

## **Statement in Support of Alberta Environment and Parks action related to outbreak of whirling disease from the Alberta Fish and Game Association**

The Alberta Fish and Game Association is concerned about the long term impacts and threats related to the discovery of *whirling disease* in Alberta. Our native, introduced and stocked trout, whitefish and arctic grayling fisheries are important from an economic, recreational and biodiversity standpoint to Albertans. Education of the public aimed at understanding the etiology, reporting possible outbreaks and practices to prevent the spread of the causative organism, *myxobolus cerebralis* is the logical starting point. The organism's complex life cycle involving several hosts, that the spores can persist in the environment, the mortality rate of up to 90% in wild trout populations and experience gained from other jurisdictions requires additional actions. Confirming whether this is an isolated outbreak confined to Johnson Lake in Banff National Park or more widespread is necessary to establish the baseline for future surveillance efforts across the province. Preventing the movement of fish from hatcheries and fish culture facilities is prudent. This should include provincial, aquaculture, aquarium and those used for academic research in the province until they can be confirmed to be free of the disease before resuming normal operations. Ongoing stakeholder involvement in strategy development is critical along with improved communication as Alberta joins jurisdictions already managing the persistent impact of the disease. The Alberta Fish and Game Association supports the current efforts of Alberta Environment and Parks in managing the outbreak.

Dr. Darryl R Smith, Provincial Fish Chair, Alberta Fish and Game Association  
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