

## Alberta Conservation Association 2007/08 Project Summary Report

**Project name:** *Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP)*

**Project leader:** Trevor Council

**Primary ACA staff on this project:** Trevor Council and Milan Gillespie

### **Partnerships:**

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

### **Key findings**

- In 2007, a total of 64 waterbodies were stocked with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 87 stocking events. Five private growers, operating under a total of ten contracts, supplied the 20-cm rainbow trout.
- The ACA has stocked an average of 131,800 rainbow trout (20 cm) annually since assuming responsibility for the EFSP.

### **Introduction**

The Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP) was initiated in 1994 by Alberta Environmental Protection, primarily to supplement the existing government stocking program. In 1998, the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) assumed responsibility for the Program. The primary objective of the EFSP is to provide Alberta anglers with increased opportunity to catch and, wherever possible, harvest more fish while maintaining the integrity of Alberta's natural waters and fish populations. The focus of the EFSP was to provide large trout (minimum 20 cm) to put-and-take ponds, thereby producing better returns for anglers. In addition, the EFSP provides opportunity for anglers to catch 20-cm rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) in areas of Alberta where such fishing opportunities would not have existed otherwise; all stocked water bodies in the Program frequently winterkill. Majority of stockings occur in the southern and northeast regions of the province, east of Highway #2. To prevent interaction with native stocks, all waterbodies are outside the green zone and require less than 6,000 rainbow trout.

### **Methods**

All stockings were delivered through contracts with private rainbow trout growers. We sent out contracts for tender a year-and-a-half prior to the stocking date to give the private grower ample opportunity to grow the rainbow trout to the 20-cm minimum size limit. Majority of the rainbow trout stocking occurred prior to the May long weekend. We monitored contracts closely to ensure that the appropriate number and size of rainbow trout were stocked in the designated

waterbodies within a set time frame. Once growers were ready to ship fish, a stocking date was arranged with the load-out monitor and the lake contact. The load-out monitor traveled to the grower's operation to inventory fish being shipped, as well as measure a random subsample (20 - 100 fish) to ensure that fish were of adequate size. A penalty system is in place and enforced to deter growers from stocking under-sized rainbow trout; growers would not be paid full contract price if the average rainbow trout was < 20 cm. For example, if the average size of the rainbow trout in a load-out was 18.2 cm, then the grower may only receive 60% of the total contract price. The load-out monitor also assessed the condition of the fish by checking condition factor (plumpness) and obvious signs of disease and deformity. Once the correct number of fish were loaded into transport containers, the load-out monitor and grower signed a form indicating the number and size of fish that were shipped. When fish arrived at the receiving waterbody, a lake contact monitored the stocking process to determine if there were transport or stocking-related mortalities.

## Results

In 2007, a total of 64 waterbodies were stocked with 131,100 rainbow trout (20 cm) during 87 stocking events. Five private growers, operating under a total of ten contracts, supplied the fish. Seventy-three percent of stockings were completed as part of the first stocking events prior to the May long weekend; the remainder were completed as part of the June and September stockings.

A total of 867 rainbow trout stockings have occurred within the EFSP since 1998 when the ACA assumed responsibility of the Program (Table 1). Approximately 1.3 million rainbow trout were stocked during this 10-year period.

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program from 1998 to 2007.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of waterbodies</b>	<b>Number of stockings</b>	<b>Number of rainbow trout</b>
1998	81	100	144,000
1999	74	93	132,650
2000	68	86	131,300
2001	71	85	131,300
2002	67	84	132,100
2003	68	84	131,300
2004	67	85	131,300
2005	66	78	122,100

2006	64	85	131,100
2007	64	87	131,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>1,318,250</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>131,825</b>

## Conclusion

The EFSP continues to provide anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest fish. Private rainbow trout growers, administered through ten contracts, raise and deliver the rainbow trout to designated waterbodies. In 2007, a total of 64 waterbodies were stocked with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 87 stocking events.

## Communications

- A complete list of rainbow trout stockings and respective numbers are located on the ACA website and are updated annually.
- Articles were published in local newspapers to promote the program and inform the public of the angling opportunities.



Typical size of rainbow trout stocked in ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP).  
(Photo: Trevor Council)



A typical waterbody stocked in the Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP). (Photo: Velma Hudson)



Private rainbow trout grower stocking rainbow trout. (Photo: Velma Hudson)



Anglers fishing a stocked pond. (Photo: Trevor Council)