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SYNOPTIC SURVEY OF SEVEN
DOUGLAS CHANNEL AREA
CPPG c. 1 mm SMITHERS

A SYNOPTIC SURVEY OF SEVEN DOUGLAS
CHANNEL AREA STREAMS: GILTOYEE'S CREEK;
TRIUMPH RIVER; KILTUIISH RIVER;
WEEWANIE CREEK; LITTLE FOCH CREEK;
BIG FOCH CREEK and BISH CREEK

by

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April, 1989

Skeena Fisheries Report #SK65

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INTRODUCTION

River sport fishing values in the Douglas Channel area, located on the northwest coast of British Columbia (Fig.1), have not been well documented. However, numerous river systems supporting populations of anadromous fish are found in this area (Manzon and Marshall, 1981) and significant angling opportunities are thought to exist.

Interest by angling guides in Douglas Channel streams has grown in recent years. In addition, an increasing number of proposals to log drainages in this area have been initiated. These developments pointed to the need for further inventory of streams in this vicinity.

Between April 15 and 22, 1989, the Ministry of Environment, Recreational Fisheries Branch initiated a synoptic survey of seven Douglas Channel area streams to assist in addressing the above concerns. The survey objectives were to investigate fisheries values and, in particular, anadromous trout angling opportunities in the area.

METHODS

The B.C. Forest Service Vessel, Coast Ranger, was used to transport Fisheries Branch staff and a jet boat to the Douglas Channel area. Of the streams surveyed, only the Giltoyes and the Big Foch were navigable by jet boat. The remainder of the streams were accessible to their tidal limits by small boat and were further examined on foot. Both video and still film footage was taken of the streams and their watersheds. Surveys for the presence of fish species was determined by angling. Stream cover, discharge and substrate were noted and the wetted width, flood plain width and gradient were estimated visually. Other resources were examined and noted such as wildlife, recreational and timber values.

