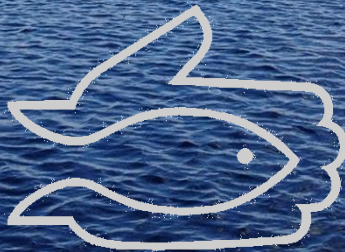




Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc.



“Giving Fish a Helping Hand”

ABOUT - SWAN VALLEY SPORT FISHING ENHANCEMENT

Our Mandate:

- **Education** – to produce and distribute information designed to educate the general public on the methods, needs and advisability of preserving and improving habitat for game fish species
- **Research & Enhancement** – to encourage, fund and undertake scientific research with a view to the enhancement of game fish habitat
- **Fundraising** – to conduct fundraising ventures to promote fisheries enhancement, research and education

History:

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement Inc. is one of the oldest sport fishing groups in the Western Region, formed in 1985 and incorporated in 1987. It all began with a group of men interested in bettering their local fisheries. They often held fishing derbies, organized and assisted in fish transfers and provincial stocking, purchased fish to stock in local lakes, installed docks to improving angling access, and held fishing seminars.

Today, this non-profit volunteer group still shares the common passion for fishing but has advanced by becoming actively involved in fisheries management activities. SVSFE members are dedicated to working by their **mandate of conducting fisheries research, enhancement and education**, this passion has spread throughout the community, with new partnerships being created every year.

SVSFE has been recognized for these efforts from both provincial and federal levels;

- (1) In 1997, a recipient of the "Canada Recreational Fisheries Award"
- (2) In 2014, received the "Sustainability in Water and Natural Area Stewardship" under the Manitoba Excellence in Sustainability Award.

It was recently in 2009, when the group started accessing external funding more frequently to operate the projects portion of the organization. The projects component of the organization is nothing new, although with fisheries related grants now available, SVSFE has been able to have technicians/staff carry out various projects, research and educational activities on a fairly regular/seasonal basis.

WHAT WE DO?

Education:

Education is vital! SVSFE is mandated to produce, distribute, and disseminate information designed to educate the general public on the methods, needs and advisability of preserving and improving habitat for game fish species. Having knowledgeable anglers, fisheries are more likely to be sustainable for future generations to enjoy. Current activities include:

- Family Fishing Day – This annual event is a great way to get out for some ice fishing fun with the whole family. Entry is free, no license required, hot lunch is provided by the Swan River Elks and SVSFE provides bait, hooks. Anglers go home with a little bit of local known on our fisheries and a goodie bag for the kids.
- School Fishing Trips – SVSFE receives continued requests to take school groups out for a day of fishing. These trips have ranged from day shore fishing trips to field trips across Manitoba to discover the history of fishing and the Whiteshell Fish Hatchery.
- Stewards of the Future - Stewards is defined as "to manage or look after" making "Stewards of the Future" the appropriate title for the program that was first offered to the Swan Valley School Division in the 2011/2012 school year. Lectures were designed to inform and motivate students to pursue goals of protecting, reconnecting, restoring, and sustaining fisheries and their watershed. SVSFE's close partner, Fisheries Branch, provided the opportunity to obtain rainbow trout raised from the Whiteshell Fish Hatchery to use for the program. The presence of fish in the classroom inspired students to relate all learning concepts to fish within our environment. Today, students participate in caring for the fish including feeding and tank maintenance, classroom presentations from SVSFE staff and local conservation staff, plus fishing trips, and a trout release.
- Annual Fish Camp – The five-day camp provides young anglers the opportunity to experience a variety of fishing and outdoor adventures, as well, campers gain valuable tools to become responsible and successful anglers. Each camper takes part in theoretical lessons, and field practical activities such as; boat & canoe safety lessons, fly fishing lessons, angling techniques, knot tying, wilderness survival, tree/plant, I.D, geocaching, observation of research methods used by SVSFE technicians
- Yellow Fish Road - Yellow Fish Road is a nation wide environmental program. It's designed by Trout Unlimited Canada. The goal is to help Canadians understand that storm drains empty into our local waterbodies. Every 2-3 years all participating groups and classes from schools in Swan River paint yellow fish on the storm drains to remind the public that polluting the streets pollutes our waters
- Work experience – Through various projects, SVSFE creates education and employment opportunities for inspiring fisheries professionals
- Bursaries – SVSFE offers an annual bursary designed to help graduating secondary students who are pursuing education in environmental or natural resource field.
- Hosting Guest Speakers & Seminars – These events are held to inspire individuals/youth to explore and experience the sport of fishing!



