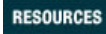




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Recently Asked Questions

This page has been created to provide responses to questions recently posed by media and members of the public, to supplement existing information available elsewhere on the RAMP website. This page will be amended as new questions are received by RAMP.

Questions About Fish Health

What fish health information is available through RAMP?

RAMP has been monitoring fish health on the Athabasca River since 1997, building on earlier data collected since 1987 by Syncrude, and on the Clearwater River since 2004.

The RAMP fish program attempts, where possible, to evaluate the health of the total fish community. RAMP's fish monitoring program emphasizes fish species which form waterbody-specific Key Indicator Resources (KIRs).

These KIRs are fish species harvested or otherwise important to the stakeholders in the Athabasca region and include walleye, white sucker, longnose sucker, goldeye and northern pike. In all, a total of 14 individual fish species fall into this category and it is this data, with supporting information from the total fish community in the river, that is incorporated into our annual report.

Information about the smaller fish species (less than 15 cm in length and not considered KIR species) is available in our full database, which was made publicly available on RAMP's website on December 22nd 2010. (www.ramp-alberta.org)

What fish health abnormalities does RAMP track?

During the fish inventory surveys, RAMP documents common features such as fin erosion, scars and wounds as well as less common abnormalities such as lesions, growths, changes in body shape or the presence of parasites.

In general, many of these abnormalities are often linked to fatigue caused by high-energy activities such as spawning.

The focus of the annual RAMP report is to document the presence of the less common abnormalities that are of concern to the local stakeholders. However, the RAMP database incorporates all abnormalities documented during the fish surveys.

What rate of abnormalities has been found in the region?

Since monitoring began in 1987, the proportion of fish with abnormalities has not increased over time.

In 22 years of monitoring, with 36,618 fish examined, abnormalities were found in 800 fish from the Athabasca River (2.1 per cent). In the Clearwater River, 115 fish have been found with abnormalities since monitoring began there in 2004, out of 8,117 fish examined (1.4 per cent).

The percentage of fish with some type of external abnormality ranged from a minimum of 0.3 per cent in 1987 to a maximum of 6.5 per cent in 1996, with an average of 2.3 per cent of fish captured across sampling years.

In our most recent survey, in 2009, there were 3,207 fish collected during the Athabasca River inventories. Of those, 68 fish (or 2.1 per cent of the total catch) exhibited some type of external abnormality.

Who has access to this information?

As of December 22nd, 2010, the complete RAMP dataset is publicly available on RAMP's website. (<http://www.ramp-alberta.org/ramp/data.aspx>)

Our annual technical reports, which include fish health assessments, and are submitted to Alberta Environment each year, remain available on the RAMP website.

What is budget for RAMP?

RAMP's budget information has been included in RAMP's community reports in the past and is available on the website (<http://www.rampalberta.org/ramp/terms+of+reference/ramp+budget+history.aspx>).

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