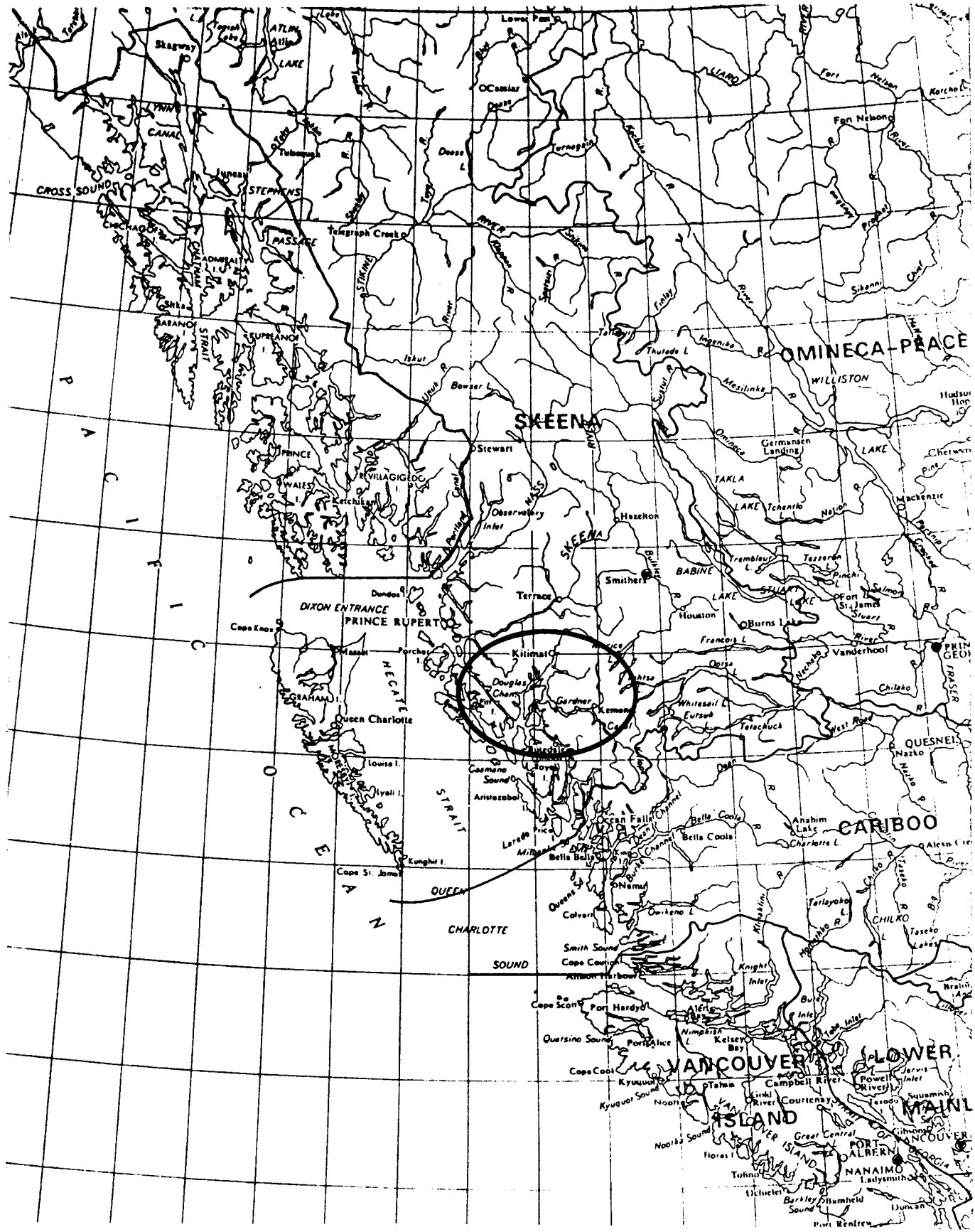


Figure 1. Location of Douglas Channel.

GILTOYEES CREEK

Giltoeyes Creek, located 32 km south west of Kitimat drains into Giltoeyes Inlet on the north side of Douglas Channel (Figs. 2, 3). The creek was surveyed by R. Tetreau and J. Lough on April 17, 1989.

1.0 Physical Description

Giltoeyes Creek is accessible to anadromous fish up to a falls located 18.8 km from its mouth (Manzon and Marshall, 1981), although, this was not verified by our crew. On the date of survey the lower 2.5 km were inspected. Snow depth adjacent to the creek ranged from 1 to 2 meters.

The surveyed reach was characterized by a low gradient meandering channel averaging 30 to 35 meters in width and containing several large, deep pools. Stream discharge was estimated at 80 cfs. Water clarity was exceptional. The substrate was comprised of fine to medium cobbles but lacked large boulders (Fig. 7). Fines accumulation appeared minimal.

The estimated width of the Giltoeyes Valley was one kilometer. Although the valley bottom through the lower 2.5 km was relatively flat, the valley walls rose sharply. Numerous avalanche slopes were noted to enter the creek. Timber values were considered minimal.

2.0 Fisheries Values

In 1980, escapement records for Giltoeyes Creek estimated salmon runs of 75 chinook, 1000 coho, 2300 chum, and 2000 pink (Manzon and Marshall, 1981). Chum salmon fry were the only fish observed. Two seals in the estuary plus an otter and a healthy merganser population upstream suggested other fish may have been present. Possible salmonid harvesting was suggested by a case of old canning jars discarded on the bank of the river.

Of the 2.5 km of stream investigated, the habitat seemed best suited for coho, chum, and cutthroat. There were over 12 fishable runs which could easily hold steelhead and five of these would be rated as classic steelhead water.

Our investigations revealed no steelhead or cutthroat. This could be explained by later arrival of the runs due to low, cold water persisting later in the spring. Later run timing was found for 1989 steelhead runs in other Douglas Channel streams such as the Kitimat, Bish and Dala systems.

Local fishing pressure on the Giltoeyes would most likely come from Kitimat, Hartley Bay or from the various logging camps which have developed along the channel. Several guides fish this system in

the late summer and fall, one of which has set up a tent camp at the creek mouth in the past. Most of the anglers are thought to be targeting on coho or chinook. Angling pressure for spring run steelhead is unknown.

3.0 Accessibility

The lower 11 km of the creek is reported to be accessible by jet boat (Manzon and Marshall, 1981), but at the low tide and extreme low water conditions found during our investigation, some sections would be marginally navigable. Hiking access from the estuary is good but there is no developed trail. The river was wadeable at a few points but at high discharge this would not be possible.

4.0 Other Attractions

The aesthetic value of the Giltoyees was very high. A well sheltered estuary and good anchorage contribute to the attractiveness for boaters or float camp operators.

