



The Alberta Fish & Game Association

6924 – 104 Street Edmonton, AB T6H 2L7

Phone: (780) 437-2342

Fax: (780) 438-6872

Email: office@afga.org

Website: www.afga.org

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Premier Rachel Notley
Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6
premier@gov.ab.ca

Dear Premier Rachel Notley,

The state of Alberta's fisheries including their habitat has spurred ongoing discussions within the angling community for the last twenty years. Besides the angling community, the topic is being broached by local governments, tourism interests, general public and former government biologists and managers. Collectively they are questioning the funding priorities, direction and focus of current management that are supposed to achieve the necessary integration of economic, social and environmental policy.

Albertans have long been told that due to a lack of suitable habitat, limited species diversity, geographic limitations, highly human altered land base and angler demand that fisheries are at an increased risk within the province. While we generally accept that this is the case, similar situations exist across North America. What is different in those jurisdictions is the direction, priorities, programs, measures and tools that are used to address the limitations often with less financial resources than available in Alberta.

Comparisons to other jurisdictions are difficult unless common standards are used. Alberta managers appear to have set benchmarks and fishery management objectives that have not been adopted elsewhere. Science relies on uniform standards and measures. Describing the state of Alberta fisheries through terminology such as collapsed, vulnerable and stable is a case in point. Outsiders hearing the situation in Alberta are presented with a picture that may imply a bleaker outlook than the actual population status. This is largely due to the fact that the measures used are risk management tools to establish angling regulations rather than standardized conservation objectives.

Success is measured by developing science based objectives, meeting societal expectations and seeing real changes on the ground. This can only be achieved through meaningful stakeholder consultation and involvement under the direction of our elected officials.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association is calling on the government to set up an external, independent, multi-disciplinary panel made up of experts and angling stakeholders from outside of Alberta to evaluate whether the current direction of fishery management in Alberta is meeting its societal, economic and environmental responsibilities. The panel would be expected to provide both comparisons to other jurisdictions as well as recommendations for changes that would be required to meet the goals. There are a number of questions that need to be considered as part of the review:

1. Are the benchmarks, measures and definitions used to classify the status of fish populations in Alberta standardized with other jurisdiction in North America?
2. Has Alberta put into place an effective aquatic habitat management and enhancement program?
3. Should the priority for management be focused on allocation and monitoring?
4. Does Alberta's reliance on modelling achieve better outcomes, cost effectiveness and actual change on the ground?
5. Are there more effective regulatory methods for creating harvest opportunity while meeting conservation objectives than those adopted in Alberta?
6. Does Alberta optimize and use all fishery management tools available?
7. Does Alberta develop fish management objectives that go beyond angling regulations that lead to enhancement efforts and habitat protection?
8. Is the limited use of the Alberta fish hatchery system justified?
9. Is the organizational and governance structure of fishery management meetings it stakeholder obligations in relation to consultation and communication?
10. Does the Alberta fishery management system achieve the necessary balance and benefits from a societal, economic and environmental perspective?

Albertan's need to be confident, that the current direction of fishery management is the best path to follow. Only an external review and report can lead to the re-establishment of trust that currently does not exist.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association is the largest and oldest conservation organization in Alberta. With over 24 thousand members including youth and 100 clubs spread across the province it represents the diversity that is Alberta. We wait for our government's action on this request.

Yours sincerely,



Wayne Lowry
President, Alberta Fish and Game Association

cc: Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta
AFGA Executive