Alberta Conservation Association (ACA)

Date: 2014-2015

Project name: Kids Can Catch Program

Information, Education and Communications Program Manager: Ken Kranrod

Project Leader: Sheila Campbell

Primary ACA staff on this project: Colin Eyo, Don Myhre, Ariana Tourneur, Budd Erickson

Partnerships:

Program sponsor: Dow Canada

Event partners

- Access Pipeline
- Agrium
- Atco Electric, Slave Lake
- Aux Sable
- Bow Habitat Station
- Brand Alliance
- Cabela's
- CBI
- City of Fort Saskatchewan
- Fort Saskatchewan Fish and Game Association
- Fort Saskatchewan Lions Club
- Gateway Press
- Gibsons
- Harold Walters and Associates
- Lacombe Co-op
- Lacombe Fish and Game Association
- Lacombe Fountain Tire
- Lamont Fish and Game Association
- Len Thompson Lures

- Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service
- Magrath Rod and Gun Club
- Moonlite Scaffolding, Slave Lake
- NALCO Champion
- Northern Light Fly Tyers
- River Valley Alliance
- Sasol
- Slave Lake Canadian Tire
- Slave Lake Rod and Gun Club
- Smoky Trout Farm
- The Rental Store, Slave Lake
- Town of Stettler
- Trans Canada
- TransAlta
- Village of Wabamun
- Wabamun and District Chamber of Commerce
- Wabamun Citizens on Patrol
- Walleye Master
- 92.7 Lake FM

Key Findings

In 2014/15, over 2,500 adults and children came out to fish at eight Kids Can Catch events, involving nearly 40 community and corporate partners. This year's success demonstrated that Kids Can Catch is a successful model in which ACA can: (1) engage with local organizations and businesses interested in fishing and conservation; and (2) invite families, youth and new Canadians to fish at stocked ponds and learn about fishing, conservation and responsible angling. The program continues to generate interest

from new communities and new corporate partners, and we anticipate the program will expand further in 2015/16.

Introduction

Kids Can Catch is a province-wide program in which ACA teams up with community and corporate partners to create free, family fishing events at stocked lakes and ponds. Kids Can Catch is the outreach program of the Enhanced Sport Fisheries Program, in which ACA works with its member groups and provincial, municipal and corporate partners to stock nearly 120,000 catchable-sized rainbow trout in 60 waterbodies across Alberta. We developed Kids Can Catch as a way to invite Albertans to fish at stocked ponds and hook new and young anglers on fishing, fish conservation and responsible angling.

Methods

ACA manages the province-wide program, including promoting the program as an opportunity for local groups interested in fishing, conservation, youth, recreation and/or tourism; connecting local organizers with resources and partners as they plan, promote and host their Kids Can Catch events; and providing web and communication services to profile each event on albertakidscancatch.com and register participants.

In 2014/15, we created a Kids Can Catch Tackle Box of tools and resources to help new and existing event organizers plan, promote and host successful events. Typically, one local organization takes lead to plan the event, and brings community and corporate partners on board to help. Partners help in a variety of ways – volunteers, in-kind donations, sponsorship, taking lead to coordinate specific event activities and/or event promotion.

Each Kids Can Catch event is free, non-competitive and family-friendly, making fishing fun and accessible for new and young anglers. Some events are new. Others are long-standing community fishing events or part of an annual festival. Some are big in numbers. Others are small. What all events share is a chance to fish, learn about fishing, fish conservation and responsible angling.

Results

In the 2014/15 fiscal year, over 2,500 people came out to fish at eight Kids Can Catch events, supported by nearly 40 community and corporate partners, as follows:

Community	Event date	Participants
Calgary	July 12, 2014	355
Fort Saskatchewan	June 14, 2014	936
Lacombe	June 7, 2014	200
Lamont	July 5-6, 2014	120
Magrath	June 21, 2014	190
Slave Lake	June 6, 2014	52
Stettler	July 12, 2014	32
Wabamun Lake	February 14, 2015	647

Total   2,532

Fort Saskatchewan Kids Can Catch is the program's flagship summer event. On June 14, 2014, over 900 youth and adults, including many new Canadians, came out to fish at Fort Lions Community Fish Pond. The bite was on, as ACA stocked the pond in the spring with about 1,000 rainbow trout, in partnership with Dow, City of Fort Saskatchewan and Fort Saskatchewan Lions Club.