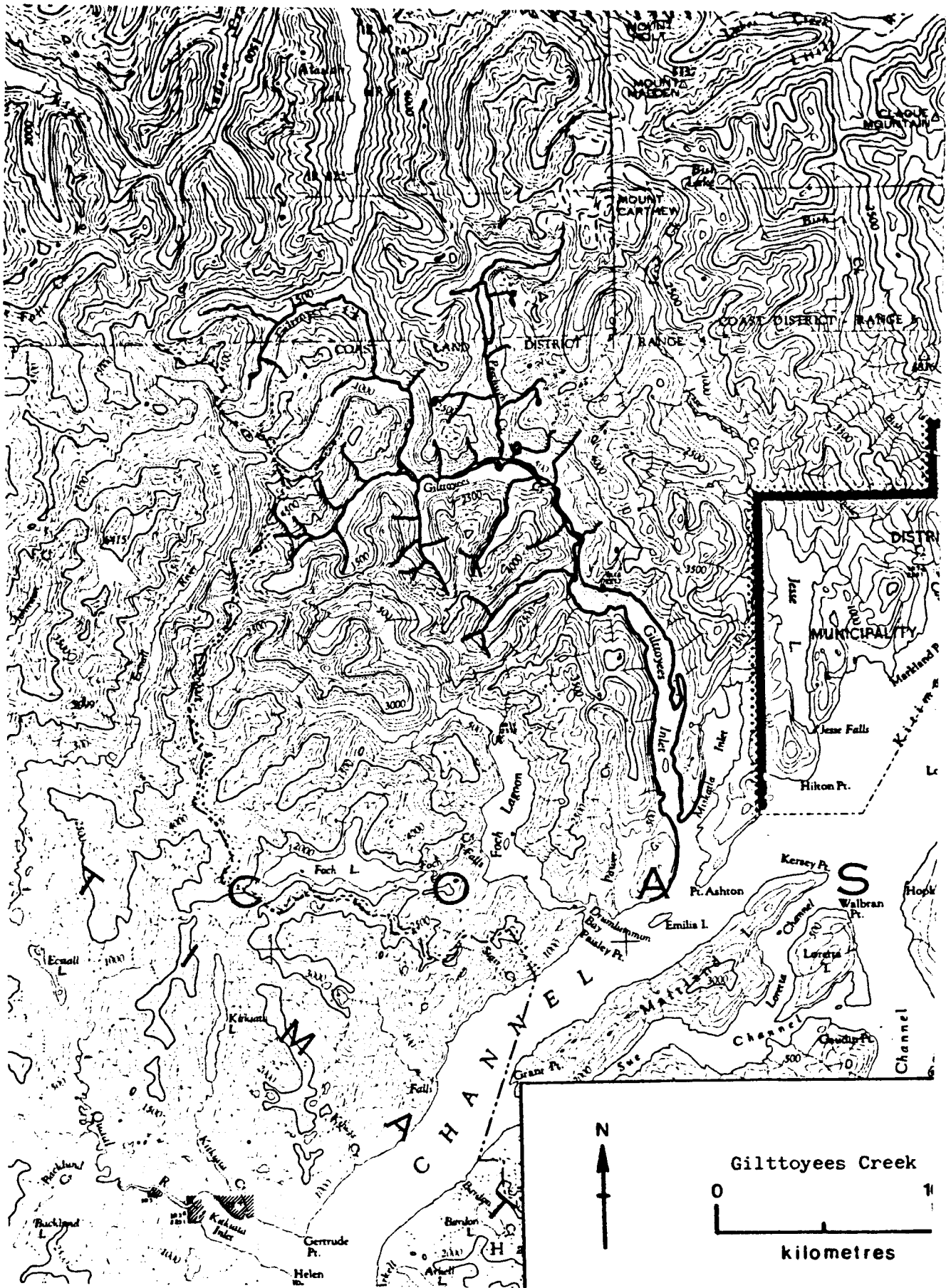


Figure 2. Location of Gilttoyees Creek on Douglas Channel, 1:250,000 scale.

