

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

Project Name: Historical Fisheries Information on the Beaver River Drainage Basin (2009)

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Partnerships:

Beaver River Watershed Alliance
Lakeland Industry and Community Association
Alberta Environment

Introduction

The Beaver River Watershed Alliance is currently developing an ecosystem health monitoring program for the Beaver River drainage basin to assess conditions of the aquatic environment and its fisheries resources. Although agriculture, road construction and industrial activities are prominent in the basin, the cumulative effects of these human activities on aquatic health, including fisheries resources is largely unknown. As part of the monitoring program, we conducted a historical survey throughout the basin between October 2008 and March 2009 to generate historical fisheries information for comparisons with current status. The survey consisted of three components: 1) archival publication search, 2) historical fisheries and basin photographs, and 3) angler interviews (public and retired fisheries staff). Sources of archival publication included the Government of Alberta libraries, municipal archives, academic and other public libraries throughout the province, and sources discovered during the survey. Angler interviews were conducted in person, by phone, or through an online survey. The literature search produced 27 ecological references on the drainage basin, five of which contained detailed information on fish assemblages. One report included several informative photographs showing relatively intact riparian conditions at various locations throughout the basin. Fish species caught by anglers included: walleye, northern pike, white and long-nosed suckers, yellow perch, burbot, sauger, and lake whitefish. Also, crayfish and clams were reported within the basin. White and long-nosed suckers were the most abundant and most widely distributed species in the basin while walleye and northern pike were the most commonly captured and sought after sport species. In general, authors suggested that sportfish (northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, whitefish and burbot) abundance were low in the late 1970s and early 1980s compared to previous years. Two of the most popular fishing locations appeared to be near Beaver Crossing south of Cold Lake, and the Highway 36 crossing on the Beaver River, south of Lac La Biche. In general, the historical information suggests that fishing opportunities may have declined in the Beaver River mainstem and its tributaries over the past decades.