

FORT SASKATCHEWAN FISH & GAME ASSOCIATION

The Fort Saskatchewan Fish & Game association is an affiliate club of the Alberta Fish & Game Association, which was established February 20, 1908.

Our roots, however, do not go back this far. By some standards we are relatively newcomers to the field. Records show that the first club organized under the name of Fort Saskatchewan Fish & Game association was founded in the home of Chester Simmons with the help of Mr. Herman Hennig, and an assembly of a dozen interested people. Our earliest records reflect Mr. Simmons as President in 1958 with a membership of 150.

From 1959 – 1963, Fred Young held the position as president. No further records reflect a Fort Saskatchewan club, however it is of interest to note that Mr. Aale Piche is recorded as regional representative from Fort Sask.

The club lay dormant until it was revived in 1969 with an initial membership of 43, under the Presidency of Bob Wilson with Henry Visscher as secretary. Our certificate of Incorporation is dated November 20, 1969 #5752 and also signed by Jim Skillen, Ralph Galvin and Eugene Huk.

The formative years were ambitious ones with the establishment of our charter, (in use today with a few changes) our trophy system, a rifle range, and fish pond. A singularly unique crest was designed and is coveted by collectors throughout the province. Crest was designed by Vi Stelzig.

Doug MacLean (with some helpers) was the main driving force behind our first wild game supper held in the old legion in 1969. It moved to the new Legion and then to Josephburg where it has been held ever since.

Many of the trends established in our early years are carried on today, for example, the support of a minor hockey team from 1970 to this date.

The main impetus of the club centered around the establishment of the rifle range and camping area. The first "Rifleman's Rodeo" was held in the Fall of 1971. This event became the main expenditure of club effort until the establishment of the Spring fish derby.

The rodeo came from Ponoka with Howie Johnson, a teacher who helped establish it here. It consisted of 5 events:

☐ Men's Senior (open to all male shooters) ☐ Ladies's Senior (open to all female shooters) ☐ Junior Open (open to all shooters under 18 years of age) ☐ Family Event (one adult and one junior of each family) ☐ Team Event (one adult male and female plus one junior shooter)

There were 5 targets, 2 mobile and 3 pop up. These were, running antelope at 100 yds., pop up goat at 150 yds., pop up sheep at 200 yds., running deer at 250 yds., and pop up bear at 300 yds. A formidable array of trophies and prizes were awarded to the 5th position in each event.

These Rodeos brought shooters to the Fort from all over Alberta and some entries from Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The event spread to Hinton with Howie Johnson and to Salmon Arm with Henry

Visscher. The Fort Saskatchewan Club was instrumental in establishing standard targets and rules throughout the rodeo circuit.

Annual rodeos were carried out until the loss of the range in 1978.

While the range dominated through the early 70's the fishermen were not forgotten. The club stocked a fish pond with fingerling trout as early as 1971 and also held family gatherings at North Buck Lake. Fishing was the main attraction, but horse shoe pitching, foot races and egg throwing contests were also on the agenda.

A well organized fish derby was re-established in 1977. This was held at North Buck Lake, the long week-end in May, until 1982 when it moved to Moose Lake. This meant a more comfortable campsite and better facilities with an additional species of fish, and by 1987 this derby was about the 3rd largest in the province by an individual club with prizes and trophies for men, women and children for Northern Pike, Walleye and Perch. The trout pond was close to the Fort at a Steel Bros. gravel pit and proved to be a great diversion for children and old timers, but was later lost.

