

Alberta Conservation Association 2013/14 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Milk River Sauger/Sport Fish Inventory

Fisheries Program Manager: Peter Aku

Project Leader: Kevin Fitzsimmons

Primary ACA staff on project:

Kevin Fitzsimmons and Tyler Johns

Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Key Findings

N/A

Introduction

Fish populations in the Milk River in southwestern Alberta are influenced by international transboundary flow agreements between Alberta and Montana. Discussions are currently underway regarding the timing and quantity of water diverted into the North Milk River and subsequently conveyed into the Alberta portion of the river. Nineteen fish species are documented in the Alberta portion of the river (approximately 170 km of stream). Three of these species—St. Mary’s sculpin, western silvery minnow and stonecat—are listed as *Threatened* under the *Species At Risk Act*, and two others—sauger and brassy minnow—are listed as “of special interest.” However, the most recent data on fish populations from the Milk River system are more than a decade old. The goal of our project is to generate data on fish distribution and abundance, which can be used to review the status of fish species as well as contribute to decision-making regarding flow control regimes. In 2013/14 (planning year), we held discussions with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to determine the priorities, objectives and broad project direction for Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) participation in the drainage. Researchers from the University of Alberta are conducting surveys on sculpin and western silvery minnow in the upper and lower reaches of the Milk River. ACA will determine population estimates for sauger and fish community composition in the middle reaches of the river. Data collection and reporting will begin in 2014/15.