

June 9, 2015

Background

There are approximately 100 plus stormwater facilities throughout Calgary currently operated and maintained by The City of Calgary, Water Services. Storm ponds are not recreational lakes; they are stormwater reservoirs designed to help prevent flooding. Storm ponds have inlets for stormwater to enter during high rainfall events and outlets to slowly release excess water afterwards. Storm ponds also help trap sediments/contaminants from catch basins, roadways and yards before releasing the water downstream into the Bow River.

Recently, Water Services was informed that fish stocking and fishing are occurring at two City ponds in the northwest – Royal Oak and Country Hills. Invasive fish species have been identified such as Prussian carp, in these ponds. These fish can survive Alberta's climate and grow to be very large. They have no natural predators in Alberta and will out-compete native species for resources.

Upon receiving this information, The City immediately contacted Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) and was advised the issue is not exclusive to Calgary but rather widespread in Alberta. AEP is developing a communications plan to deal with creating awareness about the release of illegal fish species into the environment and it is expected to be launched later this month. The City has agreed to work with AEP and align with their communication efforts. Meanwhile, Water Services has formed a committee to examine the issue to determine if there is an operational response that is required to deal with the issue.

Current Status / Next Steps

1. In the last several months, a number of citizens have been observed fishing and feeding of fish in at least two separate storm ponds in the northwest. These include the Royal Oak Storm Pond and Country Hills Storm Pond.

Once informed about the presence of fish in these storm ponds, The City contacted the AEP and was advised that this issue is on their radar and a plan of action for all of Alberta will be forthcoming at the end of June. The City has agreed to work in conjunction with AEP and align and supplement their communications efforts for storm ponds. This includes storm pond signage, and information and key messages for 311 councillor offices and community associations. Bylaw officers will be patrolling the storm ponds to educate citizens about the safety and environmental hazards associated with fish stocking, fishing and participating in recreational activities in and around storm pond e.g. swimming, boating.

2. Water Services had developed temporary signage for Royal Oak and Country Hills advising the public to not stock or fish the storm ponds. Signage, expected to be in place by June 19 at the two storm ponds. The signage will read as follows:

*It is important that **no fish** are released into the **stormwater facility (storm pond)** as they may travel downstream and disrupt the natural balance of Alberta's ecosystem. Storm ponds are not recreational lakes; their purpose is to protect the environment by trapping **pollutants/sediment** coming from streets and yards. If you see fish stocking, fishing, fish feeding, swimming, wading or boating in this storm pond, **contact 311**. **Fish cannot be released to a storm pond under the Drainage Bylaw 37M2005. The fine is \$3,000 and can include additional penalties.***

Key Messages

- Storm Ponds are a vital part of Calgary's water treatment infrastructure. These ponds collect storm water and runoff, trapping sediment and pollutants, helping to return cleaner water to our rivers and streams.
- The City is concerned about fish stocking and fishing at two storm ponds in the northwest, specifically Royal Oak and Country Hills. Both are operated and maintained by Water Services.
- Invasive fish species have been identified in these ponds. These fish can survive Alberta's climate and grow to be very large. They have no natural predators in Alberta and will out-compete native species for resources, disrupting the natural balance of Alberta's ecosystem.



- The City of Calgary, Water Services believes in education before enforcement; bylaw officers will be patrolling the storm ponds to educate citizens about the safety and environmental hazards associated with fish stocking, fishing and participating in recreational activities in and around storm pond e.g. swimming, boating. In addition, the City will be erecting signs around the storm ponds to create awareness and will be sharing key messages with Community Associations to share with their residents.
- Fish cannot be released to a storm pond under the Drainage Bylaw 37M2005. The fine is \$3,000 and can include additional penalties; it is illegal to release live fish into Alberta's lakes or rivers. Fines can be up to \$100,000.
- If anyone sees fish stocking, fishing, fish feeding, swimming, wading, boating or any other recreational activities in a City storm pond, they are asked to **contact 311**.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a stormwater retention pond?

A stormwater retention pond or storm pond is an engineered artificial body of water. Its primary function is to protect residential property from flooding by storing peaks stormwater flow and untreated street run-off (sediments and pollutants).

Why are you concerned about fish stocking?

Since the stormwater pond outflow ultimately enters the Bow River, invasive fish species such as Prussian Carp, may travel downstream and disrupt the natural balance of Alberta's ecosystem. Prussian Carp, for example, are big plant eaters and their waste depletes the oxygen in a waterways.

Is there a current bylaw in place to stop fish stocking?

Yes. Fish cannot be released to a storm pond under the Drainage Bylaw 37M2005. The fine is \$3,000 and can include additional penalties.

Why can citizens not use storm ponds for recreational use?

Stormwater contains pollutants that could be harmful if they come in contact with skin, or if they are consumed directly from the water or by eating the fish from the pond. In addition, water levels and flows can change rapidly, which creates unpredictable and dangerous conditions.

What is the City doing about the current situation?

The City recognizes that there is a need to educate the public on the primary purpose of a storm pond; to collect stormwater and runoff, trapping sediment and pollutants, helping to return cleaner water to our rivers and streams. The City will focus efforts to educate by sharing information with the Community Association, Councillor Offices, as well as providing onsite signage.

Alberta Environment and Parks is developing an education campaign that will be launched at the end of June. The City of Calgary will be working with the Province to support those communication efforts.

Where can I get more information on storm ponds?

Storm Pond information can be accessed on The City of Calgary's web site at: www.calgary.ca This website has public education materials about stormwater facilities/storm ponds.