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RAMP

RIVER

PEOPLE

RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program

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Fish Population Monitoring Programs

Fish populations are monitored to assess the health and sustainability of fish populations within the Athabasca oil sands region. Monitoring focuses on the Athabasca River and its main tributaries potentially influenced by oil sands development. Fish populations are monitored because they are key components of the aquatic ecosystem and important ecological indicators that integrate natural and development-related changes over time. Fish are also a highly-valued subsistence and recreational resource in the region. RAMP monitors fish populations throughout the oil sands region using a variety of sampling and survey techniques.

► [Read more about the Fish populations monitoring component](#)

Fish Inventories

Fish inventory studies are conducted by RAMP to examine trends in abundance and population variables for key indicator fish species. The inventory focuses on sections of the Athabasca River that are adjacent to oil sands development or near tributaries with development within their watershed. An inventory is also conducted on the Clearwater River to provide some perspective on fish communities of a river without development.

► [Access Fish Inventory Program Data](#)

► [Access Fish Pilot Study Monitoring Data](#)

Sentinel Species Monitoring

Sentinel species monitoring evaluates the health of a representative fish species in the Athabasca River, and in smaller tributaries of the Athabasca River that have oil sands development. The approach compares characteristics such as growth, survival, body size, and reproduction of a sentinel species caught downstream of oil sands development to fish that reside upstream of the development, or to data collected prior to development.

► [Access Sentinel Species Program Data](#)

Fish Fence Monitoring

Fish counting fences are used by RAMP to assess populations of spawning fish as they move up or down a river. Spring fish fence monitoring has been conducted on the Muskeg River to evaluate possible changes in the use of this watershed by spawning fishes that migrate from the Athabasca River.

► [Access Muskeg River Fish Fence Data](#)

Fish Tissue Monitoring

Fish tissue is analyzed for chemicals in order to assess the suitability for human consumption and the implications for fish health. Fish tissue monitoring is conducted on the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers as well as on several regional lakes throughout the RAMP focus study area.

Regional lakes fish tissue monitoring is conducted in collaboration with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) walleye monitoring for the regulation of sport fisheries in the area. Lakes sampled each year are on a 5-year rotating panel design implemented by ASRD.

► [Access Fish Tissue Program Data](#)

Fish Assemblage Monitoring

Fish assemblage monitoring is a pilot study initiated in 2009 to evaluate the usefulness and feasibility of monitoring fish communities in regional streams and rivers for assessing the health of resident fishes. It is closely harmonized with locations currently being monitored for water quality, benthic invertebrate

communities and sediment quality. The challenge is that many smaller streams have very few fish species, which affects the sensitivity of this monitoring approach in detecting change.

► [Access Fish Assemblage Monitoring Data](#)

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