Enhancement: "When fisheries are improved, so does the community surrounding it." SVSFE undertakes a variety of enhancement projects which include enhancing the fisheries themselves to enhancing the angling experiences and opportunities.

- ***Fish Transfers and Stocking:***

- Beautiful Lake Walleye Transfer - "**Featured Project**". Each year, SVSFE and Manitoba Water Stewardship - Fisheries Branch partner on the very popular project commonly referred as the "Beautiful Lake Walleye Transfer". This particular project rears walleye in Beautiful Lake at an exceptional rate and each fall approximately two-weeks are spent trapping and transferring walleye to respective walleye lakes. This project is very popular, as it's commonly explained as "creating instant walleye fisheries".
- Trout Maintenance - In many trout lakes, the increase of non-trout species has resulted in a demand for non-salmonid removals. These non-salmonid species including yellow perch, northern pike, white-sucker, and walleye etc., are strong competitors and have resulted in decreased trout survival and therefore decreased fishing quality in many popular trout lakes. Collectively, SVSFE and partners have determined through experience that the most effective methods for conducting such programs are via electrofishing and trap-netting. At this time, intentions are to carry out annual to semi-annual maintenance programs until determined otherwise.
- Arctic char stocking – In 2015, SVSFE received funds from the Hunter & Angler Preservation Fund of \$4800 to purchase arctic char eggs destined for Glad Lake. The Whiteshell Hatchery has partnered on this project and will be raising the char prior to stocking in 2016 & 2017. This will provide a unique opportunity for resident and non-resident anglers in the Parkland Area.
- Glad Lake Pike Transfer – As an initiative to help aid the survival of char destined for Glad in 2016/17, a pike removal program was initiated in 2015. This is one example project of a trout maintenance program. Pike are relocated to recipient lakes and SVSFE plans to continue the program in future years.
- Sport Fish Introduction – SVSFE has been committed to lake exploration and creating new fisheries since initialization. SVSFE has a strong interest in creating **unique** fisheries to attract anglers to the area. Surveys are conducted to find suitable habitat/lakes for fish introduction. Current potential re/introductions include muskellunge, golden trout
- Assisting Provincial Trout & Walleye Fry Stocking – SVSFE understands the importance of efficient stocking practices. For this reason, SVSFE aids Fisheries Branch with stocking whenever possible. This includes "scatter stocking" of trout and stocking walleye fry in suitable habitat.

- ***Enhancing Spawning Habitat***

- Whitefish Lake Spawning Habitat Enhancement – Whitefish Lake is one of the most popular local fishing destinations and is one of the only self-sustaining fisheries in the area. Ensuring and protecting this fishery for future generations is one of SVSFE's priorities. Through past studies, two main tributaries; North and Lagoon creek were identified as suitable spawning habitat for walleye and other species. Beavers create several barriers within the creeks on an annual basis and if unmanaged, this vital spawning habitat would be lost and inaccessible to fish. Through funding from the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program (RFCPP) project in 2015 (\$8,450) and ongoing

management from the group, SVSFE has committed to protecting and maintaining this habitat.

