

Sproat Lake

VAN ISLE · MANAGEMENT UNIT 1-7 · RULES AS OF 25 OCT 2026

Sproat is the big warm lake 13 km northwest of Port Alberni, north shore on Highway 4. Sproat Lake Park holds the day-use area and a boat launch, two campgrounds, and the petroglyph panel at the east end. The lake is open water you can fish in every month of the year. **SOURCED**

What people fish it for is rainbow and cutthroat trout, in a lake the province has not planted a trout in since 2000. **SOURCED** Sockeye come up the Sproat River and through the fishway into the lake, and none of them can be kept. **SOURCED**

Where a claim comes from a record or from a person, it carries a label: **sourced** (the document is listed at the bottom), **local** (local pattern with a name on it), **inferred** (worked out from what the record says), **gap** (the record does not answer it). The unlabelled sentences are mine: they only connect the rest.

WHAT YOU CAN KEEP

FISH	DAILY	THE PART THAT BITES
Cutthroat	0	Catch and release on this lake, no size exception. The lake's own line reads "Cutthroat trout catch and release, no wild rainbow trout over 50 cm; single barbless hook". SOURCED
Rainbow	4 trout total, but nothing over 50 cm in practice	The province bars keeping a wild rainbow over 50 cm here, and the regional quota allows one trout over 50 cm a day. That allowance only reaches a hatchery fish, and the last trout planted was a cutthroat in 2000. Plain reading: no rainbow over 50 cm. SOURCED INFERRED
Kokanee	5, none from streams, and a quota of their own	Kokanee are not counted against the trout limit: the synopsis gives them a separate daily quota of 5, none from streams. SOURCED Whether Sproat holds a fishable kokanee population is the part nothing I can read answers, so a 5-a-day allowance may be theoretical on this lake. GAP
Salmon	0	The DFO table opens with "unless otherwise stated in the table below, the daily limit for all waters in Region 1 is zero", and Sproat Lake is not in the table. The sockeye you see have no retention on them. SOURCED
Char	0	All char, Dolly Varden included, is release-only across Region 1. SOURCED

Across the trout: 4 a day, and the possession limit is twice the daily limit. There is no general minimum size for trout in lakes. A healed scar where the adipose fin was is the only mark of a hatchery fish; a fish with an intact adipose is wild, and on this lake it goes back if it is a cutthroat or a rainbow over 50 cm. **SOURCED**

THE SPROAT RIVER, CLOSED

Closed to all finfish from 15 June to 15 November. The reach is the lake down to boundary signs about 300 m below the Highway 4 bridge, at the downstream end of the pool below the Sproat River fishway. As of 25 October 2026 that river is shut. **SOURCED**

Both agencies also put a bait ban on the river, 1 May to 31 October, and DFO adds no retention of salmon all year. Those dates run across the closure, so the only window where the bait ban changes anything is 1 May to 15 June. The province describes the lower boundary as signs about 300 m downstream of Highway 4; DFO describes the same signs as about 300 m below the bridge. **SOURCED** **INFERRED**

DFO's bait line covers salmon fishing only; the provincial ban is the one that reaches every species in the river. **SOURCED** The lake itself has no bait ban row in the province's water-specific table, and that is an inference from a missing row, not a printed permission. **INFERRED**

WHAT YOU NEED TO FISH HERE

BC freshwater angling licence for any species in non-tidal water: annual \$41.15 resident / \$62.87 non-resident / \$91.44 non-resident alien; 8-day \$22.86 / \$41.15 / \$57.14; 1-day \$11.43 / \$22.86 / \$22.86. Licence year 1 April to 31 March. **SOURCED**

Where it comes from. Online in WILD, or in person at a licence vendor, FrontCounter BC or Service BC, and there is no residency rule about who may buy: **resident**, **non-resident** (a Canadian living outside BC) and **non-resident alien** all buy the same way, they just pay different fees. A free Fish and Wildlife ID (FWID) comes first, and the old angler numbers retired after 31 March 2026. While fishing you carry your FWID and photo ID. **SOURCED**

