

**Alberta Conservation Association  
2018/19 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** ACA Fish Stocking, New Lakes

**Fisheries Program Manager:** Peter Aku

**Project Leader:** Scott Seward

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**Partnerships**

Alberta Environment and Parks

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Alberta Transportation

County of Grande Prairie

Taber Irrigation District

Town of Taber

**Key Findings**

- Recommendations from stakeholders and regional fisheries biologists identified three waterbodies as potential trout stocking sites for field evaluation.
- Desktop and field evaluation of these three waterbodies indicate that none have fisheries potential.
- One pond, Chestermere Pond, identified in 2017 is undergoing further evaluation prior to being added to the AFS project.
- Taber Pond, identified during the 2016/17 AFS New Lakes search, was stocked for the first time in May 2018.

- County Sportsplex Pond (County of Grande Prairie), identified during the 2016/17 AFS New Lakes search, was stocked for the first time in June 2018.

## **Introduction**

ACA stocks approximately 65 waterbodies with approximately 116,000 catchable-sized trout (i.e., 20 cm) under its ACA Fish Stocking (AFS) project. AFS ponds can receive upwards of 2,000 angler hours per hectare during the summer months (Fitzsimmons and Keeling 2015) making them some of the most intensely fished waterbodies in the province. AFS ponds are also very popular because they are often within a reasonable driving distance of many anglers (Patterson and Sullivan 2013). ACA is working to identify new lakes to stock and/or develop to create additional recreational fishing opportunities as part of the AFS New Lakes project.

## **Methods**

In the first three years (2015-2017) of the AFS New Lakes project, we identified and evaluated 217 waterbodies within a 50 km radius of major urban centres in Alberta using Google Earth © (2018) imagery supplemented with input from regional fisheries biologists and stakeholders. We also included waterbodies further than 50 km from major urban centres that were recommended by stakeholders. We used satellite imagery and provincial fisheries database queries to eliminate unsuitable waterbodies based on attributes including: potential for fish escapement, presence of trout predators, water depth (excessive weed growth), overlap with sensitive amphibian habitat, and potential for user conflict (e.g., on a golf course).

We completed field assessments on the remaining waterbodies to determine physical, chemical, and biological suitability of these waterbodies for recreational trout fishing. At each pond, we measured water depth, dissolved oxygen, temperature, conductivity, pH, water clarity, and noted aquatic weed abundance, shoreline characteristics, and accessibility to the public.

## **Results**

Three waterbodies were recommended for field evaluation in 2018. None of these waterbodies were suitable for AFS expansion, however, evaluation of one waterbody, Chestermere Pond, identified in 2017 is ongoing (Figure 1).

In addition to searching for new waterbodies, two waterbodies we had identified in previous years of the AFS New Lakes search have been developed into fisheries and stocked with rainbow trout in 2018: Taber Pond and County Sportsplex Pond (County of Grande Prairie).