- Beaver Lake Spawning Shoal Creation - Beaver Lake in Duck Mountain Provincial Park has been managed for its recreational fishing potential by SVSFE since the late 1980s. One of the limiting factors for re-introduced walleye identified in 2013, was inadequate amounts of spawning habitat. SVSFE partnered with Manitoba Conservation Water Stewardship and DFO under the RFCPP funding (\$25,400) to develop and implement the installation of spawning shoals in Beaver Lake. In the winter of 2014, a team of volunteers assisted in placing over 400 cubic yards of material on the ice, creating 1050m² of spawning habitat. Today, Beaver Lake continues to support a good population of walleye and is annually stocked with sub-adults to assist in developing this walleye fishery. SVSFE continues to monitor recruitment with small, but positive increments of success. As the walleye population matures, fish utilizing the spawning shoals will increase, and in turn, provide a sustainable walleye fishery for anglers to enjoy.
- Wellman Lake – Reef Enhancement - SVSFE has been very involved with management and enhancement efforts on Wellman Lake. Some in our area refer to it as the most studied lake in the world! Activities include; enhancement and monitoring of the famous spawning reef, evaluation of fish populations, tributary assessments, conducting various walleye spawning studies (telemetry studies), rearing walleye fry and adult walleye stocking. Truly, this is a lake the group has investigated time and money into and their efforts are beginning to pay off. This lake is a popular destination in the Duck mountains and SVSFE we continue to monitor and enhance this fishery to its highest potential.
- ***Improving Angling Experience*** – This is completed through dock installation, trail/road/parking area improvements and through development of informative signage/maps. SVSFE is always striving to share their results, projects and initiatives. The group is continually working at improving communication with the public through social media, signage and interacting within the community.
- ***Fishing Derbies*** – SVSFE has held fishing derbies to not only get people out enjoying the sport of fishing but also to help in management efforts ie. Fish transfers: Gator Bowl, Pike Transfer

Research: Studies provide a proactive approach in managing, sustain and enhancing the fisheries in our lakes, rivers and streams. SVSFE has taken on the initiative to pursue projects necessary to understand and cooperatively manage our fisheries with local fisheries managers and partners. In the end, decisions are based on assessment results which lead to quality management decisions. Activities include:

- ***Fish Population & Lake Surveys*** –SVSFE's involvement in local surveys initiated the adoption of non-lethal techniques to collect current data on the health/state of our local fisheries. The program has evolved to utilizing non-lethal techniques of both trap netting & electrofishing to establish/collect baseline fish population data during the spring and/or fall open water seasons. "With electrofishing at night, 24-hour trap netting sites and seasonal sampling variations, most species and life stages will be well represented using the Non-Lethal Sampling Protocol (NLSP) model" (Kansas). Results aid in fisheries management objectives/plans.
- ***Spawn Assessments*** – Monitoring preferred spawning habitat and migration within our lakes and rivers is crucial in managing walleye fisheries. SVSFE utilizes various methods including radio telemetry tracking, placement of spawning mats, drift netting, guzzling for fish eggs and through visual observations. Findings have assisted in improving spawning habitat where required.

- **Recruitment Surveys** – Determining natural recruitment success and stocking efficiency on high pressure walleye fisheries has become a high priority for SVSFE and Fisheries Branch. Through recruitment surveys, we can: **(1) work together in determining appropriate and more effective fry stocking rates, (2) help determine success of natural recruitment.** The objective: utilize this simple method to monitor natural reproduction over time and help determine if/when management practices are needed by evaluating stocking effectiveness through OTC detection. "The use of OTC for mass marking fish is a method that is widely accepted and utilized by fisheries agencies across North America" (Kansas 2010). The recommended objective from fisheries branch is to stock lakes with walleye fry that need supplemental assistance due to high harvest rates and/or low to nil natural reproduction, and therefore making fry more available to lakes that require supplemental stocking.
- **Lake Exploration** – SVSFE is aware of the economic importance recreational fishing brings to an area. By developing or expanding opportunities brings values to various community members. Lake explorations are annual investigations on lakes to either; rear/raise fish prior to stocking, or lakes to develop new fisheries (fish introductions).
- **Angler Interviews** – Interviews provide anglers a venue to voice their opinions on local stocking, values, opportunities and angling experiences. Interviews provide SVSFE awareness and motivate people to get involved. Typically, people are more prone to get involved if they can see the work that is being done. Interview input is a valuable to SVSFE and fisheries managers
- **Bathymetric Mapping** – SVSFE has collect bathymetric data on several lakes in the Swan Valley Area. The group has partnered with various academic institutes and government over the years to develop the final product. SVSFE intends to distribution depth maps to the public, create informative signage at various lakes and utilize for management purposes. Signage will include a large bathymetric (depth) map as the main focal point, along with relevant information including sport fish species present, regulation references, lake statistics, management plans, etc. to improve overall angling experience to visitors.



