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# Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC

## Stewarding the BC Fishing Experience

It's a fact—BC anglers are spoiled. Freshwater fishing in BC is already an extraordinary experience, and the Freshwater Fisheries Society of British Columbia (FFSBC) is working behind the scenes to make angling in BC the best in all of North America. Now in its sixth year of operations, the FFSBC is a private, non-profit organization established by the province to conserve and enhance freshwater fish populations in BC through fish culture, stocking and other services. Working in close collaboration with the sport fishing industry and government agencies, in particular the Ministry of Environment, the Society aims to steadily rebuild angler activity by 30 per cent over the next ten years.

The Society owns and operates five major fish hatcheries in Duncan, Abbotsford, Sumnerland, Clearwater and Bull River, near Cranbrook, as well as a trout distribution centre in Prince George. Its diverse and highly successful trout, char and kokanee stocking programs account for about 50 per cent of all the freshwater fishing on the lakes in BC. Last year, over 9.3 million fish and eggs were stocked into 823 lakes and streams across BC. For every dollar expended on the fishing program, \$21 was generated by angler spending into the province, primarily in rural areas.

To better promote recreational fishing to BC residents and visitors alike, the FFSBC has worked with its partners in the sport fishing sector to develop BC's first 'Angler

Market Development Plan'— a comprehensive market development strategy that includes enhanced stocking programs, multi-media campaigns to boost the profile of sport fishing, strategic partnerships and public engagement opportunities. This plan put into motion exciting initiatives such as Learn to Fish and Fishing in the City programs as well as fishing docks and piers and other access-oriented projects.

Based at the FFSBC's Fraser Valley and Kootenay Trout Hatcheries and delivered on numerous lakes and provincial parks, the FFSBC's Learn to Fish Program is an ongoing initiative that offers an enriching first fishing experience and basic instruction for youth as well as some adults. To date, this year almost 11,000 people participated in the program, bringing the number of participants who have gone through the program to over 39,000. The four-year-old program is an astounding success, given that almost half of the participants fished at least once more after participating in the program.

In 2008, the FFSBC also launched Fishing in the City, a forward-thinking program to attract new and lapsed anglers to fishing opportunities in Greater Vancouver and on Southern Vancouver Island. Lakes including Como, Lafarge, Rice, Green Timbers, Deer, Mill, Ida Ann, Langford and Chemainus all have been targeted with increased stocking levels, in order to encourage city dwellers to partake in fishing opportunities close to home. In its second year, Fish-

ing in the City far exceeded expectations, attracting high numbers of participants, almost 40 per cent of whom are new, lapsed or occasional anglers, including a significant number of new BC residents.

The FFSBC also works closely with the Family Fishing Society to support the BC Family Fishing Weekend. In 2008, the province-wide event experienced a 40 per cent increase (50 per cent on Vancouver's North Shore) in attendance from the previous year, and 2009 saw healthy figures despite inclement weather. The program is steadily attracting more and more communities, as well as awareness through widespread campaigns year to year.

The Angling Ambassador Program was launched this summer in the Thompson Okanagan area. This program is a partnership between FFSBC and the BC Wildlife Federation volunteers from member clubs to provide lakeside information on where and how to fish. Events have been staged at Nicken, Pillar, Alleyne Lakes and Shuswap River. More events are being planned for this winter to take advantage of the great family ice fishing opportunities found in this area.

The Ministry of Environment and its partners Service BC and FFSBC introduced a new electronic licensing system that will make it easier for everyone to participate in freshwater fishing. Over 300 participating vendors now have the capacity to sell licenses through the online portal, and individuals can also purchase licenses online at [www.fishing.gov.bc.ca](http://www.fishing.gov.bc.ca) or

via the FFSBC's website, [www.gofishbc.com](http://www.gofishbc.com) anywhere, at any time.

Over the past three years fishing docks, piers or ponds have been constructed through partnerships in many BC communities including Whistler, Coquitlam, Kelowna, Prince George, Abbotsford and Cranbrook.

These initiatives and others are working at getting people from all walks of life hooked on fishing, but more can be done. Findings from a recent economic study prepared for the FFSBC revealed that freshwater fishing is indeed growing in BC. Since 2005, license sales are up, and direct angling spending has increased from an already healthy \$480 million to over \$520 million per year—seven times more than all downhill skiing equipment purchases annually. Yet fishing's affordability, an annual resident license is still just \$36, continues to attract people to the activity even in a difficult economy. In 2009 more people are fishing in every region of the province, sustaining business and local economies, enriching their own lives and the lives of others, while supporting a much-valued resource.

To learn more about freshwater fishing opportunities in the province, where to buy a license and other useful information please visit [www.discoverfishingbc.com](http://www.discoverfishingbc.com).

For more information on the Freshwater Fisheries Society of British Columbia, visit [www.gofishbc.com](http://www.gofishbc.com)

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