Other activities of the club in its earlier years were the Junior Conservation Program, Hunter Safety Training Program, Alberta Fishing Education program, Fly Casting, and Fly Tying courses, Predator control (magpie and crows), Taxidermy courses, and the raising of Pheasants, and by 1987 had released 575 pheasants. Goose nesting was also a major program and many flax bales and later floating structures were set out in area wetlands. Norman Dahl and Chuck Meyer were thought to have put on some of the earliest hunter training courses anywhere, going as far back as the 50's, and continuing on for many years. Other early years events are unknown as all the club records and archives were lost in a fire in the home of Al Dimmer in Evergreen Trailer Park. The main contributing members in these early years include Al Dimmer (former president) and Marshall Melnyk, (who were instrumental in producing the handbook), Doug MacLean (who revived the club when it started to slump in the late 70's when we lost our range), Jim Skillen, John Thompson, Jack Lundberg (former president), Marcel Letawsky, Brian and Sharon Bilan, John Appleton (former president), and Walter Bablitz (who was also club President for 7 years in late 80's and early 90's)

Andrew Young was the son of Bill and Mary Young of Sherritt Gordon Mines who died tragically in an auto accident at the age of 16. Andrew was chairman of the bird committee of the Fort Saskatchewan Fish & Game Association at the time of his death. He is remembered as an avid outdoorsman, a graduate of the Alberta Hunter Training and Conservation program, and one who had an extensive butterfly collection. The Andrew Young trophy donated by his family has been established and carried by the club as the Junior Trap Shooting Champion since its inception in 1970. Our Andrew Young Memorial junior trap shoot is held every September. In our modern years (1990 forward) the club continued to grow. We established a much sought after rifle range (in conjunction with the Mundare club) in 1989. We finished another 5 yr. pheasant rearing program and another 1000 birds were released. Other programs were,

Mallard Duck nesting cones, then tunnels, cavity nesting boxes, and scores of bluebird houses. Many Hunter Education and Fishing Education courses were also held (Len Gransch was the driving force behind most of these courses). The club annually has a booth in the city's Trade Fair and also supply birdhouses for the kids in the city's Legacy Park family Fun festival.

Our summer fish derby (now a family weekend campout and catch & release derby) has gained in fame and moved to lakes such as Cross Lake and recently Fawcett Lake. (2005 had 120 registered).

We also established a kid's ice fishing derby (recently named "The Bill Kostenuk Memorial Kid's Ice Fishing Derby") held every winter and has been at locations including Hanmore Lake, Sandy Lake, Lac St. Anne, Nakamun Lake, Lac La Nonne, Long Lake and also at our own Trout Pond. The first derby was put on by Gerald Inkster & John Appleton at Bonnie lake in the early to mid 70's.

From the late 80's and throughout the 90's, instrumental members include Eric Mickailyk, Doug Urichuk (former president), Len Gransch, Roger Gamache, George Hargesheimer, and Doug & Robyn Butler, to name but a few.

In the late 90's, after much searching, the club obtained a long term lease with the county of Strathcona on 80 acres near Elk Island Park. (Leo Carns did a lot of background work on this) A cabin was erected (Real Bibeau and friends put in many hours) and "The Chuck Meyer Memorial Trout Pond" was dug & stocked. Many of the club's activities occur at this location now.

Our annual "Wild Game Dinner & Trophy Banquet" is second to none and the envy of many and held every March. The 2009 event will be the club's 40th annual. We honor the club's trophy winners and supply a social gathering for our members. It also is the club's biggest fundraiser of the year. With help from our many sponsors, the club has 36 major trophies that are awarded on an annual basis. Most date back to the 1969 – 1970 era, however some new ones have been added over the years. The Fort Saskatchewan Club also sponsors the Provincial Grizzly bear trophy and has done so since 1975.

In 2005 our membership numbered 575. Current active members include Real Bibeau, Colin McLean, Dennis & Pat Hluschak, Dan Roth, Gord Blize, Doug & Robyn Butler as well as many previously mentioned and several others. Most events and projects are continued on and new ones always being looked for by our conservation minded club. Youth events now have a high priority and recently we've had success in duck nesting and gopher shooting competitions with our juniors.

(Note: Our 2007 membership reached 700 members, a record high)

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(compiled by Doug Butler)