varden, rainbow and steelhead trout, stickleback and cottoids. This stream formerly hosted remarkable runs of salmon which have been over-fished. The stream has always been known for its excellent trout fishing. Most of the sport fishing pressure exerted now is by the logging community and the Forest Service. The stream hosts all the invertebrates the nutrients will support. In the slower sections of the stream and in the lakes there is considerable nuphar, potamogeton, vallisneria and ceratophyllum. There is no use made of the water nor is there appreciable industrial or domestic pollution.

Thorne River formerly hosted great runs of salmon and trout. However, at one time there were fish traps right up to the river mouth and the leads overlapped in Thorne Bay. The river has never recovered. There was an anglers camp, the Thorne River Club, near the river mouth which was abandoned with the advent of the clear-cut logging. Presently there are many millions of board-feet of logs rafted at the river mouth and the largest logging camp in the world is discharging its raw sewage into the head of the bay.

✓ Staney Creek

Staney Creek is probably the largest drainage on Prince of Wales Island with no extensive lake system. The mouth lies on Tuxekan Passage at N. Lat. 55°48'20", W. Long. 132°9'0" and it is approximately 10 miles airline from the mouth to the most distant source.

Refernce maps are U.S.G.S. Craig (C-3), (C-4), (D-3), (D-4). The watershed measures approximately 50 sq. mi. Flow is 50 c.f.s. nominal, 350 c.f.s. average and over 10,000 c.f.s. in flood. The stream may raise 5 ft. in flood. Access is now by logging road from Thorne Bay. The entire watershed lies within the Tongass National Forest. The stream bottom is mostly gravel with some areas of exposed bedrock. Gradient is 15 ft. per mile for the lower 6 miles. Pool riffle distribution is good with many pools formed behind undercut trees in the stream. There are no barriers in the mainstem until gradients steepen toward the headwaters. Spawning areas are excellent and quite extensive. Bank cover is as the loggers left it and now largely consists of broadleaf vegetation. The watershed is typical Southeast Alaska Island topography with extensive muskegs in the flatter areas and timbered steep slopes in the drainage periphery. Fish using the stream are pink, chum and coho salmon, cutthroat, Dolly Varden, steelhead and rainbow trout, stickleback and cottoids. The stream has a long history of supporting large pink, chum and coho runs as well as large trout populations. Only with the road access has the stream been heavily fished for sport and that mostly for steelhead and coho. The invertebrate population is influenced by the low flows and is not much bolstered by plankters that normally inhabit lakes. Aquatic vegetation is sparse due to fairly brisk water movement and gravel substrates. No industrial or domestic use is made of the water and pollution is minimal.

Staney Creek has long been known as a pink, chum and coho producer of considerable importance. With the advent of the logging and road access, the logging community has sport fish pressured the stream heavier than ever before with reports of large easy takes of fish. The watershed has been clear-cut very extensively and the hydrology of the system has changed.