

2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT

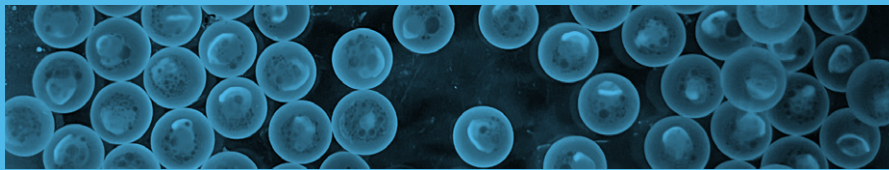


Freshwater Fisheries
Society of BC

Celebrating 20 Years Helping to Make Fishing in B.C. Even Better

158M

rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, brook trout, steelhead, and kokanee – from eyed egg to catchable size – raised and released.



350,000+

Learn to Fish participants since the inception of the introductory program in 2006.

70+

new fishing docks, creating easy-to-access fishing at locations around B.C.

\$8.7M

invested in projects that benefit B.C.'s recreational fisheries.



\$207,000

awarded to 33 volunteer-led projects supporting conservation and restoration of native trout populations and their habitats.

\$79,500

in scholarships awarded to 48 students, recognizing outstanding commitment to academic pursuits in freshwater fisheries.



Message from our President and Board Chair

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC was registered under the B.C. Societies Act in March 2003, with a mandate to conserve and enhance B.C.'s freshwater fish resources for the benefit of the public. After 65 years of being the fish culture section of the B.C. government's fisheries management program, we charted a new path of fisheries service as a private, not-for-profit organization. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Freshwater Fisheries Society this year, we would like to recognize the vision, work, and support of our staff and partners who helped us transition from those anxious and exciting early days to the successful organization we are today.

**346,000
FISHING
LICENCES
PURCHASED
FOR THE 2022-
23 SEASON.**

The relationships we have built and maintained with the Province of British Columbia, and other key partners and supporters, have allowed us to deliver the recreational stocking program and to develop new research, outreach, and conservation initiatives. We are able to enhance and expand our programs to adapt to climate

change, help to remove barriers and provide equitable access to fishing, and engage with anglers of all abilities, thanks to these vital relationships.

Our long-term viability as a non-profit organization requires responsible and prudent management of our financial resources. The approved 9.9% increase to licence and conservation surcharges taking place in 2023/2024, and an additional 4% increase in the 2024/2025 licence year, mark the first increases our provincial government has made in freshwater fishing licence fees since 2003 – the year our organization was formed. With much of our funding coming from licence revenue, the increases will offset some of the inflationary pressures our organization is facing. We will continue to look for efficiencies to mitigate uncertainties and maintain the economic health of the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC in the coming years.

We start 2023 with a new five-year strategic plan, our fourth plan since inception, to help shape the future of the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC. We sincerely thank our board, management team, and employees, past and present, for creating an organization of which we are very proud. Our employees are the backbone of the organization, and their safety, well-being, and growth continue to be central priorities of the Society. As we look towards the next twenty years, we are committed to delivering our mandate and to maintaining the strong relationship we have established with our contractual partner, the Province of B.C. We are also committed to delivering and supporting programs that help make fishing in B.C. even better – for all current and future anglers.



ANDREW WILSON
PRESIDENT



GEORGE IWAMA
CHAIR

FRESHWATER FISHERIES

20 YEARS



Transition of ownership and responsibility for all property completed. The Society assumes management of all hatchery facilities from the British Columbia Buildings Corporation.

The newly developed Learn to Fish program is delivered in five locations across the province.

The Freshwater Fisheries Society is removed from the Public Service Act and is solely responsible for its own human resources.

A pilot (and very rudimentary) conservation sturgeon hatchery is constructed in Vanderhoof, raising 4,000 young sturgeon over the summer, and releasing them into the Nechako River in the fall.



In partnership with BC Hydro, an energy-reduction program is initiated, lowering operating costs while improving production efficiency at our hatchery facilities.

The Fish Health Lab is relocated from leased space in Nanaimo to a new lab facility at the Vancouver Island Trout Hatchery in Duncan.

