

**Alberta Conservation Association**  
**2024/25 Project Summary Report**

**Project Name:** Channel Catfish Stocked Ponds

**Fisheries Program Manager:** Peter Aku

**Project Leader:** Mike Rodtka

**Primary ACA Staff on Project:** Brad Hurkett

### **Partnerships**

Aquaculture Centre of Excellence – Lethbridge Polytechnic  
Government of Alberta

### **Key Findings**

- We located a reliable source of triploid (i.e., infertile), channel catfish fry in the USA for importation.
- We obtained provincial and federal fish import permits for importation of approximately 7,000 catfish in the spring of 2025.
- We arranged for the Aquaculture Centre of Excellence in Lethbridge to rear the catfish in preparation for field trials in 2026.

### **Details**

At the request of the Government of Alberta (GoA), Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) evaluated the suitability and availability of commonly stocked sport fish in North America as an alternative to rainbow trout for creation of put-and-take fisheries where summer water temperature and dissolved oxygen limit trout stocking. Following our evaluation, channel catfish was selected as the most promising alternative. Channel catfish provide very popular put-and-take fisheries in stocked ponds in the USA and are relatively tolerant of degraded water quality. However, channel catfish do not currently occur within Alberta, so their importation required careful consideration.

To assist in the GoA's evaluation of our proposal, we completed a review of the biology, ecology, management, and culture of channel catfish, enabling a detailed assessment of ecological risk, as well as consideration of the management and social implications of stocking catfish. This work eventually resulted in approval for ACA to import triploid (i.e., infertile) channel catfish fry in 2026. Aquaculture production of channel catfish in North America occurs almost exclusively in the USA and triploid fish are a special order. In 2024/25 we located a supplier of triploid catfish in Idaho and arranged for the necessary import permits. We plan on importing approximately 7,000 channel catfish fry in the spring of 2025. The catfish will be raised in the biosecure facility at the Aquaculture Centre of Excellence in Lethbridge for their first year. During this time the culture requirements and growth of the fish will be closely assessed, and we will identify experimental ponds for field trials scheduled to begin in 2026/27. Although fish stocking for recreational angling enhancement has occurred in the province for over a century, this is the first time channel catfish have been evaluated for this purpose in Alberta.

## Photos



Photo 1. Channel catfish raised for recreational angling enhancement by an Idaho grower.

Photo: Brad Hurkett



Photo 2. ACA staff member Brad Hurkett admiring a channel catfish grown in an outdoor raceway in Idaho. Photo: Mike Rodtka