



Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC

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“If You Stock Them, They Will Fish”: A Report Card on Fishing in the City

While I suspect that most people think of fishing as a pastime that traditionally takes place in remote locations far from the hustle and bustle of urban centres, this does not have to be the case. In fact, last year the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC and a group of local partners decided to shatter that myth and find out what would happen if we tried to create a purpose-built, customized sport fishery in the heart of the Lower Mainland. We wanted to find out if W.P. Kinsella was right when he famously wrote “If you build it they will come”.

It turns out Kinsella’s axiom is as true for fishing as it is for baseball. If you build a sport fishery and let people know about it, they will go fishing in the heart of the city.

The program was both ambitious and simple. The Freshwater Fisheries Society identified four lakes across the Lower Mainland that had good shoreline access, were close to public transportation, and were accommodating and inviting to experienced and novice anglers alike. Working with our many partners, we developed a plan to stock Lafarge Lake and Como Lake in Coquitlam, Rice Lake in North Vancouver and Green Timbers Lake in Surrey with “catchable” sized trout on a frequent basis over the spring, early summer and fall.

Regional and municipal parks helped us develop signage providing on-the-spot information to would-be anglers, local newspapers kept people abreast of our progress, and fishing tackle shops offered fishing tips and tricks to any newcomers to the sport who wanted to participate in one of these unique fisheries. Weekly Learn to Fish evening programs introduced children to the sport of recreational fishing on the shores of their local community lakes. We would measure success by our ability to create a fishery that was enjoyable for both a seasoned angler and a novice with a \$20 fishing rod, a bobber and some worms.

The fisheries were even more popular than we hoped. More than 13,000 anglers tried their luck at Rice and Lafarge lakes and another 5,500 experienced fishing at 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.

If the notion of anglers using YouTube seems odd, it turns out that our fishery appealed to a younger, more tech-savvy bunch. Indeed, more than 65% of those who went fishing in the city were under the age of 45. Our on-the-ground surveys showed that most anglers were successful and most had traveled about ten minutes to get to their new fishing spot.



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In other words, more than 18,000 residents of the Lower Mainland went fishing, literally, in their own back yards!

Naturally we have to try it again. In 2009, we will again be offering Fishing in the City at these four lakes and we expect that anglers will again come out in force. We know that the program was a hit with all our partners and we look forward to working together to provide a unique fishing opportunity for anyone who wants to try their luck this summer. For more information on Fishing in the City please visit www.gofishBC.com

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