

Friends of the Red Deer River  
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Our group would like to present a new idea for managing the Provinces best trout fisheries in Alberta, specifically the Central Alberta area. The intent is to use the idea as a pilot project and if the project proves successful apply it to a selected number of other trout fisheries with potential for both Stillwater and flowing water. It is the hope that the program will offer the angler of Alberta and tourist anglers a quality program that is consistent. Upon success of the initial pilot project the Province could then embark on the other selected capable trout fisheries to disperse the intense angling pressure the meager few quality trout fisheries are currently experiencing.

The new idea our group would like to present for the Red Deer River, Dickson Trout Pond & Cow Lake to the SRD (Sustainable Resources Development) and the Provincial Government of Alberta is shown below. **The first priority that we would like to present here is the Red Deer River pilot project!** The other two important suggestions are a key ingredient to distributing angler pressure over more trout fisheries by offering up more quality trout fisheries for anglers to partake in within the Province.

## **# 1 Priority - Red Deer River proposed plan**

### **Fishery resource stamps**

Implement the following stamps and revenue base:

Fishery Conservation Stamp:	\$20.00 annually * Note: this stamp even applies to anglers under age 16 & over 65 years of age.
Resource Stamp for fishing guides:	\$1000.00 annually (per guide)
Recreational User Stamp:	\$15.00 annually (per person)
Trophy Trout Stamp:	\$ 25.00 (one per angler per season-trout over 25")

The stamp revenues would need to be segregated from general revenues and kept in a special responsibility centre to be applied directly into managing the Red Deer River project in a successful manner. This should be possible as the Province now divides some license revenue between two private organizations the "Alberta Conservation Association" and the "Alberta Professional Outfitters Association". This has set a precedence that should allow funds to be isolated from the General Revenue Fund for this specific project.

## **Fine Structures**

\* Fine values should be set at a minimum dollar value that is significant enough to permanently deter dangerous illegal retention of fish from any specific fishery. By using the W.I.N. card to follow and make use of its original purpose (establishing disciplinary records for individual angler offences) as well as to assist in the process of increased penalties based on the conviction record of serious repeat offenders. Fines should double with each consecutive repeat offence and subsequently angling privileges suspended from 3-5 years. Beyond this the real serious offender should have their equipment, boats or even vehicles confiscated and the proceeds from sales to go back into the specific fishery that took the losses. These convictions should also be made very public to make an example that this kind of damaging behavior will no longer be tolerated in the Province any longer.

### **Examples of minimum fine structure**

Fishing with barbed hooks	\$250.00 per infraction-first time.
Fishing with bait illegally	\$500.00 per infraction-first time.
Illegal retention of protected fish	\$1500.00 per infraction-first time.
Fine for each individual fish as well	\$1000.00 per infraction-first time.

### **Revenues base**

The revenue base from the above stamp programs and fine revenues must be isolated so they stay on the Red Deer River to ensure the following.

Put in place an enhancement building and construct a small clear creek within the secure (fenced) in grounds of the enhancement building. This would make it possible for the Province to secure milch & eggs from the genetically pure strain of fish from the Red Deer River project area. Hatch them out in the building and raise them in an enclosed cold water stream until the time of release back into the project area. This would not be an annual thing after the first few years it would only be done in special circumstances when it is really critical to sustain the quality program suggested.

The revenue base would also fund two enforcement positions as well as a biologist position that would be specifically tasked to police and manage this project area. Right now to many times the enforcement Officers are called away on immediate trouble calls, wildlife violations, trespassing situations and a multitude of reasons that multi task them into oblivion. The project will require and prove there is a concerted effort required across the board for our best trout fisheries if they are to survive the angling pressure and rampant illegal activity that is depleting our best trout fisheries at an alarming rate.

### **Enhancement of the project area of the proposed RDR Fishery Management Plan**

- A) Milk as many of the largest genetically Brown trout that are in optimum condition to provide the great genetics required to boost the population base that currently reside in the Red Deer River below Dickson Dam. This will give the low numbers that are left from the destructive 2005 flood and rampant illegal retention a real honest chance to recover. Rampant illegal retention is a real limiting factor has been ongoing for years and has harmed the Brown Trout fishery on this stretch of water dramatically.



- B) Source a special strain of Rainbow Trout and (Triploid) them so they cannot reproduce and enhance the project area on the Red Deer River with these triploid Rainbow Trout. The initial enhancement could be in the area of twenty thousand triploids at a size of 8"-10". Then every second year enhance the river with a number around five thousand per year in the 8"-10" range.
- C) If possible find some way to help the Rocky Mountain Whitefish population on the RDR as it was one of the top Whitefish fisheries in the Province before 2005. This could mostly be done hopefully by implementing very restrictive measures such as catch & release until the population of Whitefish shows signs of a strong recovery.
- D) Eliminate the use of Bait period on the RDR project area; including maggots these fish (Whitefish) take tiny lures, streamers, nymphs and dry flies quite willing. This will provide great sport and do a great job of reducing mortality of all game fish on the river.

## **#2 Priority – Re-establish Cow Lake as a retention lake for Rainbow Trout/Brown Trout**

This program should be based on stocking the majority of the rainbow trout as Diploids (productive fish) or all trout as triploid (non-reproductive fish) for angler enjoyment and retention. This Lake in the early to late 1980's drew anglers Province wide as well as anglers from all over North America. It handled tremendous angler pressure with high retention limits and still produced a world class fishery. In the period of two months the local economic revenue base realized from this fishery alone drew in \$140,000.00.

