

## **Alberta Conservation Association 2017/18 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** Enhanced Fish Stocking Project

**Fisheries Program Manager:** Peter Aku

**Project Leader:** Diana Rung

**Primary ACA staff on project:** Jim Potter and Diana Rung

### **Partnerships**

Access Pipeline  
Agrium Redwater  
Alberta Environment and Parks  
Aquality Environmental  
Canadian Tire  
Town of Cochrane  
City of Fort Saskatchewan  
Complete Crossings  
Dow Chemical Canada  
SysGen Solutions Group

### **Key Findings**

- The Enhanced Fish Stocking project provided anglers opportunities to catch and harvest rainbow trout, brown trout, and brook trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited.
- Due to shortage in the commercial hatchery fish production related to whirling disease, we were compelled to stock fewer fish in 2017/18 relative to previous years.
- We added one new pond to our stocking list.
- We stocked 52 waterbodies with 73,231 rainbow trout, 5,000 brown trout, and 4,800 brook trout.
- Ten waterbodies were not stocked pending an assessment by the Government of Alberta for whirling disease risk.
- We installed signage at ten 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, brown trout, and brook 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 salmonids, trout stocking occurs only in the White Zone of Alberta (settled area of the province) and in waterbodies that frequently winterkill. Most EFS ponds are close to towns and cities, making them popular family destinations and ideal for the recruitment of new anglers.

## **Methods**

Trout stockings were completed through two contracts: one with a private grower and one with the Government of Alberta (GoA) fish hatchery. The stocking contracts for both the private grower and GoA were negotiated several months before stocking.

Spring stockings occurred between mid-April and the May long weekend, early summer stockings occurred by the third week in June and fall stockings occurred in early October. We monitored the private grower contracts closely to ensure that the appropriate number and size (20 cm) of rainbow trout were stocked. 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 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. We participated in one trout load-out at the GoA Cold Lake fish hatchery in May. Subsequent trout stockings of rainbow trout, brown trout, and brook trout by GoA did not require monitoring.

## **Results**

In 2017/18 we added one new pond, Shell True North Pond, to our stocking list. We stocked a total of 52 waterbodies with 83,031 trout of which 73,231 were rainbow trout, 5,000 brown trout, and 4,800 brook trout. Due to disruption in the commercial hatchery fish production related to whirling disease, we were compelled to reduce the number of fish stocked in 2017/18. The total number of fish we could obtain was approximately 67 percent of our normal stocking rate. Approximately 60 percent of the stockings were completed during the first stocking before the May long weekend, 35 percent were completed as part of the June stockings and 5 percent were completed in early October. The private growers stocked 32,921 trout and GoA stocked 50,110. In addition to the rainbow trout we typically stock in these ponds, GoA stocked brown trout into seven ponds and brook trout into ten ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience. Prior to stocking, Alberta Environment and Parks screened all EFS ponds to determine risk of whirling disease; 10 ponds identified as requiring further assessment were not stocked in 2017/18.

We installed project signs at ten 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 2017.

<b>Waterbody</b>
Bow City East Pond
Castaway Pond
Enchant Park Pond
Irma Pond
Kinsmen Lake
Lougheed Trout Pond
Mitchell Pond
Nose Creek Pond
Wallace Park Pond
Wetaskiwin Lions Trout Pond

### **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 third consecutive year, we supplemented our rainbow trout stockings with brown trout at seven ponds to provide anglers with greater diversity in their fishing experience. This year we stocked brook trout for the first time in ten ponds. Due to shortage in the commercial hatchery fish production related to whirling disease, we were compelled to stock fewer fish in 2017/18 relative to previous years.

### **Communications**

- A complete list of rainbow trout, brown trout, and brook trout stockings was posted on our website and updated frequently during trout stocking season. The list can be viewed at [2017 ACA stocking list](#)

## Photos



Trucks and transport tanks are disinfected prior to loading trout.  
Photo: Diana Rung



Government of Alberta staff transfer rainbow trout.  
Photo: Diana Rung



Rainbow trout in a stocking tube.  
Photo: Diana Rung