

Reservoir Restoration

Good lake fishing is closer to home than you think. Over the past decade, Lower Mainland fisheries biologists have spearheaded aquatic restoration programs on two area reservoirs, Alouette in Golden Ears Park near Maple Ridge and Wahleach



Photo: Bob Land

(Jones), just east of Chilliwack. Since the program began on Alouette Reservoir 6 years ago, the kokanee salmon population has increased from 20,000 to over 300,000 fish, with some of the largest weighing 0.5 kg (1 pound). Many fish species are enjoying the recovery of the kokanee population: large predatory rainbow and cutthroat trout, bull trout (some nearly 4 kg or 9 pounds), northern pike minnow and lake trout (up to 10 kg or 20 pounds) provide anglers with one of the most diverse fisheries in the province.

In the late 1990s, biologists found few, if any, kokanee spawning in the tributaries of Wahleach Reservoir. This year, after 8 summers of fertilization, a peak count of 734 stream spawners is a good indication of recovery. Two-pound cutthroat trout now frequent this very picturesque reservoir located in the alpine area of the

Fraser Valley.

Restoration program goals are to restore productivity and maintain healthy fish populations in each reservoir. Operation of hydroelectric dams resulted in abnormally low nutrient levels, a condition known as "cultural oligotrophication". Biologists have been directing the weekly application of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer to the reservoirs from April through August of each year, meant to mimic historical nutrient levels. These nutrients grow phytoplankton, which are food for zooplankton, which in turn are food for kokanee and other fish species. These cooperative Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection projects are funded by BC Hydro, with support from the Ministry of the Attorney General (Alouette River Correctional Unit), Limnotek and BC Parks.