

**Alberta Conservation Association
2008/09 Project Summary Report**

Project name: *Enhanced Fish Stocking Program*

Fisheries and Aquatic Program Manager: Peter Aku

Project leader: Trevor Council

Primary ACA staff on this project: Trevor Council

Partnerships: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key findings

- The Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP) provided anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest fish in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities would not have existed otherwise.
- In 2008, a total of 60 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 86 stocking events. Four private growers, operating under a total of ten contracts, supplied the 20-cm rainbow trout in May, June, and September.
- The ACA has stocked an average of 131,750 rainbow trout (20 cm) annually since assuming responsibility for the EFSP.
- Approximately 1.45 million 20-cm rainbow trout were stocked through 750 stocking events since 1998.

Abstract

The Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP) provided anglers with increased opportunities to catch and harvest 20 cm rainbow trout in parts of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited or do not exist. Recipient water bodies were prone to winterkill and as a result required an annual rainbow trout stocking to maintain the angling opportunity. All rainbow trout stockings were delivered through contracts with private growers. A total of 60 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 rainbow trout during 86 stocking events in 2008. Approximately 60 percent of the rainbow trout stockings were completed during the first stocking prior to the May long weekend. A total of 750 rainbow trout stockings occurred within the EFSP since 1998 when the ACA assumed responsibility of the EFSP. Approximately 1.45 million rainbow trout were stocked during this 11-year period.

Introduction

The Alberta Conservation Association assumed responsibility for the Enhanced Fish Stocking Program (EFSP) in 1998. The primary objective of the EFSP was 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 larger trout (minimum 20 cm) to put-and-take ponds, thereby producing better returns for anglers. In addition, the EFSP provided opportunity for anglers to catch 20-cm rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) in regions of Alberta where such fishing opportunities would not have existed otherwise. The majority of the rainbow trout stockings occurred in the southern and northeast regions of the province, east of Highway 2 and in water bodies that frequently winterkill. To prevent interaction with native stocks, all waterbodies were outside the green zone and required less than 6,000 rainbow trout.

Methods

All rainbow trout stockings were delivered through contracts with private growers. Contracts were sent out 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. The 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 transport the rainbow trout, 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 the rainbow trout being shipped, as well as measure a random subsample (20 - 100 fish) to ensure that fish were of adequate size. A penalty system was in place and enforced to deter growers from stocking under-sized rainbow trout. 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 documenting the number and size of the rainbow trout. Once the rainbow trout arrived at the receiving waterbody, a lake contact monitored the stocking process to determine if there were transport or stocking-related mortalities.

Results

In 2008, a total of 60 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 rainbow trout (20 cm) during 86 stocking events. Four private growers, operating under a total of 10 contracts, supplied the rainbow trout. Approximately 60% of the rainbow trout stockings were completed during the first stocking prior to the May long weekend; the remainder were completed as part of the June and September stockings.

A total of 750 rainbow trout stockings occurred within the EFSP since 1998 when the ACA assumed responsibility of the EFSP (Table 1). Approximately 1.45 million rainbow trout were stocked during this 11-year period. The number of water bodies stocked with rainbow trout ranged from 81 in 1998 to 60 in 2008.

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within ACA’s Enhanced Fish Stocking Program from 1998 to 2008.

Year	Number of waterbodies	Number of stockings	Number of rainbow trout
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
2008	60	86	131,100
Total	750	953	1,449,350
Average	68	86	131,759

Conclusion

The EFSP provided anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest rainbow trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities would not have existed otherwise. Private rainbow trout growers, administered through 10 contracts, raised and delivered the rainbow trout to designated water bodies. In 2008, a total of 60 water bodies were stocked with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 86 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.

Photos



Typical size (20 cm) for rainbow trout stocked in ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program. (Photo: Trevor Council)



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



Private rainbow trout grower stocking rainbow trout. (Photo: Trevor Council)



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

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within ACA's Enhanced Fish Stocking Program from 1998 to 2008.

Year	Number of waterbodies	Number of stockings	Number of rainbow trout
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
2008	60	86	131,100
Total	750	953	1,449,350
Average	68	86	131,759