

**Alberta Conservation Association  
2000/09 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** Belly River Fish Inventory (2009)

**Project Leader:** Trevor Council, Jason Blackburn

**Primary Staff:** N/A

**Partnerships:**

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
Department of Fisheries and Oceans  
Alberta Environment

**Introduction**

The Belly River is a major aquatic system in southwestern Alberta, flowing 181km from the Canada-US border to its confluence with the Oldman River near Lethbridge. High water demand for both domestic and irrigation purposes under current management schemes seriously limits the river's capacity to support cold-water fish species in all but the head-water section. In particular, lack of water in lower sections at critical times limit the capacity of these sections to sustain fish populations. The goal of the proposed study was to assess the capacity of the lower Belly River in supporting a cold water fishery by documenting species composition, distribution, and abundance of fish within a 71-km reach from the confluence of the Waterton River to the confluence of the Oldman River.

**Status**

This project was deferred to the 2009 field season. We were unable to conduct surveys during the 2008 field season due to uncharacteristically sharp changes in water level. Water levels were either too low or too high for safe conduct of the planned electrofishing surveys.