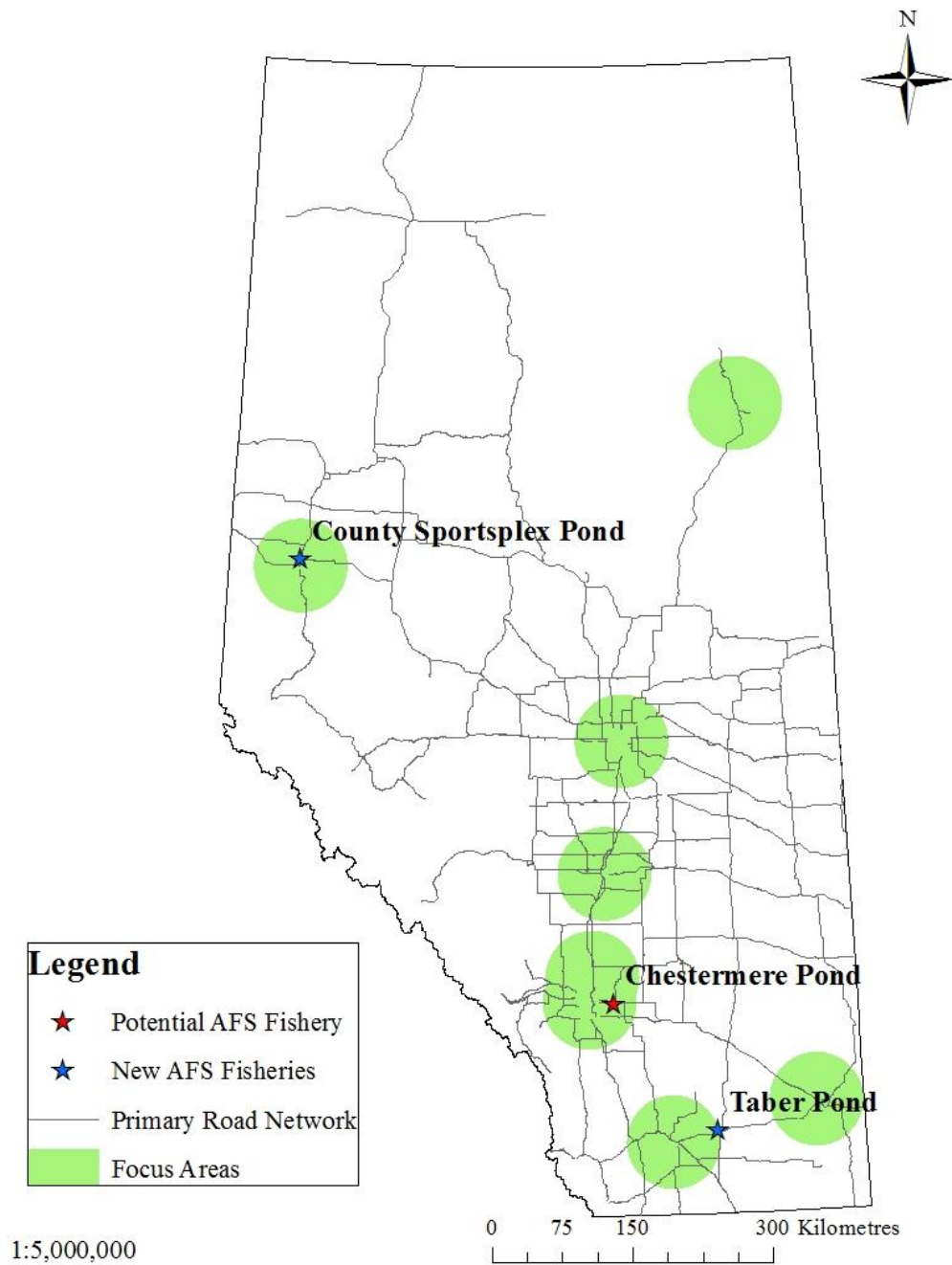


Figure 1: Provincial focal areas for ACA Fish Stocking (AFS) New Lake expansion, including 50 km buffers, potential AFS fisheries and new AFS fisheries.

## Conclusions

There are a limited number of waterbodies that are suitable for AFS expansion. However, the AFS New Lakes project continues to find and develop fisheries, creating new fishing opportunities near large urban centers.

### **Communications**

- ACA brochure “Remember the Old Fishin’ Hole? Let’s bring that back.”

### **Literature Cited**

Fitzsimmons, K., and B. Keeling. 2015. Survival of stocked trout and a creel based sport fishery assessment of 12 Alberta Conservation Association stocked ponds. Data Report, produced by the Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada.

Patterson, W. F. and M. G. Sullivan. 2013. Testing and refining the assumptions of put-and-take rainbow trout fisheries in Alberta. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* 18:340-354.

### **Photos**



ACA Fish Stocking New Lakes candidate waterbody, Chestermere Pond, east of Chestermere, Alberta, approximately 9 km. Photo: Diana Rung



Happy anglers at County Sportsplex Pond, Clairmont, Alberta. Photo: Ed Kolodychuk



Novice anglers attending a Kids Can Catch event at Taber Trout Pond, Taber, Alberta. Photo: Peter Aku