

## Provincial Stocking Programs Provide Recreational Opportunities For Anglers



The Fish Culture Section of BC's Ministry of Fisheries, stocks over 1,100 lakes and streams with an average of 10 million trout, char and kokanee each year. This provides satisfying angling experiences in a wide variety of geographic settings for many anglers. This program is a proven stimulus for the \$500 million freshwater sport fishing industry, supporting about 30% of the sector's angling activity.

Five provincial trout hatcheries produce the fish: Vancouver Island Hatchery (Duncan); Fraser Valley Hatchery (Abbotsford); Kootenay Hatchery (Ft. Steele); Clearwater Hatchery (Clearwater); and, Summerland Hatchery (Summerland). In 1998, for example, 5,300,000 rainbow trout, 191,000 coastal cutthroat trout, 84,000 westslope cutthroat trout, 777,000 steelhead, 688,000 brook trout and 1,985,000 kokanee were released.

The objective of the stocking program is to provide a diversity of fishing opportunities for anglers without compromising wild fish populations. Prior to starting any local stocking program, assessments need to be done on prospective lakes to determine whether wild populations or other aquatic life will be affected

by any new stock introductions. To further maintain the genetic diversity and natural hardiness of B.C.'s wild trout stocks, the hatchery program collects 90% of its egg supplies from wild populations. This approach is unique, as most jurisdictions use primarily domesticated stocks of hatchery trout.

Significant energy has been devoted to improving the quality and variety of trout stocked by provincial hatcheries in recent years. Evaluation of various native trout strains have determined that some stocks thrive in habitats too challenging for other strains. For example, the Blackwater River and Tzenziacut Lake rainbows compete and grow well in lakes with non-salmonids, while the Pennask Lake strain does not. Studies also reveal that some stocks feed aggressively near shoals, making them favourites with fly fishers, while other stocks prefer deeper water.

Research has also led to the development of all-female, as well as sterile, trout stocks. Sterile

trout prove advantageous by eliminating early maturation and mortality in males thus allowing for the growth of large, bright fish in highly productive small lakes. Sterile fish also protect wild stocks as interbreeding cannot occur. Ongoing research aims to develop alkaline-tolerant strains of trout and kokanee capable of creating or improving fisheries in many otherwise unproductive interior lakes.



The unique focus on wild stocks and the use of sophisticated fish culture techniques to improve hatchery fish performance means quality fishing today and the promise of even better angling experiences tomorrow.

Provincial hatcheries are open to the public and all facilities except Clearwater have Visitor Centres that contain extensive educational displays on fish conservation, habitat protection and sport fishing in British Columbia. Hatchery phone numbers are listed with

the regional information in this synopsis.