

Fisheries Management in Alberta

Minister's Vision

Almost everyone can remember their first fishing trip, who they were with, the feeling of that first tug on the line, the size of the fish they caught, or the one that got away. We are blessed in Alberta to live in one of the most majestic places on the planet with a diverse landscape and a wealth of natural resources – including the rivers, lakes and ponds that sustain our province's fisheries. Fishing is a part of Alberta's cultural fabric and we promised to work together to make our fisheries strong, healthy, vibrant and sustainable for generations to come.

In addition to being the Minister of Environment and Parks, I am also an avid angler and outdoorsman who respects the environment and the abundance of natural beauty in our great province. I believe all Albertans have a role to play as we move toward a future where we balance conservation and recreation. Recreational fishing is an important part of our goal to uphold the sustainability and quality of our fisheries. For far too long, decisions about the management of Alberta's fisheries have been perceived as taking place without meaningful public input, where anglers' observations and valued opinions were not taken into consideration when changes were made. The problems facing Alberta fisheries are significant, but not insurmountable; however, I strongly believe we need more transparency and meaningful participation in the process if Albertans are to have confidence in their fisheries management system.

In the past, challenges have threatened the viability of fisheries in some of the water bodies in our province. Severely declining fish stocks and loss of fish habitat led to the collapse and loss of some fisheries, putting some species at risk. Investment in fish stocking programs was reduced, and in some cases, the opportunity to fish for a specific species



was limited. Combined, these factors discouraged many Alberta anglers. Over time, with the input and support of recreational anglers, Alberta Environment and Parks managed a recovery in many of our lakes and rivers. While there have been recoveries of some fish populations, other species or populations have not recovered. This is why, with your help, we're working to address these issues so that today's anglers – as well as future generations of anglers – can better enjoy fishing in our province. Whether you fly fish the Bow, fish for monster pike in Winnifred Lake, fish at your local lake or stocked trout pond, or drop a wire worm through the ice looking for that elusive whitefish, the health and sustainability of these fisheries is important to all Albertans.

As someone who loves to spend time outdoors, and since being appointed as the Minister of Environment and Parks, I have had numerous discussions and meetings where people passionate about fisheries in Alberta have expressed their thoughts and ideas with me. I have heard about positive things, innovative ideas to make things better, as well as challenges and issues. This is why we want to hear from you. I want to know your thoughts and ideas. Recognizing that some of the challenges will not be a quick fix, it is my hope that together, we can identify options and work toward a long-term sustainable plan for Alberta's fisheries.

Some of the ideas and issues we have heard from concerned anglers, fishing groups and municipalities are reflected below. I hope that you see this as a positive starting point, and through your participation, we can build on these concepts and explore others that may emerge through consultation.

- We need to increase current stocking programs, with an expansion of stocking programs into more water bodies, with new fish species or strains. We will work with fishing clubs and associations to help develop these expanded stocking programs.
- We need to partner with Albertans to manage Alberta's fisheries in a different and exciting way that will provide long-term ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits, and will reinforce Albertans' position as good stewards of the environment.
- We should better involve stakeholders and the public through face-to-face meetings and surveys to streamline fishing regulations and sustain Alberta's fisheries.
- Habitat conservation programs should be designed to improve current fish stocks or to create new ones, with an emphasis on protecting native trout species.
- Stock assessments and monitoring should be delivered in a cooperative way, with increased collaboration with Indigenous communities, anglers and other stakeholders.
- There should be collaboration with anglers and land users to ensure our waters are cleaner, more productive and free from invasive species.
- We should explore more opportunities for catch-and-keep fishing, informed by science to help our fisheries adapt and grow.
- We need to ensure an acknowledgment of the cultural and socio-economic benefits of stable fisheries and its importance to economic diversity and tourism opportunities.

The Alberta government, anglers, Indigenous communities and conservation groups will need to work together to support and enhance fishing in our province. We have a shared obligation to remain vigilant to conserve and enhance fish stocks in our waters.

Our focus will be more than providing fish for anglers. We will also support the important role that fish – and Alberta's fisheries – hold within our larger ecosystem. We will explore innovative management strategies and enhance fishing regulations to improve our fisheries with a long-term vision built from your input so our fisheries can be strong, healthy and sustainable for generations to come.

The ability to spend time in the outdoors and pursue activities such as fishing is important. For many of us, it's among our fondest memories. Whether fishing is part of your annual summer vacation plans, a long weekend getaway, or you simply decide to take advantage of a one-time chance to fish during one of our free family fishing weekends, angling in Alberta has plenty to offer.



Fishing with friends or family is something that we hold dear, and through this engagement process we hope to afford future generations the opportunity to make their own memories. I hope to see you out on the water and look forward to your participation in our engagement process. Please take the time to attend an engagement session or provide your feedback online at talkaep.alberta.ca.