2004

2006

2008

2003

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC is created, transforming British Columbia's provincial hatchery program into a private, non-profit fisheries service – funded by licence revenues.



Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC

2005

The Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery Visitor Centre, which had been closed to the public since the early 2000s, is reopened to visitors, and the first hatchery fishing ponds are established on the site.



2007

The Provincial Angling Market Development Plan is launched, with a goal to increase licence sales by recruiting and retaining anglers.

Freshwater fishing licences become available for anglers to purchase online. Anglers can still purchase paper licences in-person from authorized vendors during this transition.



The Kootenay Trout Hatchery Visitor Centre fishing pond is constructed.

A pond is constructed on the recently acquired Skaha property near Okanagan Falls, providing rearing space for the urban catchable-sized rainbow trout stocking programs in B.C.'s southern Interior.

FISHERIES SOCIETY OF BC



The Society develops hatchery raceway recirculation technology, saving electricity and water consumption, primarily through a large reduction in groundwater pumping. We begin fabricating; the Clearwater and Vancouver Island trout hatcheries are the first to receive the new technology.

2011



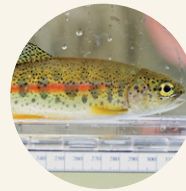
The Province and Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC sign a new agreement, committing 100% of freshwater fishing licence revenue to the Society. With this additional revenue, our scope of investments also grows to include both stocked and wild freshwater recreational angling. The first juvenile sturgeon raised at the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre are released.

2015

A community fishing pond is constructed at the Clearwater Trout Hatchery.

The Society launches the Native Trout Stewardship Initiative, providing grants to support the efforts of stewardship groups that protect and restore wild freshwater fish, the habitats they live in, and the fisheries they provide.

2018



A new Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) is completed at the Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery, with the first catchable-sized rainbow trout released from the facility in the fall of 2022. The new RAS building allows us to move all fish production within our facility, and we no longer need to use trough space at Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Chehalis River Hatchery for rearing Fraser Valley rainbow trout.

2022

2012

The Rod Loan program is initiated as a means of increasing access to fishing by providing rods, reels, and fishing gear for anglers to try fishing, for free, from a number of venues across the province.



2017

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC and Sport Fishing Institute host the 8th World Recreational Fishing Conference in Victoria, bringing together 400 delegates from 22 different countries.

The newly created BC Provincial Fish Aging Lab opens at the Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery. The facility provides aging data to provincial biologists, allowing them to make timely management decisions regarding the conservation and enhancement of B.C. fisheries.

2021

The Society receives additional financial support from the Province of B.C. (under the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program's Destination Development program) for additional investment in infrastructure in Merritt and the Nicola Valley. The funding allows us to scale up our efforts to improve access to fisheries for all British Columbians.



The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC was formed as a non-profit organization on March 26, 2003. Working in partnership with government, industry, and anglers, our goal is to make fishing in B.C. even better through the enhancement and conservation of B.C.'s freshwater fish resources.

Board of Directors

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC is governed by a Board of Directors. Our Board is comprised of up to six independent members, two members appointed by the Province, and the Society's president. The Board sets policy, provides strategic direction, and monitors the financial and operational health of the organization. The president is a non-voting director responsible for the ongoing operations and management of the organization. New independent members are selected by the Board of Directors.

Board members for 2022-2023 are:

Gord Argue, *Outgoing Chair*

George Iwama, *Incoming Chair*

Murray Jacobs, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Jamie Ross, *Director*

Steve Matthews, *Director*

Kathy Ruddick, *Director*

Scott Barrett, *Director*

Trevor Rhodes, *Director*

Andrew Wilson, *President*

Senior Management Team

The President and senior management team are responsible for all operations and programs delivered by the Society. We employ 69 full-time and 49 seasonal staff across our three divisions. Senior management team members for 2022-2023 are:

