

Alberta Conservation Association 2015/16 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Enhanced Fish Stocking Project

Fisheries Program Manager: Peter Aku

Project Leader: Diana Rung

Primary ACA staff on project:

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Partnerships

Access Pipeline
Agrim Redwater
Aquality Environmental
Aux Sable Energy
City of Fort Saskatchewan
City of Red Deer
Complete Crossings
Dow AgroSciences

Key Findings

- The Enhanced Fish Stocking project provides anglers with opportunities to catch and harvest rainbow trout and brown trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited.
- We stocked 60 waterbodies with 115,150 rainbow trout and 5,000 brown trout. For the first time in the stocking project, we stocked brown trout into seven ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience.
- Contracted private growers and the Government of Alberta fish hatchery stocked trout in our ponds.
- We installed project or interpretive signage at 11 waterbodies.

Introduction

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) assumed responsibility for the Enhanced Fish Stocking (EFS) project in 1998. The primary objective of the project 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 EFS project, we stock catchable-sized (i.e., 20 cm total length) rainbow trout and brown trout into ponds to create put-and-take fisheries where anglers are allowed to harvest up to five fish per day. To prevent interaction with native fish, trout stocking occurs in the White Zone of Alberta (settled area of the province) only and in waterbodies that frequently winterkill; these waterbodies typically require less than 3,000 trout in

a single stocking. Most ACA stocked lakes are close to municipalities, making them very popular family destinations.

Methods

Trout stockings were completed through nine contracts: eight with private growers and one with the Government of Alberta fish hatchery. For private growers, we sent out contracts for tender a year and a half before stocking dates to give these growers the opportunity to grow the rainbow trout to the required 20 cm size. The stocking contract with the government was negotiated a year before stocking.

Most stockings occurred between mid-April and the May long weekend. We monitored the private grower 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 travelled to the grower's operation to inventory the rainbow trout being shipped and measure a random subsample (30 to 40 fish) to confirm that fish were of adequate size. We implemented a penalty system to deter growers from stocking undersized 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 was loaded into transport containers, the load-out monitor and grower signed a form documenting the number and size of fish. At the receiving waterbody, a volunteer lake contact monitored the stocking process to determine if there were stocking or transport-related mortalities. Rainbow trout and brown trout stockings contracted to the government hatchery did not require monitoring and were completed by government staff.

Results

In 2015/16, we stocked a total of 60 waterbodies with 115,150 rainbow trout and 5,000 brown trout. Approximately 60% of the stockings were completed during the first stocking before the May long weekend; the remainder were completed as part of the June stockings. Private growers supplied and stocked 89,600 rainbow trout into 46 ponds, and the government hatchery supplied and stocked 25,550 rainbow trout into 14 ponds. The government also stocked 5,000 brown trout into seven ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience. We imposed a 20% payment penalty on one private grower for 4,500 undersized (19.2 cm) fish. All other stocked fish were 20 cm in length.

We installed signs at 10 waterbodies (Table 1) to identify them as ACA stocked sites and to identify contributing partners. We also installed two interpretive signs at Bower Ponds in Red Deer to promote ethical angling of northern pike.

Table 1. Waterbodies where Enhanced Fish Stocking project signs were installed in 2015.

Waterbody
Castor Fish Pond
Echo Dale Regional Park
Foremost Reservoir
Heritage Lake
Len Thompson Pond
Magrath Fish Pond
Mitchell Pond
Morinville Fish and Game Pond
Nose Creek Pond
Ray's Pond

Conclusions

Our EFS project provides anglers with increased opportunities to catch and harvest trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities do not otherwise exist. In 2015/16, for the first time, we supplemented our rainbow trout stockings with brown trout at seven ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience. Private growers and the government hatchery raised and delivered trout to the designated waterbodies.

Communications

- A complete list of rainbow and brown trout stockings is posted on our website and is updated frequently during the trout stocking season.

Photos



An Enhanced Fish Stocking project sign installed at Echo Dale Regional Park. Photo: Jim Potter



Private growers load rainbow trout into transport tanks. Photo: Diana Rung



A sign installed at Bower Ponds promoting responsible angling. Photo: Diana Rung



A sign installed at Bower Ponds displaying information on northern pike. Photo: Diana Rung



A young angler participates in trout stocking at Mitchell Pond. Photo: Diana Rung