During the years this program was successful our other trout fisheries in Central Alberta had both high angler satisfaction and a consistent fishing experience available for all anglers to enjoy. Since the collapse of the Rainbow Trout fishery on Cow Lake, the Clear Water area Trout fisheries haven't even come close to experiencing anywhere near the quality of angling that was previously available. The Province has to spread angling pressure in a huge way on both Stillwater and flowing waters both illegal and legal this cannot be over stated. This program of re-establishing the once great trout fisheries this Province had, enhancing others and creating new QSF fisheries will accomplish this. Not to mention in "Fish & Wildlife " documentation it clearly states the vast majority of anglers much preferred the option of Trout versus both Pike and Perch on Cow Lake.

This Program seems to be a must if other more fragile programs are to be successful this is a big body of water (2100 acres of water surface area) that is super productive and pumps out a very large number of trout to enormous sizes in a minimal amount of time. If the fishery is to be successful as well as consistent the requirement of four things is probably necessary and they are.

- A) The installation of a "steel barricade" a short distance downstream from the broken beaver dam on Cow Lake has the ability to draw down water levels on the lake via a valve placed at the base of the barrier. This provides the opportunity to take advantage of a few situations to raise lake levels or draw them down. In order to draw the water levels down significantly (to about half the volume of normal water levels) the channel directly above the barricade may have to be dredged out. The dredging of the channel is a very worthwhile objective to pursue even if it is expensive. This will increase the odds of this physical re-habilitation of the Rainbow and Brown trout fishery on the lake. By having the opportunity to draw the water levels down significantly enough to cause a complete winterkill of the Perch and Pike in the Lake. Through (design and construction) the valve or drain system located at the bottom downstream base of the weir that will allow the lake to be lowered.



- B) Once drawn down to the halfway mark use a carefully calculated and systematically well planned out application of Rotenone to kill the Perch and Pike. Once this has been completed leave the Lake at the reduced level (half empty) to further apply a systematic winterkill the winter following the Rotenone kill. If the lake is only drawn down about halfway it should not take near as long to return to normal water levels.
- C) After the Rotenone and winter kill has taken place introduce a predator species to control any surviving Perch population. The introduction of Triploid (sterile) Blackwater Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout to prey on young Perch is a proven one. The Triploid trout both species especially the Brown Trout will grow quickly and change their feeding habits to one where Perch especially will be their main source of food if still available after the Rotenone and winterkill process. Put a catch and release restriction on the triploid Brown Trout and Triploid Blackwater Rainbows (after placing very visible identifying markings on the Blackwater Rainbow Trout) as these two types of trout are the control mechanism on the lake to control unwanted Perch populations.
- D) The final part of this plan would allow the angler to take as many perch home as they can catch to fully ensure the control or elimination of any build up of mature populations of Perch in Cow Lake.
- D) Possible implementation of aeration or aeration injector systems in a few places that have access to a constant source of electrical power sources. The aeration is an alternate protective measure to aide in eliminating the chance of any future winter kill.
- E) Set an angling restriction where each individual angler could retain two trout over the 16" or 40cm length per day.
- F) If the fishery is to be stocked with an original 300,000 boost of trout and there is no winterkill and there is a subsequent annual stocking of 150-200 thousand trout ice fishing could probably be allowed. If not the Province may have to eliminate ice fishing all together.

These suggestions are included to provide the retention angler with a fishery that ensures their angling desires have been met. This will also spread angling pressure over more areas and protect the quality trout waters within the area that cannot handle tremendous angling pressure especially consumptive pressures like Cow Lake can.

### **#3 Priority – Establish Dickson Trout Pond as a QSF Stillwater.**

Back in the early 1980's when rainbow trout were first introduced to Dickson Pond the fishing experience was unbelievable. Due to it being easily accessible and its popularity in the last twenty years the angling experience has quickly deteriorated to a point where it is a dismal disappointment as a fishery. With a few simple changes this fishery could provide a very high level of angler satisfaction and disperse angling pressure in this area even more. These changes would save the Province annual stocking costs and enhance the fishery and even provide revenue base for the local economy.

- A) Change the current restrictions to read only one trout of over say 20" or even 23" per day can be retained by the angler.
- B) Stock the lake with fewer trout to keep the lake food base at optimal levels, and with more trout of different year classes remaining in the lake to provide a quality experience. Also allowing the retention angler to both experience quality angling and still be able to retain a few fish.

- C) Implement an aeration process through the winter as this lake is a fairly shallow lake for over 80% of the surface area. There is assuredly some winterkill taking place on this body of water at least over the worst winter conditions at a minimum.
- D) Eliminate ice fishing altogether on this body of water and perhaps a bait ban so smaller year classes of trout can be safely released.

The enforcement Officers that have been staffed through the pilot project revenues can be tasked to focus policing totally on the Red Deer River project area, Dickson Pond and Kurbis pond out by Erskine. This is a sound set of suggestions that our group and a very large number of concerned anglers now put forward to SRD and the Provincial Government. Many anglers are now communicating after all that the angler that purchases a provincial fishing license has entered into a contract with the Province. They faithfully enter into this contract the angler is entitled to a certain level of reasonable expectation of a quality angling experience. This half decent angling experience is not a lot to ask for yet it is not happening and hasn't for many years. We hope you will accept our suggestions open your minds and embrace this concept and we wait for your response. With all the work this group has put in over the last 25 years towards this end and the current disheartened angler attitude we think we deserve a detailed written response as to why the Province rejects these ideas and if so why, or if they embrace them and if so lets get started immediately.

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