Andrew Wilson, *President*

Tammy Longbottom, *Director, Human Resources*

Natalie Power, *Chief Finance and Information Officer*

Adrian Clarke, *Vice President, Science and Recreational Fishing Development*

Tim Yesaki, *Vice President, Operations*

Locations



BUSINESS DIVISIONS

CORPORATE SERVICES
business oversight; marketing
and communications services

SCIENCE AND RECREATIONAL FISHING
research, technical expertise, development,
and outreach

OPERATIONS
stocking program
delivery



Year in Review

Recruit, retain, and reactivate freshwater anglers



Learn to Fish and Rod Loan

The Learn to Fish program was developed in response to a documented sharp decline in angler participation that followed a peak in recreational fishing's popularity in the mid-1990s. Since 2006, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has been introducing youth and adults to the passion of fishing through the program. In 2022, more than 25,400 participants learned the basics of how, when, and where to catch fish at one of 827 sessions held across the province. At each program, youth and adults learn about fish habitat, how to identify their catch, and how to fish responsibly. Learn to Fish participants also get hands-on experience while learning about casting and retrieving, and tips for catching fish. Thanks to the generous financial support of our partners, Learn to Fish events are offered free of charge at locations across British Columbia.

New and prospective anglers can also try fishing without having to purchase gear through our Rod Loan program. Offered at 19 locations across B.C. in 2022, anglers can

borrow a spinning rod and a box of basic fishing tackle from select tourism visitor centres, our hatcheries, and a new partner – the Richmond Public Library.

Making fishing more accessible

By leveraging funding and support from the Province, regional governments, and local fishing clubs, we've been investing in day-use facilities, trails, boat launches, and fishing docks to help make fishing more accessible to everyone. In the summer and fall of 2022, we installed 20 fishing docks. At locations where it was feasible to improve accessibility for low-mobility anglers, aluminum transition plates were added, connecting the dock ramp to the shoreline.

With financial support from the Province of B.C.'s Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program, the two-year Merritt and Nicola Valley infrastructure project was completed in 2022. Projects that will help support the growing number of freshwater fishing enthusiasts exploring the areas include: seven new fishing docks (Hook, Marquart, Davis, Stump, Harmon, Dot, and Lundbom lakes); road and boat launch improvements at 14 sites (Kump, Clifford, Rickey, Thalia, Johnny, Dot, Billy, Gordon, LeRoy, Tupper, Roscoe, Tyner, Gypsum, and Gump lakes); a secondary boat launch, day-use parking area, and washroom at the Lundbom Lake Recreation Site; a new access road, hardened boat launch, campsite expansion, and washrooms at the Stump Lake Recreation Site; and a day-use picnic shelter near the Harmon Lake fishing dock.

The three-year Fishing Highway 24 project, with grant support from the Rural Dividend Fund, was also completed in 2022. Over the course of the funding cycle, we improved fishing access to a number of sites in the region, including: 10 new fishing docks (Phinetta, Hathaway, Irish, Ripple, Bridge, Janice, Goose, Valentine, Crystal, and 108 Mile lakes); improved road access and an added boat launch at Horse Lake; a boat launch, washroom, and parking at Timothy Lake; and enhancements at five recreation sites (Irish, Hathaway, Ripple, Phinetta, and Bridge lakes).

Recycling used fishing line

Most fishing line is made of monofilament, a synthetic fibre that is non-biodegradable and can remain in the environment for up to 600 years. Fishing line poses a particular risk for birds and animals that accidentally ingest or become entangled in it, leading to injury and death.

To help keep discarded fishing line out of streams and lakes, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC partnered with Clear Your Gear, a Canadian volunteer fishing-line recycling program that started in Manitoba in 2016. We have worked with local governments and stakeholders (like the City of Chilliwack and the Chilliwack/Vedder River Cleanup Society) to install fishing-line recycling units at 48 locations across the province, focussing on high-use fisheries and our hatchery fishing ponds. The fishing line is collected from recycling receptacles and shipped to the Berkley Pure Fishing company in Iowa, where it is melted down into raw plastic pellets.

