

## **Dumped Goldfish are overrunning Winter Lake**

### **Plans are in the works to eradicate them!**

The Town of Olds has been working with Alberta Environment and Parks on how to get rid of the invasive goldfish living in Winter Lake storm water retention pond. The release of Goldfish into Alberta's waterways or storm water ponds is a serious issue, one which is threatening the health of our waterbodies as well as the operations of storm water facilities.

You may think it is harmless to release one or two aquarium species into a body of water but as you read the following article you will realize that this has a serious consequence to our environment.

Eradication is now necessary to prevent the risk of Goldfish being carried through overflow outlets into other storm water ponds and eventually the Alberta river system.

Storm water retention ponds are built to manage runoff water accumulated through snow melts, thunder storms, etc. These ponds are incorporated into park settings where the public can enjoy the landscaped environment, pathways, and wildlife it attracts.

Olds is not the only community in Alberta to be confronted with evasive Goldfish problems. To date Alberta Environment has had reports of Goldfish in storm water ponds in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Edmonton, St. Albert, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Olds, Calgary, High River, Okotoks, and Coaldale.

In early June, the Town featured Brian and Bill McLachlan netting fish from Winter Lake to transfer them to a greenhouse aquaponics system used to fertilize and grow plants using only water and "fish fertilizer." Unfortunately, the population in Winter Lake is so large they hardly made a difference to the ever increasing issue the Town is faced with.

The population of goldfish in Winter Lake is estimated to be 30,000-40,000 and they need to be destroyed. Goldfish are not native to Alberta and pose great risk to Alberta's natural ecosystem. They produce large populations that carry diseases that will harm local fish populations, and are able to tolerate fluctuations in water temperature and low levels of oxygen. They eat (other) fish eggs, plants, and plankton which is a food source for native fish species.

In August, Alberta Environment and Parks in conjunction with a licensed contractor, will be treating the pond with a plant-based chemical called rotenone.

Rotenone is a naturally occurring compound that is derived from the roots of a tropical plant of the bean family and has been used to kill fish. It is a registered pesticide with the Federal Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA).

Project planning takes several months, however the treatment by Alberta Environment and Parks should be completed in three to four days.

This is only the first treatment, and as other communities have discovered, follow up treatments will likely be required in subsequent years.

The best prevention on this issue is public education. The Town of Olds is asking all citizens to understand the impacts of invasive species to Alberta waterways and prevent future occurrences. "The release of fish into public water is an offense and individuals face penalties up to \$100,000."