No stamp is needed to fish the lake for trout. **INFERRED** The **non-tidal salmon stamp** (\$17.14 resident, \$34.29 non-resident) covers keeping a salmon from non-tidal water only, and is not needed if you release every salmon. Nothing in Sproat Lake can be kept, so it only matters if you move to water where retention is open, the Somass being the nearest. **SOURCED** The **steelhead stamp** (\$28.57 resident, \$68.57 non-resident) is required if you fish *for* steelhead at all, keep or release, and one stamp covers you for the licence year however many short-term licences you buy, so buy it before you work the tributaries. Every stamp runs from the day you buy it to 31 March, and needs a basic licence behind it. **SOURCED**

What you carry. Where a stamp is required, carry an unmodified paper or digital copy of your licence. Where a stamp has a retention record attached, as the steelhead and chinook stamps do, the copy has to be paper, because a kept fish has to be recorded on it straight away. **SOURCED**

The Somass is a different licence. Below the tidal boundary signs at the top of the rapids at Paper Mill Dam it is tidal water, and tidal water is federal: a DFO tidal licence with its own salmon stamp, bought separately. A provincial stamp does not cover it, and the tidal one does not cover the river above the signs. **SOURCED**

WHAT HAS ACTUALLY BEEN PLANTED

The province: 30 release records for Sproat Lake in the stocking report, and the newest is **7 November 2000, cutthroat trout fingerlings, 5,474**, Taylor River strain. Two more cutthroat plants in 1999. Before that, rainbow trout from 1926 to 1951, and between 1921 and 1924 eyed eggs and fry of **Atlantic salmon from the Miramichi**, 12,000 fry and 88,000 eyed eggs over the four records. Nothing since 2000. **SOURCED**

The federal record says there is still planting in this watershed, just not in the lake. Across the DFO enhancement post-season reports for brood years 2020 to 2022, Sproat Lake carries its own enhancement site, with coho unfed fry planned at 10,000 per tributary site (Alexander, Shuhum, Dixon, Tall Timbers, Cougar Smith, Sproat Park, Logging Road One and Two). Where the report gives an actual count: 5,175 into Alexander Creek for brood 2020, 2,021 into Alexander Creek and 3,574 into Dixon Creek for brood 2021. Several rows carry the note “not released at this site this year”. **SOURCED**

So the honest sentence is not “nothing is planted here”. It is: no trout have gone into the lake in a quarter century, while coho fry still go into the streams at its head, and neither agency’s report is a complete ledger on its own. **INFERRED**

SPROAT OR GREAT CENTRAL, ON THE RECORD

	SPROAT LAKE	GREAT CENTRAL LAKE
Cutthroat	Catch and release SOURCED	No lake-specific rule, so the 4-trout quota applies SOURCED
Rainbow over 50 cm	No wild fish kept SOURCED	No wild fish kept SOURCED
Gear	Single barbless hook SOURCED	Single barbless hook SOURCED
Seasonal closure	None on the lake SOURCED	None on the lake. A reach closes 1 Jan–30 Apr: from the dam to signs about 50 m upstream of the Ash Main bridge SOURCED
Newest release on record	2000, cutthroat fingerlings SOURCED	2001, steelhead fry, 29,570, Stamp/Somass strain; no trout since 1951 SOURCED

Which one to fish is not a records question. Sproat is the lake with the road along it, the boat launch, the campgrounds and the summer water-ski traffic. **SOURCED** Great Central is the deeper, quieter one up the Somass road. **LOCAL** Both halves of that are somebody’s knowledge, and the second half has a name on it below.