Fishing BC Cooperative Marketing Partnership

The BC Fishing Tourism Association, Sport Fishing Institute of BC, and Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC formed an alliance in 2016, to promote British Columbia as a fishing tourism destination. With matched funding from Destination BC's Cooperative Marketing Partnership Program, the Fishing BC cooperative program helps drive industry collaboration, align marketing efforts with provincial and regional strategies, raise the profile of the fishing tourism sector, and leverage efforts to promote B.C.'s fishing – much of which takes place in rural communities – to markets in B.C., Canada, and the United States.

Fishing tourism operators saw renewed demand for travel to B.C. in 2022, especially from United States and Alberta anglers. We also ran a targeted campaign larger than in previous years to B.C. anglers in the spring of 2022 to try and encourage local travel early in the season.

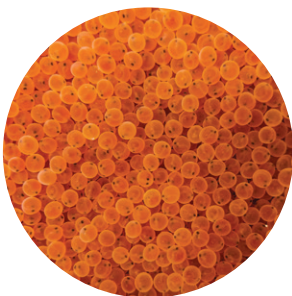
2022 Family Fishing Weekend

The 23rd Family Fishing Weekend was held from June 17th to 19th, 2022. Canadian residents can try fishing, without having to purchase a licence, on the third weekend of June every year. Community groups and clubs also hosted free fishing events at 30 locations across the province over the three days.



2

Innovative and responsible freshwater fish culture



First trout released from the new facility at the Fraser Valley Trout Hatchery

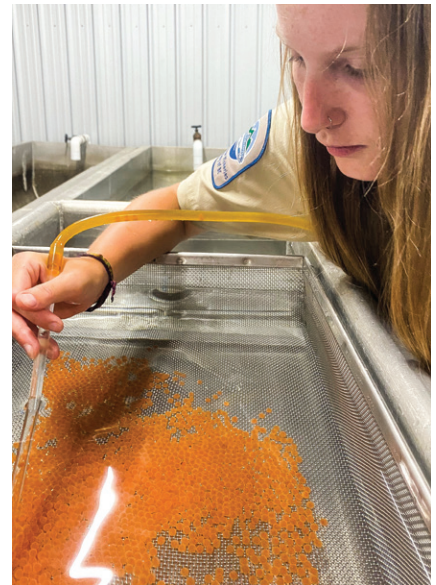
A new recirculating aquaculture building at the Fraser Valley Trout hatchery was completed in the spring of 2022. Our staff will raise 90,000 rainbow trout to a catchable size each year in the new facility, with the majority getting stocked into local Lower Mainland lakes. Completion of the facility provides the capacity for us to raise all fish for the provincial stocking program in-house. Previously, we used trough space at the federal Chehalis River Hatchery to grow fish to full size.



Research to assess and improve the stocking program

Work continues evaluating the performance of trout released at different yearling sizes, specifically for mixed-species lakes in which predators consume juvenile rainbow trout. Our staff are also assessing whether water-temperature differences between our hatcheries impact triploiding success, with warmer water temperature at fertilization and pressure shocking potentially causing greater variability.

Relative to other North American fish culture programs, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC's is unique in that much of the current egg supply is collected from wildtype adult populations. Originating from wild populations, the broodfish populations are maintained using several broodstock lakes that provide reliable sources of adult fish and disease-free eggs upon which the Society's fish culture program depends. Healthy broodstocks play a critical role ensuring that production goals are met and genetic attributes are maintained. We regularly perform genetic analysis of our broodstocks to maintain robust populations of our hatchery-raised fish. We are also identifying suitable brood lakes for the all-female sterile kokanee stocking program.





**Supporting Recovery of
Endangered White Sturgeon
Populations**

Our current Nechako program goal is to release two-year-old juvenile sturgeon at 70 centimetres or 2.5 kilograms (equivalent in size to a five-year-old wild sturgeon). In 2022, 300 juvenile white sturgeon were released into three sites on the Nechako River and two in Fraser Lake, of which 50 fish were radio-tagged for tracking purposes.