To expand Kids Can Catch into the winter, ACA hosted Wabamun Lake Kids Can Catch as the program's flagship ice fishing event. The event grew from 200 participants in 2014 to 647 participants in 2015, thanks to partnerships with TransAlta, Cabela's, Wabamun and District Chamber of Commerce, Wabamun Citizens on Patrol and Village of Wabamun.

From January to March 2015, ACA promoted the Kids Can Catch Program to local organizations at events such as Alberta Fish and Game Association Annual Conference, Growing Rural Tourism Conference, Canadian Badlands Tourism Conference, and Edmonton Boat and Sportsmen's Show. Program promotion has resulted in interest from new organizations to plan Kids Can Catch events in the 2015/16 fiscal year.

Conclusions

In 2014-15, the Kids Can Catch Program succeeded in its goal to create opportunities for Albertans to fish and learn about fishing, fish conservation and responsible angling. Perhaps the best way to sum up the year is to share part of an email from a participant at Fort Saskatchewan Kids Can Catch:

> *"About a month ago I found online a reference about your "Kids Can Catch" free event. I have 4 young kids who have only fished a handful of times and a husband who loves to go fishing but doesn't get a chance to go often, so I thought this would be a fun activity for the family to do plus my husband could get his "fishing fix". Plus I knew lunch was included-always a bonus when you have kids! My father in law ended up coming as well and it turning out to be such a good bonding experience for all of us. I was so impressed that each of my children got a gift backpack full of fishing information and gear to get them started, and a fishing rod for each of my kids to keep. That I did not expect-I was just happy with the free lunch! But even more importantly, the fun my kids had trying and then succeeding in catching a fish-priceless. Honestly, it was like a Kodak moment as my husband caught one and quickly gave it to my daughter, who was the closest to him, and got her to reel it in. The look of pride on my kids faces as we took pictures of them and their "prize"-now that is what I call a worthwhile experience! Since then my kids have gone fishing at least twice with their dad, with grandpa tagging along once. It's only been one and a half weeks since your event! That is more times then my husband went last year, and he's thrilled. And the equipment you gave us has been put to good use so far! What surprises me is that my kids keep asking to go, even when they didn't always catch something the last time. My husband is very excited to share his love of fishing with our kids. Thank you again for providing such a wonderful opportunity for families like mine to bond with each other while enjoying nature."* (P. Vaarstra, email June 25, 2014)

Communications

We shared the story of the Kids Can Catch Program and its events through ACA communication channels, including:

- albertakidscancatch.com – ACA purchased the URL as the program's landing page.
- Creation of one webpage for each event to promote the event and its sponsors, register participants, and share the story of each event.
- E-newsletter article to share the success of the summer events with the 83,000 e-newsletter subscribers
- Facebook and Twitter posts to promote the events and share stories.
- Launch of "Fall in love with fishing this Valentine's Day" for Wabamun Lake Kids Can Catch, which involved information on ACA's homepage, Facebook and Twitter posts, news release, Constant Contact, and participant email communications pre- and post-event.
- Creation of the Kids Can Catch Tackle Box – tools to help event organizers plan, promote and host their event.

ACA leveraged local media stories on Kids Can Catch events, including:

- Fort Saskatchewan Record, June 19, 2014: "Kids Can Catch puts fish on the line." http://www.fortsaskatchewanrecord.com/2014/06/19/kids-can-catch-puts-fish-on-the-line
- Spruce Grove Examiner, January 30, 2015: "Kids Can Catch 2015 provides opportunities to learn." http://www.sprucegroveexaminer.com/2015/01/30/kids-can-catch-2015-provides-opportunities-to-learn
- Let's Go Outdoors, January 31, 2015: "Kids Can Catch – Ice Fishing at Wabamun Lake." http://www.letsgooutdoors.ca/television-programming/2015-television-radio-digital/item/118-kids-can-catch-ice-fishing-at-lake-wabamun