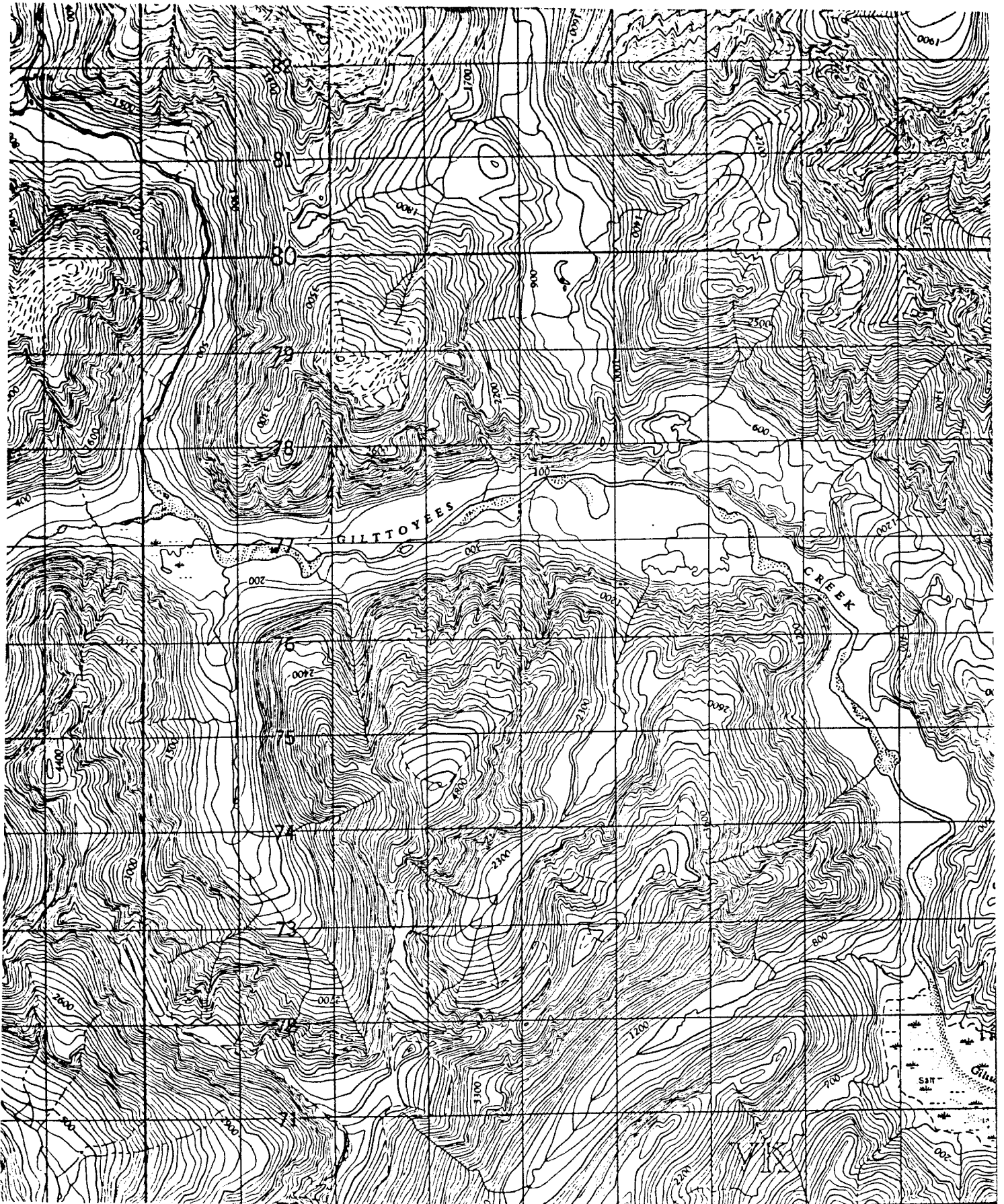


Figure 3. Topographic Map of Giltoyees Creek, 1:50,000 scale.