Raising and releasing fish to support recreational fisheries

Each year, in consultation with provincial fisheries biologists, we stock trout, kokanee, and char – from fry to a catchable size – to provide improved recreational fisheries for B.C. anglers. In the fiscal year 2022-23, our hatcheries raised and released 6.1 million fish into 656 waterbodies around the province. To support the Province’s anadromous program, we also assisted in the release of juvenile steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout into a small number of coastal streams.

Small Lakes Recreational Stocking

ADMINISTRATIVE REGION	COASTAL & WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT		EASTERN BROOK TROUT		KOKANEE		RAINBOW TROUT	
	FISH STOCKED	LAKES STOCKED	FISH STOCKED	LAKES STOCKED	FISH STOCKED	LAKES STOCKED	FISH STOCKED	LAKES STOCKED
Vancouver Island	15,595	10			18,650	4	178,440	53
Lower Mainland	4,000	5					86,499	31
Thompson			92,500	25	124,800	8	805,000	148
Okanagan			18,400	17	32,000	3	482,235	95
Kootenay-Boundary	57,038	16	14,775	10	137,075	14	242,154	83
Cariboo			62,500	7	1,254,410	19	1,977,033	94
Skeena			18,350	5	4,300	2	54,000	16
Omineca			60,000	10	85,800	4	240,600	49
Peace			12,000	3			30,200	10
TOTAL	76,633	31	278,525	77	1,657,035	54	4,096,161	579

Coastal Rivers Recreational Stocking

ADMINISTRATIVE REGION	PROGRAM	STEELHEAD		ANADROMOUS CUTTHROAT	
		FISH STOCKED	RIVERS STOCKED	FISH STOCKED	RIVERS STOCKED
West Coast – Vancouver Island	Federal	63,202	2	6,253	1
	Community				
	FFSBC			10,135	1
South Coast – Lower Mainland	Federal	136,539	3		
	Community	27,500	1		
	FFSBC	54,424	2		
TOTAL		281,665	8	16,388	2

Conservation stocking support for recovery programs

In addition to the recreational stocking program, we give conservation recovery support to the Province for endangered species like white sturgeon. In 2022-2023, we provided fish culture services to support recovery initiatives for the following:

Nechako white sturgeon – 300 juveniles released into the Nechako watershed

Columbia white sturgeon – 518 juveniles released into the mid- and upper-Columbia system

Kootenay Lake kokanee – 1,493,219 eggs planted for the Kootenay Lake recovery initiative

3

Supporting Diverse and Thriving Recreational Fisheries

Projects benefit recreational fisheries around the province

Since 2015, fisheries biologists and managers from the provincial government and Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC have identified and prioritized projects that benefit recreational fisheries – both wild and stocked – around the province. Funding for projects approved by the Small Lakes, Large Lakes, and Rivers committees comes from licence fees.

To qualify for funding, the joint provincial-Society committees assess whether the projects meet at least one of the following objectives:

1. Enhance the fishing experience
2. Attract and maintain public participation in recreational fishing
3. Maintain and improve the variety of fishing options available to the public
4. Maintain and restore healthy wild and enhanced fish stocks to support freshwater fisheries
5. Seek opportunities to support shared stewardship initiatives
6. Improve delivery of the freshwater fisheries program

The fisheries committees recommended projects for a combined total of \$1.1 million in funding for the eight years of the program: 20 small-lakes projects (with a \$341,000 budget), 18 large-lakes projects (with a \$341,000 budget), and 21 rivers projects (with a \$418,000 budget). Projects include stock assessments and stock monitoring, support for River Guardian programs, creel surveys, and angler questionnaires.

Native Trout Stewardship Initiative

Five community organizations received a share of the \$42,500 in Native Trout Stewardship Initiative funding in 2022-2023. Four of the projects were located on Vancouver Island and targeted habitat restoration activities for cutthroat trout, as well as other native salmonid species. The remaining project supported public outreach and stewardship workshops for several trout and salmon streams in the Lower Mainland region. Activities included fish population inventories, habitat assessment and restoration, and increased public awareness. These projects continue to engage school children, public volunteers, anglers, and local First Nations groups.



