

Alberta Conservation Association 2011/12 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 provides anglers the opportunity to catch and harvest rainbow trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited.
- Stocked a total of 59 waterbodies with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 84 stocking events in May, June and September 2011.
- ACA has stocked over 1.84 million rainbow trout into various waterbodies since 1998.

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 Albertans with increased recreational angling opportunities, particularly in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities do not otherwise exist. Under the EFSP, we stock catchable-sized (i.e., 20 cm minimum total length) rainbow trout into ponds to create put-and-take fisheries where anglers are allowed to harvest up to five fish per day. As a result, the EFSP provides Alberta anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest more fish while maintaining the integrity of Alberta's natural waters and fish populations. To prevent interaction with native fish stocks, trout stocking occurs in the white zone of Alberta (i.e., settled area of the province) only and in waterbodies that frequently winterkill; these waterbodies require generally less than 4,000 rainbow trout in a single stocking. Most of the lakes stocked by ACA occur in close proximity to municipalities, making them very popular family destinations.

Methods

We delivered all rainbow trout stockings through contracts with private growers. We sent out contracts for tender a year-and-a-half prior to stocking dates to give the private grower opportunity to grow the rainbow trout to the required 20-cm minimum size. The majority of 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, we arranged a stocking date 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 overall well-being 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 2011, we stocked a total of 59 waterbodies with 131,100 rainbow trout (20 cm) during 84 stocking events. Three private growers, operating under a total of 10 contracts, supplied the rainbow trout. We completed approximately 65% of the stockings during the first stocking prior to the May long weekend, and completed the remainder as part of the June and September stockings.

Since 1998 when the ACA assumed responsibility for the EFSP, we have stocked over 1.8 million fish in 1,206 stocking events (Table 1). The number of waterbodies stocked ranged from 81 in 1998 to 59 in 2011.

Table 1. Summary of rainbow trout stocking within Enhanced Fish Stocking project from 1998 to 2011.

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
2011	59	84	131,100

Total	930	1,206	1,842,650
Average	66	86	131,618

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. Private growers, administered through 10 contracts, raised and delivered the rainbow trout to designated waterbodies. In 2011, we stocked a total of 59 waterbodies with 131,100 20-cm rainbow trout during 84 stocking events.

Communications

- Provided a complete list of rainbow trout stockings on ACA's website; this list is updated annually.
- Published articles in local newspapers to promote the project and inform the public of the angling opportunities.

Photo captions



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



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



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



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



Rainbow trout flowing through a stocking tube. (Photo: Trevor Council)



Rainbow trout entering pond via a stocking tube. (Photo: Brad Hurkett)