HOW WE DO IT?

#1 - Partnerships

SVSFE recognizes "**strong partnerships**" as their key to success. These relationships open up opportunities and broaden the group's knowledge, resources and ability to work efficiently and effectively. These partners help share the group's initiatives and help recognize what can be accomplished through "doing meaningful work to improve angling" (Ian Kitch).

Partners include:

- Government agencies (Federal & Provincial)
- Sport fish & game groups (ISFE, FLIPPR, etc)
- Local cottage owner associations (Blue Lk, Singush Lk, Child's Lk, Glad/Wellman Lk, Whitefish Lk)
- Local outfitters (Alpine Outfitters, Blue Lake Resort, Wellman Lake Lodge)
- Various organizations (Conservation District, Trapper's Association, Snowmobile clubs)
- Municipalities (Town of Swan River, RM of Swan Valley West)
- Academic institutions (SVRSS, UCN, KCC, U of M)
- Tourism Development (Roblin ED, Travel MB)
- The Community (various businesses)
- And the growing list of individual volunteers.

Manitoba's Fisheries Branch and SVSFE work closely to achieve goals. Maintaining relationships between fisheries staff throughout the province has developed a unique team and is why it works.

External Funding

The main financial support for SVSFE's work today is through external funding. SVSFE has resourced funding from the Fisheries and Wildlife Enhancement Fund (FWEF), the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program (RFCPP), Service Canada - Canada Summer Jobs, and the Hunter & Angler Preservation Fund (HAPF) and various other agencies. SVSFE always promotes extra attention to the FWEF as they have been a main contributor since 2009, awarding over \$690,000 to SVSFE's work.

Local Fundraising

In addition, SVSFE raises funds and awareness at their annual banquet and boat raffle on the first weekend of May every year since 1987. This event brings over 600 members out to enjoy a night of food, friends and activities, all to support the sport of fishing. It is a great place to share your fishing stories, eat fish, and learn about local fisheries. We also receive generous contributions and support from all of our local businesses.

The Love of Fishing:

But most importantly by incorporating the love for fishing in our valley and encouraging families and individuals to explore and experience what our fisheries have to offer is how this group truly succeeds.



CHALLENGES WE FACE

One challenge our organization faces is getting active volunteers to join the board. Life today is busy, but the handful of current volunteers see the advantages to being actively involved and the positive footprint the group has made. This is why they continue to dedicate their time and energy to the organization. With more volunteers involved, the more activities/improvements SVSFE can contribute back to the fisheries.

Another challenge is to resource consistent funding for project activities. Some grants required funds to be matched, which involves significant planning/funds/partnerships for costly/larger projects. Most funding is granted by project and there is a lot of time involved in project planning to ensure activities are well organized and communicated with partners. Much of this lag work is completed through volunteered time by our technicians and directors.

HOW INDIVIDUALS/ORGANIZATIONS BECOME INVOLVED:

- Joining the executive and becoming active in group activities
- Sharing feedback on our local fisheries; submit daily catches & tagged fish returns, participate in interviews
- Becoming a member by purchasing a banquet ticket and attending our annual fundraiser. Members are welcome to meet and bring forward ideas for sport fishing to our executive.
- Share experiences & knowledge in fisheries practices, research, management
- Volunteer or Partner on projects! There are many ways to give back: fundraising events, participate in research, enhancement & education activities; transfer projects, stocking, youth fishing days, fish camp, installing docks, improving trails, promotional activities, the list goes on. If you want to give back to the fishing community, volunteering for SVSFE is the way to give fish a helping hand!

