



Information on

- **Fresh Water Aquaculture and Public Land**
- **Aquaculture Regulations**
- **Exotic and Non-native Species**
- **Risk Assessment**

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Fresh Water Aquaculture and Public Land

Alberta’s alternative livestock industry, including the production of fresh fish through aquaculture for commercial purposes, has expanded rapidly over the last few years. At the same time, an interest is being expressed to raise fish on public land for commercial or personal use. In addition, there have been several instances where individuals have approached the Lands Division for authority to raise various aquatic species that are not typically associated with fish production (e.g., leeches for medical purposes, aquatic plants for commercial purposes) on public land or in a Crown owned water body.

Public Land Managed for Multiple Land Uses

The Alberta Government manages public land in an integrated manner for multiple uses. This means that although the public land may have one primary use allocated to it (e.g. livestock grazing), other land uses such as public access for recreation, and oil and gas exploration are also accommodated. The nature of aquaculture generally precludes other uses of the land. Aquaculture enterprises typically require the site to be protected against contamination or loss of stock. This effectively limits reasonable public access to these lands. Proposals to raise aquatic species on public land are therefore generally not considered for approval.

Regulations Governing Aquaculture on Public Land

A licence is required under Section 8 of the *Fisheries (Alberta) Act* to propagate, rear or keep alive cultured fish in Alberta. The Fisheries (Ministerial) Regulations allow Arctic char, Brook trout, Brown trout, Rainbow trout, Tiger trout, Grass carp, Atlantic salmon, Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, Sockeye/Kokanee salmon, Freshwater prawns, Goldfish, Koi and Tilapia to be raised by cultured means. The regulations also specify that aquaculture can only take place within “contained waters” or “prescribed waters.”

Contained waters refer to: aquariums/tanks normally housed within a building or man-made reservoirs (dugouts) that have their water effectively isolated from flowing into another water source, are lined with an impervious material and no larger than 600 square feet in surface area. Prescribed waters are: water bodies or contained waters that have their source of water as a municipal water supply, a well or through surface runoff; or water bodies that are completely surrounded by private land, or other land that is not public land under the *Public Lands Act*. With the exception of some provincially run fish hatcheries, aquaculture operations aren’t currently permitted on public land.

ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS

Exotics and Species Not Covered by the Alberta Fisheries Regulations

Occasionally, requests or applications are received to authorize the production of species not generally associated with aquaculture, i.e. species not listed under the Ministerial Regulations of the *Alberta Fisheries Act* (1997). The primary consideration in evaluating such requests is to assess the risk of potentially introducing non-native or exotic species into natural ecosystems. The introduction of exotic species poses a potential threat to native species in wetlands, lakes and rivers. Such threats may often extend beyond provincial boundaries when watercourses flow into neighbouring jurisdictions. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Aquaculture Section has identified the following principle concerns:

- **disease risk** - the direct transfer of new diseases by the target species or the introduction on non-target species to provincial waters
- **ecological risk** - the impact of the new species on native aquatic plant and animal communities
- **genetic risks** - the risks imposed should the new species interbreed with wild stocks
- **threatened and endangered species** - populations that may be at risk due to exploitation of source species.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development uses a risk assessment process to evaluate the risks and negative affects the introduction of a species may have on wild fisheries resources, habitats and the aquaculture industry. This applies to all aquatic species that aren't currently listed under the Ministerial Regulations of the *Alberta Fisheries Act* (1997).

All requests or proposals for utilizing a Crown owned water body to culture aquatic species not listed under the Ministerial Regulations of the *Alberta Fisheries Act* (1997) may be required to undergo the risk assessment process administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development before any other consideration is given to reviewing the proposed use of public land.

If you require updated information, contact any of the offices below:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Lands Division
Rangeland Management Branch
South Tower, Petroleum Plaza
9920 – 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4
Telephone: (780) 427-3595

Land Management Branch
9915 – 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2G8
Telephone: (780) 427-3570

Forestry Division
Forest Management Branch
9920 – 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4
Telephone: (780) 422-4590

Eric Hutchings
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Provincial Aquaculture Specialist, Aquaculture Section
5401 – 1 Avenue South
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4V6
Telephone: (403) 381-5574

OR you can visit the Lands Division Website:
http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/land/c_1.html