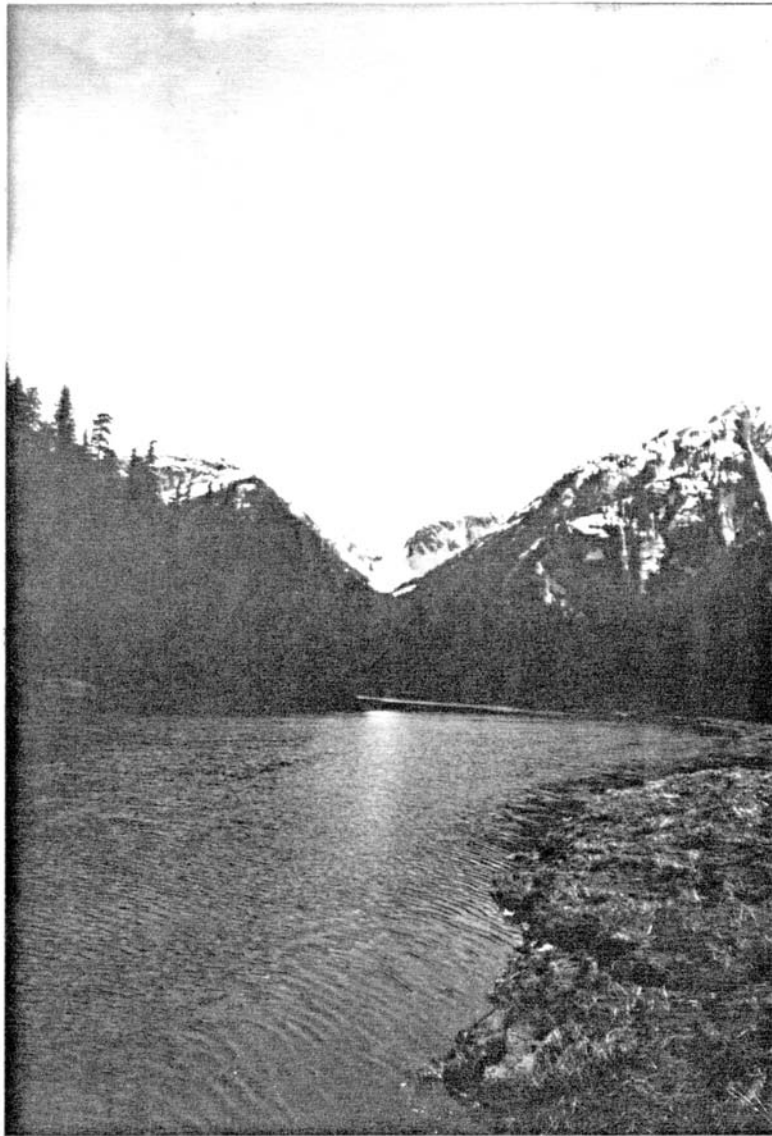


Figure 4. High tide on lower Giltoyees Creek.

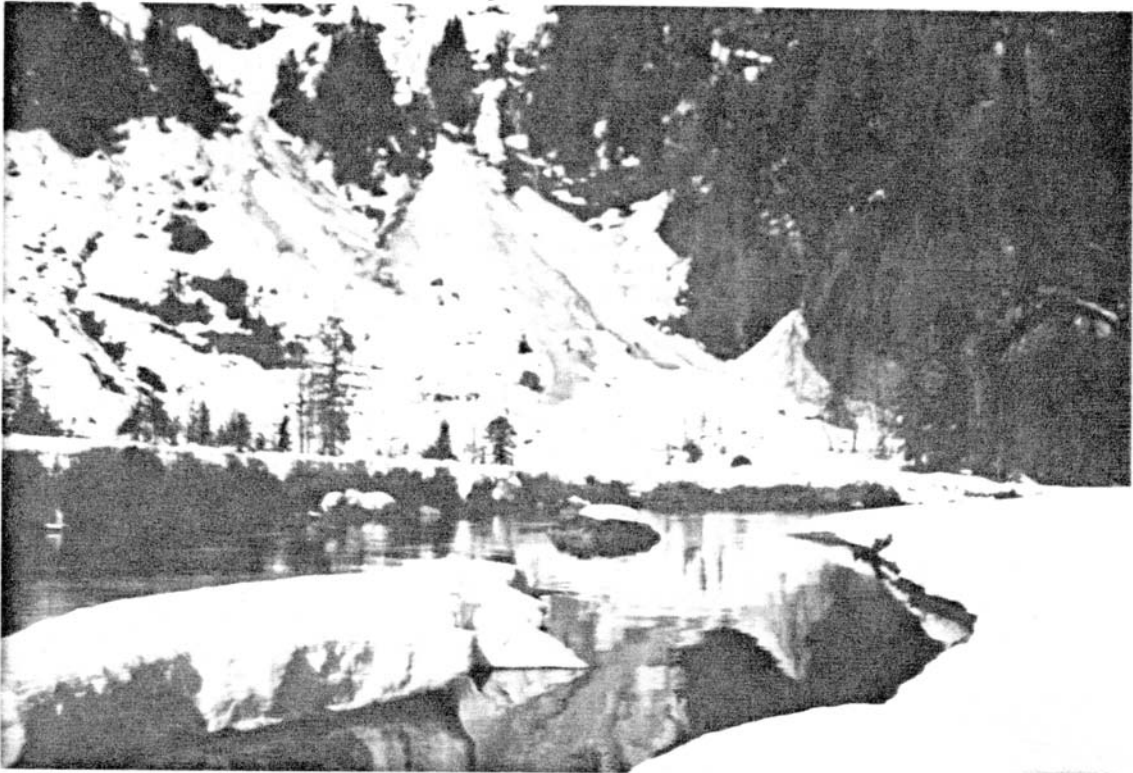


Figure 6. Deep snow still present with avalanches flowing to the creek, 2 km upstream on Giltoyees Creek.