Scholarships awarded to five students

Since 2008, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC has awarded \$79,500 in scholarships to 48 students at various levels of postsecondary study. The scholarships recognize outstanding commitment to academic pursuits in the field of freshwater fisheries, and are available to students enrolled in fish culture or natural resource management

programs within an accredited postsecondary educational institution in British Columbia. Applicants must have completed at least their first year of postsecondary studies and plan to continue as a student, with the intent of establishing a career in B.C. Students at all levels of postsecondary study are eligible. For the 2022-23 academic year we awarded scholarships with a value of \$1,500 each to five deserving recipients.



**Ongoing testing
for whirling disease**

Our fish health lab continues to assist the provincial government and Parks Canada testing for the detection of whirling disease in the Kootenay Region. Eastern brook, rainbow, and westslope cutthroat trout, as well as mountain whitefish, collected from sites located in the Elk and Kootenay river drainages have all tested negative to date.

Partners and Sponsors

Our primary and contractual partner is the Province of B.C. through the Ministry of Forests. We work closely with and support the province’s Fish and Wildlife Branch and regional fisheries biologists. To deliver many of the research, outreach, and conservation initiatives we are involved in, we rely upon the financial support of our valued partners and sponsors.

Research and Development

Carleton University
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Genome BC
Genome Canada
Mitacs Accelerate Program
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council
Simon Fraser University
Thompson Rivers University
University of British Columbia
University of British Columbia – Okanagan Campus
University of Calgary
University of Ottawa
University of Victoria
University of Windsor

Angler Access

BC Parks
BC Wildlife Federation
Ministry of Forests
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Province of BC
Recreation Sites and Trails BC
Tourism Fernie

Learn to Fish and Outreach Programs

Backroad Mapbooks
Bass Pro Shops
BC Ram Dealers
BC Wildlife Federation
Canada Summer Jobs
City of Summerland
City of Victoria
Columbia Basin Trust
Courtenay Fish and Game Association
Deltaport
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
Luhr Jensen and 13 Fishing
Mosaic Forest Management
Northern Lights Winery
Teck Highland Valley Copper
Yamaha Motor Canada Ltd.

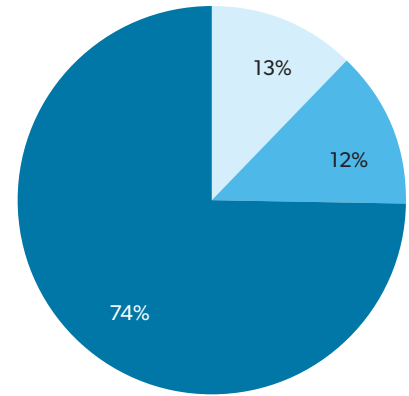
Sturgeon and Kokanee Recovery Programs

BC Hydro
Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council
District of Vanderhoof
Ministry of Forests
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund
Rio Tinto

2022-23 Financial Results

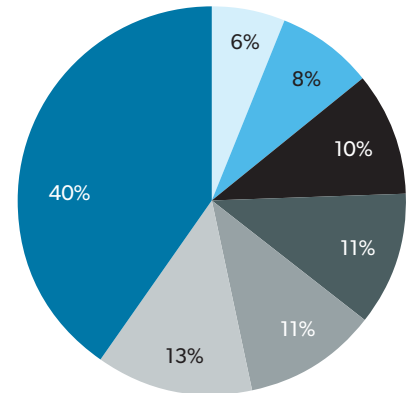
Revenue Sources ('000)

■ Freshwater Fishing Licence Fees	\$	10,157
■ Partners and Sponsors		1,833
■ Province of B.C.		1,706
TOTAL	\$	13,696



Expenses ('000)

■ Recreational Stocking Program	\$	6,252
■ Facility Upgrades and Innovation		1,952
■ Administration and Support Services		1,774
■ Outreach, Marketing and Development		1,636
■ Conservation and Restoration		1,578
■ Fisheries Committee Projects		1,252
■ Research		1,003
TOTAL	\$	15,447



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Your licence dollars at work.

100% of freshwater fishing licence fees
go toward making fishing in B.C.
even better.