

Report to the Shareholders

Don Peterson

President, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC

Dear Anglers,

The 2009 fishing season is in full swing and I thought it would be an opportune time to provide you with an update on what the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has been doing to improve and promote sport fishing in British Columbia.

Since becoming a private, non-profit society some six years ago, we have made a concerted effort to develop innovative and effective ways of enhancing recreational fisheries in BC. Our motivation is simple. Because we receive the bulk of our revenues from freshwater fishing license fees, it only makes sense for us to strive to make recreational fishing as popular as possible. But it's not all about us! Our focus on building a more vibrant recreational fishery will also benefit anglers and the hundreds of other small businesses that depend on anglers for their success.

Our transition from a government organization to one that operates on business principles has driven us to make a wide range of efficiencies and improvements to our service delivery. For example, since 2003 our five major hatcheries have:

- * produced 15% more fish by weight;
- * doubled the number of sterile fish released annually - to over 4 million;
- * increased our catchable trout stocking to community fisheries by 50%; and,
- * increased the actual number of lake stockings by a whopping 40%!

While these are impressive stats, two simple numbers from our 2008 stocking efforts really help put these numbers into perspective. Last year we released 7.5M fish into 754 lakes and streams all over British Columbia. Did you know that this stocking program supports 50% of all freshwater angling activity in the province and almost \$300M in economic activity?

And while providing quality sustainable fishing opportunities to our clients is important, we have been increasingly concerned in recent years about the extent to which our ranks of anglers are equally "sustainable". In other words, along with most other jurisdictions, we have been focusing on ways to stem the drop-off in the number of people participating in the sport.

For example, in 2005 with support from several of our partners we started the Learn to Fish Program. This program has been an unqualified success and over the past four years we have introduced almost 30,000 people (mostly youth) to fishing. More importantly, our follow-up research suggests that 40 percent of those who took the program went fishing again on their own in the two years following, and we feel confident that a goodly proportion of these youngsters will become the anglers of tomorrow.

In conjunction with the province and private sector partners, we introduced the first ever provincial level multimedia campaign aimed at improving the profile of sport fishing - in tidal and non-tidal waters across the province. You may have been watching Global TV news this past June and seen our commercial, closed-caption spot and contest directing viewers to the www.discoverfishingbc.ca website.

We also created the innovative Fishing in the City program that is aimed at creating new urban fishing opportunities in the Lower Mainland specifically designed for the needs of urban anglers. Last summer, more than 18,000 anglers tried their luck at Rice, Lafarge, Como and Green Timbers lakes. People learned about the program from their local newspapers, but more significantly, they were talking about it on online fishing forums, spreading the news by word of mouth and even posting videos on YouTube.

Our research on the program revealed that more than 65% of those who went "fishing in the city" were under the age of 45, most anglers were successful and most had traveled about ten minutes to get to their new fishing spot. In other words, more than 18,000 residents of the Lower Mainland went fishing, literally, in their own back yards!

We have also recognized that in addition to creating great fisheries you need to reduce barriers and help anglers get to where they want to go. To that end we have also worked closely with our partners in the Ministry of Environment to improve the user-friendliness of the fishing regulations synopsis and to simplify fishing regulations. While some regula-

tions will always be complex, we see no reason why simple, accessible fisheries ought not to have simple, easily understandable regulations.

Similarly, while more experienced anglers have been using our Fish Wizard program to get more information about lakes or areas of particular interest, we have recently created two new tools aimed at making trip planning a bit easier.

We have partnered with local fishing guru Rodney Hsu (www.fishingwithrod.com) to create a series of YouTube-based fishing tutorials for newer anglers (<http://www.youtube.com/ffsbc>). We have also harnessed the power of Google Earth to create a custom map of all recently stocked lakes in BC. Each fishing icon on this map has links to Fish Wizard's lake reports such as recent stocking activity and lake depth maps. Each icon also represents a species stocked so the anglers have the option to view their targeted lakes. The new Stocked Lakes layer can be an important part of planning the ultimate fishing trip using the functionality of Google Earth such as driving directions and places of interest <http://www.gofishbc.com/>.

These are just some of the innovations and improvements in service delivery that have come about since the FFSBC was created. And it is important to remember that we have accomplished it all with no increase in funding over the past six years!

Many anglers, business owners and business associations across the province have told us how much they appreciate FFSBC's improved service levels and the positive impact we are having on their businesses. I trust you will agree that the decision by our provincial government in 2003 to create the private, non-profit FFSBC focussed on rebuilding recreational fishing in the province was a great move. The track record of FFSBC over the past 6 years speaks to the wisdom of that decision.

Finally, I would like to thank the BC Wildlife Federation executive, board and the member clubs for their on-going support and collaboration with FFSBC. Each year the list of clubs around the province that our staff are working with on stocking programs, learn to fish events and other important projects grows. The most recent initiative is the BCWF/FFSBC partnership in delivery of an Angling Ambassador program. This program is being piloted in the Kamloops, Salmon Arm and Merritt areas this summer and, if successful, will be moved to other parts of the province next year.

Thank you for your time and I hope the 2009 season is a great one for all members of the BC Wildlife Federation. •