Figure 7. Typical stream substrate 1.5 km upstream on Giltoyees Creek.

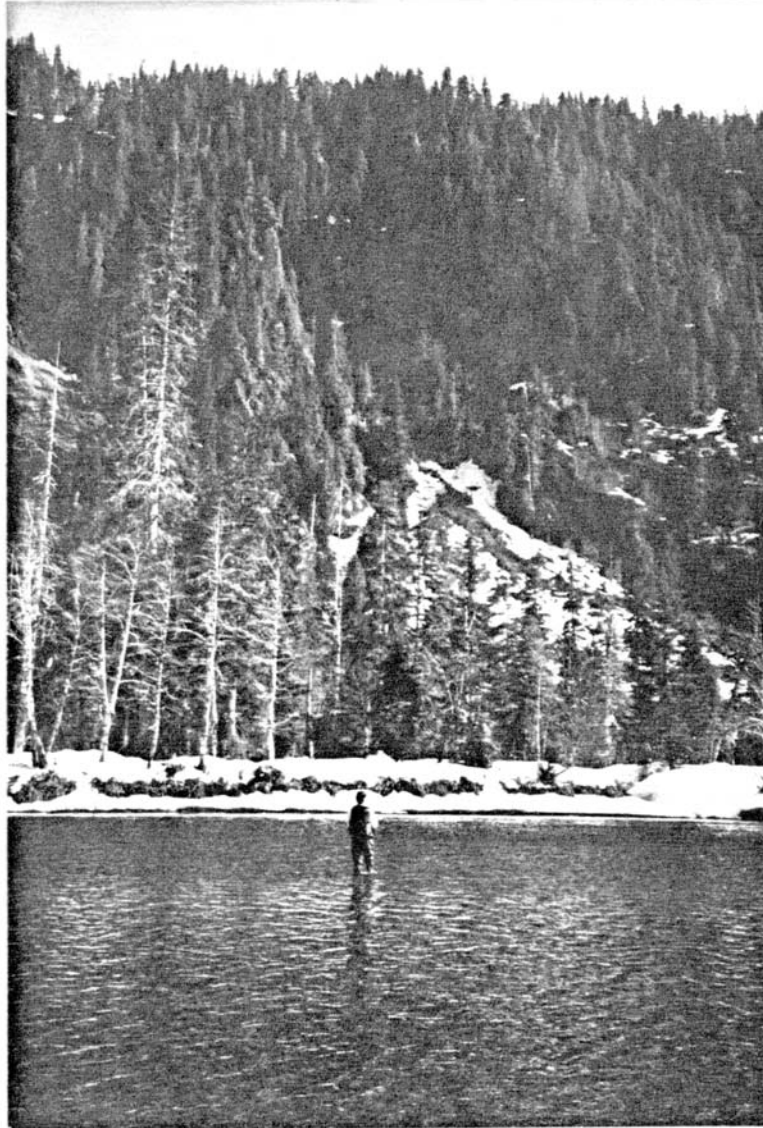


Figure 8. Giltoyees Creek 2.5 km upstream from the estuary. Deep, slow flowing pool with fine to medium gravels.

TRIUMPH RIVER

The Triumph River flows into the head of Triumph Bay, located on the south side of Alan Reach in Gardner Canal (Fig. 9). It was surveyed April 18, 1989 by R. Tetreau and S. Hatlevik.

1.0 Physical Description

The Triumph River system is lake headed. The river below the lake outlet is 2 km long and had an average wetted width of approximately 20 meters at the time of this survey. A set of 15 to 20 m high cascading falls was located at the river mouth (Fig. 12 and 14) and a smaller set of rapids was situated just below Triumph Lake outlet. At the lake outlet, the substrate consisted of bedrock, large fractured boulders and very little gravel. The 1 km mid-section of the river had excellent spawning gravel and abundant stream cover. Cutbanks, debris jams and overhanging vegetation comprised the stream cover (Figs. 17 - 20). The gradient throughout the mid-section was 0.5%.

On the south side of the Triumph River a rough trail leads to Triumph Lake. It took an hour and fifteen minutes to hike to the lake from the estuary. The lake is 2.7 km long (Fig. 27) and has a large tributary entering at the south end.

