

Alberta Conservation Association 2016/17 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
Agrium Redwater
Alberta Environment and Parks
Aquality Environmental
Aux Sable Energy
City of Fort Saskatchewan
Complete Crossings
Dow Chemical Canada

Key Findings

- The Enhanced Fish Stocking project provided anglers opportunities to catch and harvest rainbow trout and brown trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited.
- We stocked 61 waterbodies with 115,950 rainbow and 5,000 brown trout. For the second year, we added 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 signage at 10 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 only in the White Zone of Alberta (settled area of the province) and in waterbodies that frequently winterkill. Most lakes stocked by ACA 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 (GoA) fish hatchery. For private growers, we sent out contracts for tender 18 months before stocking dates to allow growers the opportunity to grow rainbow trout to the required 20 cm size. The stocking contract with the GoA 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 to 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 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 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 by GoA did not require monitoring.

Results

In 2016/17, we stocked a total of 61 waterbodies with 115,950 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 89,500 rainbow trout into 48 ponds, and GoA supplied and stocked 26,450 rainbow trout into 13 ponds. In addition to the rainbow trout we typically stock in these ponds, GoA stocked 5,000 brown trout into seven ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience.

We installed project signs at 10 waterbodies (Table 1) to identify the waterbody as a site stocked by ACA and to identify contributing partners.

Table 1. Waterbodies where Enhanced Fish Stocking project signs were installed in 2016.

Waterbody
Anderson Dam
Bonnyville Pond
Boyle Pond
Bud Miller
Claude Brennan Memorial Pond
East Stormwater Pond
Emerson Lake
Hermitage Park Pond
Legal Reservoir
Mound Red Park

Conclusions

Our EFS project provided anglers with increased opportunity to catch and harvest trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities do not otherwise exist. For the second consecutive year, 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 GoA fish hatchery raised and delivered trout to designated waterbodies.

Communications

- A complete list of rainbow and brown trout stockings was posted on our website and updated frequently during trout stocking season.
- An article entitled “Catching Rainbows – Putting Fish Where There Were Few Before” was published in the Fall/Winter 2016 edition of *Conservation Magazine*.

Literature Cited

None

Photos



A private grower weighs and loads rainbow trout. Photo: Diana Rung



Rainbow trout eggs being incubated at a private hatchery. Photo: Diana Rung



Lyndon strain rainbow trout eggs during incubation. Photo: Diana Rung