

FROM Tom Mill
Director, Fisheries Branch

OUR FILE REFERENCE

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TO Jim Barlischen
Manager, Environmental
Mitigation
Public Works, Supply
and Services

DATE October 18, 1991

TELEPHONE 427-6730

SUBJECT BROWN TROUT STOCKING FOR THE OLDMAN RIVER DAM

I am sorry that I did not get back to you in writing earlier after your original telephone call in September or early October. Thanks for calling again.

As I stated in my memorandum of August 16, 1991 to Jake Theissen, we have no brown trout available for stocking in the Oldman River in 1991. Since my reply to Jake, I have been advised by staff planning our 1992 hatchery programming that we can re-allocate brown trout intended for other locations to stock the Oldman River in 1992. This will give us time to shift our brood stock program to produce additional brown trout to meet the larger program needs for subsequent years.

I still need to hear from our regional fisheries head, Frank Bishop, he has consulted with John Englert in your department to develop and agree upon a stocking plan for the river. This is very important to finalize before public expectations are created (or increased, since they seem to exist already) by publicly announcing when, where, how many and what size of what fish species we might go ahead with. Long-term fishery management objectives, and the regulations to support them, will be required as components of any stocking program.

We did have just under 1,000 large brown trout brood fish culled this fall from the Allison Creek Brood Trout Station stocks. After considering your request to put fish in the Oldman River this fall, we decided to proceed with our original intent to stock these fish in the Red Deer River below the Dickson Dam. We did so for the following reasons, which I am quite comfortable to have you repeat in communicating with your client groups:

- a) We have a long-standing tailwater fishery enhancement plan for the Red Deer River for which these fish were intended.

- b) The Red Deer River downstream system has re-established itself as a productive fishery environment which we are confident is capable of supporting these fish.
- c) We have completed quite extensive post-impoundment monitoring work in this system and feel that we can measure the success of this project.
- d) Our Central Region fisheries staff are working with a local fisheries volunteer group with whom this project is a strong priority.
- e) It was our consensus that the Oldman River stocking plan could be impeded by planting adult fish before several years of stocking small fingerlings. Brown trout are highly predacious and the very large fish we had on hand could be expected to reduce survival of the subsequent fingerling stockings.
- f) Stocking large fish makes it very difficult to avoid commencing a fishery immediately; if the objective is to create a self-sustaining population (and that is our preference in this type of situation) then we prefer not to attract immediate angling pressure.
- g) We would like to have a better understanding of the flow regime which the reservoir operation plan is going to be supporting downstream of the dam, and of the habitat improvements in the tailwater reaches where the brown trout will be stocked. These are integral considerations which will influence the success of the venture more than any others. Since some of these matters are still under planning and review, we feel that stocking this fall would have been premature.

While it is true that we could have planted one or two hundred of these fish into the Oldman River as a public relations gesture it is our experience that the angling public is not receptive to tokens. They are well informed and critical of actions which they understand will not bring about any real benefits.

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VERY IMPORTANT!!

If you encounter problems in explaining this decision to your client group(s) please have Frank Bishop invited to attend any meetings planned in the south, or call my office for discussions in Edmonton. This is the one thing that I would like to reinforce. Fisheries management objectives are set by our regional staff, in consultation with the client groups most closely affected.

Tom Mill

Tom Mill

cc. Frank Bishop, RMH
J.W. Theissen
Dave Berry
Terry McFadden
Ken Ambrock