A more detailed description of the physical characteristics and fisheries values of the Triumph system has been prepared by Bustard (1989) for Wedeene River Contracting.

The area from the estuary up to 0.5 km below the lake was logged approximately 20 to 30 years ago. The second growth is 12 to 15 m high and very thick.

2.0 Fisheries Values

In the 1 km section of the Triumph mid way between the lake and estuary, 42 steelhead (6 males and 36 females) were angled. All of the fish exhibited advanced sexual maturation characteristic of summer runs. The fish ranged 2 to 5.5 kg and averaged 3 kg. Ten females were kelts and one was dropping eggs at the time of capture. One small male steelhead was caught at the Triumph Lake outlet. The fish was 45.7 cm long and scales confirmed it was searun (Fig. 29). The relative absence of fish in this upper area could be due to the lack of good spawning habitat above the upper falls.

Six cutthroat were captured just below the lake outlet but none were observed throughout the rest of the river. It appears that these fish were lake residents that had moved into the river to spawn. Sizes ranged from 20 to 40 cm (Figs. 30, 31).

Dieter Abrahms (pers. comm.) has fished the Triumph in the fall but has never caught coho or steelhead in the system at that time of year. Department of Fisheries and Oceans has no mention or records of the Triumph River in their Catalogue of Salmon Streams and Spawning Escapements of Statistical Area 6 North (Manzon and Marshall, 1981).

The 1 km mid-section of the Triumph has about 10 good pieces of steelhead holding water, 5 of which would be rated as having excellent fishing quality. Steelhead in this section would be very vulnerable to anglers, making overharvest a serious concern.

Suitable habitat and buffered flows from the lake should generate high egg and juvenile survivals in the Triumph.

3.0 Wildlife Values

An otter was observed at the lake outlet and numerous sets of deer tracks were sighted on the trail to the lake. Upon arriving at the Triumph estuary, we met three guided bear hunters. The ice on the lake was beginning to recede from the outlet and several pairs of golden eye ducks were observed.

4.0 Accessibility

The Triumph River can only be accessed by air or boat. Float planes can be landed on the lake or at the estuary. Helicopter access would be limited to the estuary due to the lack of landing areas along the river. Boat access is good with an excellent anchorage in Triumph Bay.

5.0 Other Attractions

Other attractions in the Triumph River area include nearby salt water fishing and crabbing grounds. Other than a few remains from an old logging operation there are no cabins or roads in the Triumph valley.

The Triumph River is highly appealing aesthetically. It can be waded in most of the tailouts, and the solitude, wildlife, and good fishing create a very enjoyable angling experience.

