

**Alberta Conservation Association
2023/24 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Fish Stocking Expansion – New Lakes

Fisheries Program Manager: Peter Aku

Project Leader: Scott Seward

Primary ACA Staff on Project: Kevin Fitzsimmons, David Jackson, Diana Rung, and Scott Seward

Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association

Alberta Transportation

County of Grande Prairie

Evelyn and Leslie Wadey

Government of Alberta

Lacombe Fish & Game Association

Saddle Hills County

Taber Irrigation District

Town of Taber

Key Findings

- Recommendations from stakeholders and regional fisheries biologists identified two ponds as potential trout stocking sites for evaluation in 2023/24; however, neither of the ponds passed Alberta Conservation Association’s screening criteria.
- We are collecting baseline data on Sawmill Lake, in collaboration with the Government of Alberta, to aid their determination of stocking potential.
- Candidate ponds from previous years, Chestermere Pond near Chestermere and BP1 (a borrow pit) near Fort McMurray, both have fisheries potential but creating public access remains an issue at these ponds.

- A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Government of Alberta to acknowledge that Chestermere Pond has fisheries potential and is desired by both agencies. This should aid in discussions to create access to Chestermere Pond.

Details

Stocked trout fisheries are popular in Alberta, with rainbow trout being the third most sought-after fish by anglers in Alberta. Given the popularity of stocked trout fisheries in Alberta, this project seeks to expand the number of stocked ponds through identification and screening of ponds with potential to support a stocked trout fishery. We evaluated two new ponds (Fort Vermilion Pond and La Crete Pond) during the 2023 field season and determined that neither met Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) criteria (e.g., water depth, dissolved oxygen, temperature, conductivity, pH, water clarity, absence of invasive species, barriers to prevent fish escapement, etc.) for a stocked fishery. However, in collaboration with the Government of Alberta (GOA), we are also investigating a much larger waterbody (Sawmill Lake) than what ACA typically stocks. We collected baseline winter water quality data and will collect bathymetric data and water quality in the spring of 2024 to aid the GOA in determining if Sawmill Lake meets the criteria of their stocking program. Two ponds identified from previous years, Chestermere Pond (near Chestermere) and a borrow pit (BP1 near Fort McMurray), may be suitable for future fisheries. We are working with the GOA and local municipalities to determine next steps for these ponds.

Photos



Photo 1. Overview of Sawmill Lake during initial winter assessment during March 2023.

Photo: Scott Seward



Photo 2. A favourite fish food, freshwater shrimp, found during the winter assessment of Sawmill Lake. Photo: Scott Seward