

Alberta Conservation Association 2010/11 Project Summary Report

Project Name: *Enhanced Fish Stocking Project*

Fisheries Program Manager: Peter Aku

Project Leader: Trevor Council

Primary ACA staff on project:

Trevor Council

Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key Findings

- The Enhanced Fish Stocking Project (EFSP) provides anglers the potential to catch and harvest rainbow trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited.
- In 2010, we stocked a total of 60 waterbodies with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 83 stocking events in May, June and September.
- ACA has stocked an average of approximately 131,650 rainbow trout annually since assuming responsibility for the EFSP in 1998; approximately 1.71 million rainbow trout have been stocked during this 13-year period.

Introduction

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) assumed responsibility for the Enhanced Fish Stocking Project (EFSP) in 1998. 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 is to provide larger (minimum 20-cm) rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) to put-and-take ponds, thereby producing better returns for anglers. In addition, the EFSP provides opportunities for anglers to catch 20-cm rainbow trout in regions of Alberta where such angling opportunities would not otherwise exist. Rainbow trout stockings occur in the White Zone of Alberta, east of Highway 2, in waterbodies that frequently winterkill. To prevent negative impacts to native stocks, all waterbodies are outside the Green Zone and require generally less than 4,000 rainbow trout in a single stocking.

Methods

We delivered all rainbow trout stockings through contracts with private growers. We sent out contracts for tender 1.5 years prior to stocking dates to give the private growers ample opportunity to grow the rainbow trout to the 20-cm minimum size limit. The majority of the

rainbow trout stockings occurred between mid-April and 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 a load-out monitor and a lake contact. The load-out monitor traveled to the grower's operation to inventory the rainbow trout being shipped, as well as measured a random subsample (20 – 100 fish) to ensure that fish were of adequate size. We enforced a penalty system to deter growers from stocking under-sized fish. 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 fish. 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 2010, we stocked a total of 60 waterbodies with 131,100 rainbow trout (20 cm) during 83 stocking events. Three private growers, operating under a total of 10 contracts, supplied the rainbow trout. Approximately 70% of the stockings occurred 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 1,122 rainbow trout stockings have occurred within the EFSP since 1998 when ACA assumed responsibility for the project (Table 1). Approximately 1.71 million rainbow trout have been stocked during this 13-year period. The number of waterbodies stocked with rainbow trout ranged from 81 in 1998 to 60 in 2010.

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within the Enhanced Fish Stocking Project from 1998 to 2010.

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
2009	61	86	131,100
2010	60	83	131,100

Total	871	1,122	1,711,550
Average	67	86	131,658

Conclusions

The EFSP provides anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest rainbow trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities would not otherwise exist. In 2010, we stocked a total of 60 waterbodies with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 83 stocking events. Private growers, administered through 10 contracts, raised and delivered the rainbow trout to designated waterbodies.

Communications

- A complete list of rainbow trout stockings are available on ACA's website and are updated annually.
- Published articles in local newspapers to promote the project and inform the public of the angling opportunities.

Photo captions

Photo 1.

Anglers fishing at Dewitt's Pond. (Photo: Trevor Council)

Photo 2.

Dewitt's Pond, a typical waterbody stocked in the Enhanced Fish Stocking Project. (Photo: Trevor Council)

Photo 3.

Rainbow trout stocking at McQuillan Reservoir. (Photo: Brad Hurkett)

Photo 4.

Typical 20-cm rainbow trout stocked in the Enhanced Fish Stocking Project. (Photo: Trevor Council)