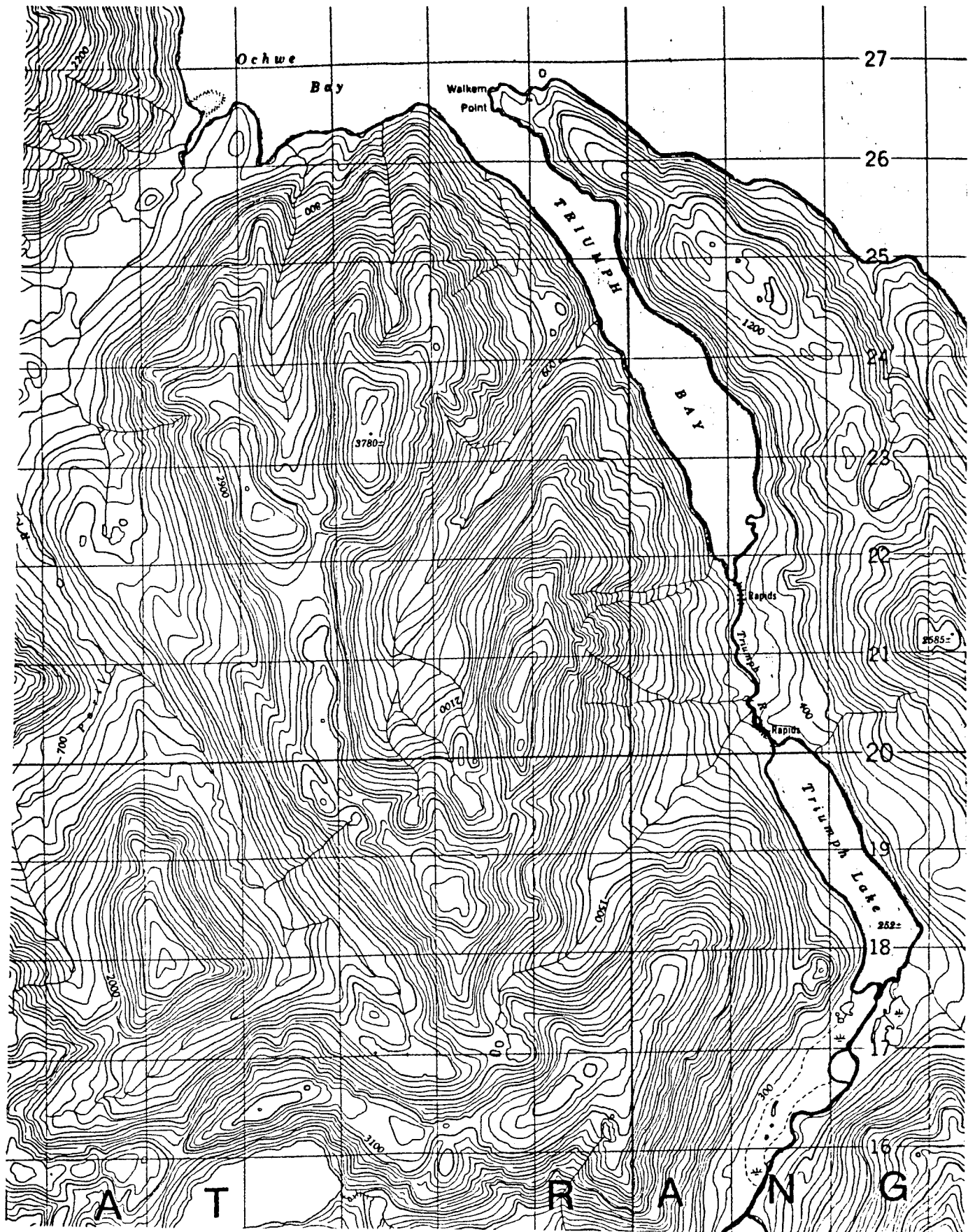
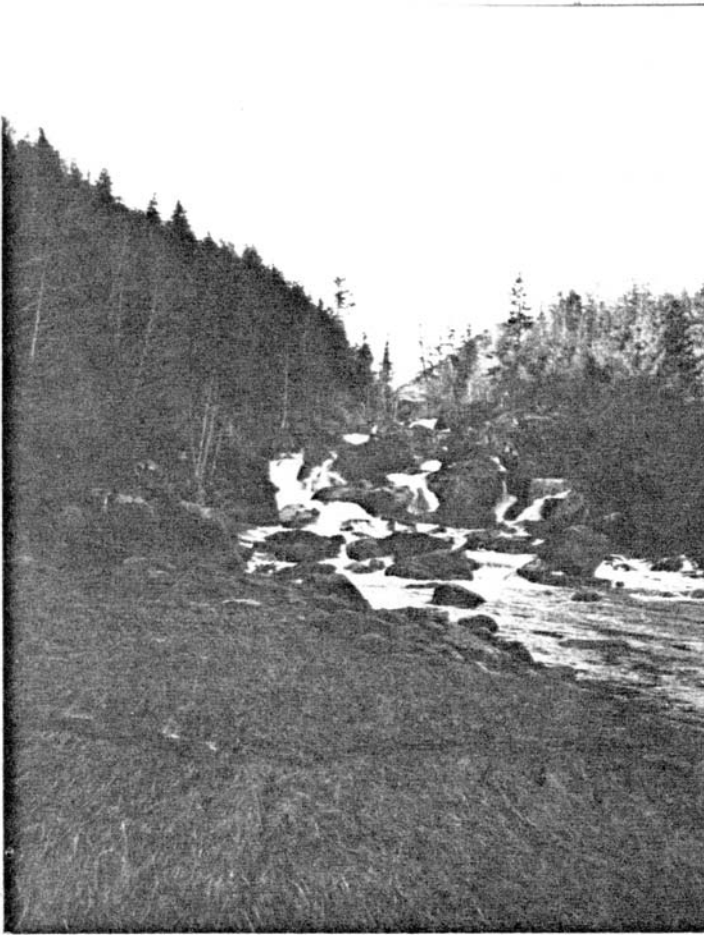


Figure 9. Topographic map of the Triumph Lake and river area, 1:50,000 scale.



Figures 10, 11. Triumph estuary. Note second growth forests, logged 20 to 30 years ago.



Figure 12. Triumph estuary.