ACCESS, AND WHAT TO WATCH FOR

LAUNCH	Boat launch in the day-use area of Sproat Lake Park on the north shore, off Highway 4, 13 km northwest of Port Alberni. Two campgrounds in the same park, reservable through BC Parks. SOURCED
SHORE	Highway 4 runs the north shore, and the pull-offs along it are the other way in. BC Parks names paddlers setting in “at the boat launch or at any accessible point along the lake”. SOURCED
TRAILERING	Since 17 May 2024 it is illegal in BC to move a boat with the drain plug still in. Pull it and drain every compartment on dry land before you leave the launch, even for the drive home. Clean, Drain, Dry, aimed at whirling disease. SOURCED
WATCH	No lifeguards on duty. The park names waterskiing and, when the wind is up, windsurfing as the popular uses, so fast boats and skiers share the water with you. No motorized vehicle access on the trail network or in the day-use area. SOURCED

LOCAL PATTERN

Pressure sits at the short walks. Sproat is fished harder than Great Central because it is easier to reach: many roadside pull-offs, a launch at the park, and summer boat traffic over the same water everybody drives past. Go early or go where the boats are not. LOCAL Credited to Bea, 21 October 2026.

NAMED GAPS

A depth-and-flasher pattern. I have the rulebook and the stocking records. I do not have a sourced, current trolling pattern for Sproat's cutthroat or rainbow, so I am not inventing one. GAP

How far the boat traffic pushes fish. The park records the traffic; nobody I can cite records what the fish do about it. GAP

Launches other than the park's, and what the lake level does across the year. One launch is documented. The rest of the shore access is pull-offs, and I have no record of a dock, a fee or a condition. GAP

A second local voice. The local pattern above rests on one person. A second angler who fishes Sproat regularly would either confirm it or break it, and either is worth printing. GAP

SOURCES AND METHOD

- BC Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis 2025–2027, Region 1 section (PDF, updated with the synopsis): general regulations (daily quotas, wild trout release, no minimum size in lakes, kokanee quota) and the Region 1 water-specific table, MU 1-7, rows “SPROAT LAKE”, “SPROAT RIVER” and “GREAT CENTRAL LAKE”. Conservation surcharge stamps, p. 7.
- Province of BC, freshwater fishing regulations page, **updated 26 Aug 2026**: the “pull the plug” rule effective 17 May 2024, and the Region 1 in-season corrections table, which carries no entry for Sproat Lake, Sproat River or Great Central Lake as of 25 Oct 2026.
- Province of BC, recreational freshwater fishing licences, **page updated 22 Oct 2026**: WILD and in-person sales, FWID, angler numbers retired 31 Mar 2026, carry rules, stamp and retention-record copies.
- Province of BC, conservation surcharges, **page updated 1 Apr 2026**: steelhead \$28.57 / \$68.57, non-tidal salmon \$17.14 / \$34.29.
- DFO, Region 1 freshwater recreational salmon limits, openings and closures (read 25 Oct 2026), including the Sproat River rows and the zero default for unlisted waters; and DFO, tidal areas 23 and 123, for the Somass tidal boundary at the Paper Mill Dam signs.
- Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, Fish Stocking Reports, waterbody “SPROAT LAKE” (identifier 01128ALBN): 30 release records, 1921–2000.
- DFO Salmonid Enhancement Program, Post-Season Reports, brood years 2020–2022, rows for enhancement site “Sproat Lake ES”.
- BC Parks, Sproat Lake Park (page read 25 Oct 2026): location, launch, campgrounds, day-use, no lifeguards, popular uses.

Read and re-checked 25 Oct 2026. Gaps are named, never estimated. Where two agencies describe the same line differently, both descriptions are printed. Full revision history: [changelog](#).

Tell me which water you're headed for →

info@thetiderip.com · Planning a trip, or about to fish water you haven't fished before? Write and tell me which one. I'll tell you what the record says about it, and what it doesn't. If you want the whole thing pulled fresh for your own dates, that's the custom sheet, and I'll say what it costs before you decide anything.