

Swan Lake Integrated Watershed Management Plan

Fisheries Comments

The primary waterbodies within the watershed that the CD should focus aquatic ecosystem improvement projects are the Swan River and the Woody River. These are the two largest Swan Lake watershed tributaries and potentially have the largest human impact. Both rivers have year round resident fish populations. The watershed, and in particular, Swan Lake would benefit from improvements on these two rivers as the watershed has recreational, commercial and first nations fisheries interests.

Improvement projects on the Swan River will include a fishway on a ford crossing. To help alleviate fish passage concerns on the Swan River, the Swan Lake Watershed Conservation District has planned (construction in September 2010) a fishway channel around a ford crossing on the Swan River. This crossing has acted as a barrier to fish migration for decades. The construction of this channel will allow fish to migrate around the structure during high flows.

Other riparian improvement projects that would benefit the watershed would be erosion control improvements on agricultural land including some off watering sites for cattle. These works would benefit both the Swan and Woody rivers.

Fisheries Western Region has walleye telemetry data from the 1990s. Swan Valley Sportfishing Enhancement (SVSFE) has more recently researched walleye movements with a telemetry project in 2009/10. SVSFE and the Swan Lake Watershed Conservation District (SLWCD) conducted aerial habitat surveys and mapping in 2008 on two rivers within the watershed, the Swan River and Woody River outlining potential habitat concerns. They also conducted fisheries surveys on both systems to establish some baseline information on fish species in both rivers.

The large bodied fish species that utilize this habitat are Northern pike, White sucker, Walleye and Yellow perch. These species will run long distances to find suitable spawning habitat. Northern pike prefer shallow vegetated areas for spawning while white suckers and walleye prefer shallow running water over gravel and cobble.

The above mentioned species are those of most economic importance to the watershed in terms of recreational and commercial opportunities. There are many other species that use the watershed habitat. The majority of the Cyprinid species are important as forage for the predator species, northern pike and walleye.

Public concerns regarding cleaning debris from creeks and streams are a localized issue likely concerning a landowner with flooding. All of the creeks and stream this year have experienced extremely high flows since spring and likely don't have any debris issues anymore. If there are such concerns, each issue should be reviewed on its own merits.

Since the Swan Lake Basin Management Plan was completed in 2004, Fisheries Branch has stocked 650 walleye fingerlings in 2008 and 100,000 walleye fry in 2009 and 2010 into the Swan River. The objective of these stockings is to supplement local walleye populations.