



Calgary Fish & Game Association

Carburn Park Fish Stocking Proposal

Carburn Park is a natural area park nestled along the Bow River featuring two man-made ponds, a regional pathway, and numerous wildlife, waterfowl, and wildflowers to experience. The park reflects the preservation of wildlife habitats and ecosystems for all Calgarians to enjoy. Located at 67 Riverview Drive SE, Calgary, it is ideally suited for city-wide outdoor pursuits.

Park Features

The park is adjacent to the Bow River and its world-class “blue ribbon” trout fishery. The [Map of Carburn Park](#) illustrates the attraction of the area to city residents:

- Two man-made ponds
- Fishing (ice fishing not recommended – water supply is from the Bow River)
- Outdoor ice skating during the winter months.
- Canoes, dinghies, and paddle boats allowed - no motorized boats
- Washrooms - open year-round (7 a.m. - 10 p.m.)
- Walking trails
- Tables and benches
- Birdwatching
- Dogs permitted, on-leash only
- **NO** swimming

History

In the early 1950s, J. F. Burns, a pioneer Calgary contractor, set about to purchase 350 acres of land including Carburn Park. Acquisition of the land was completed in 1959 and J. F. Burns Sand & Gravel Ltd began mining gravel from the lands east of the present Carburn Park in 1960 and the following year, the land was annexed to The City of Calgary. The mining operation was subsequently suspended and the City then obtained ownership of the land. In 1982, Burnco, as the company was renamed, resurrected the subject of recovering the valuable gravel reserves. In consultation with the City, Burnco formulated an acceptable proposal beneficial to both the company, city, and the community. It would mine 800,000 tonnes of gravel from a nine-hectare section of the park. In return, Burnco would construct a family-oriented park including two recreational lakes, pathways, picnic areas, washrooms, a playground, landscaping, parking, and access roads, without any cost to The City of Calgary.

In 1985, Alberta Environment’s “Bucks for Wildlife” program contributed funds to adapt the lakes by deepening the lake area excavations and recontouring the shoreline and lake bottoms. The lakes are stocked with 5,000 trout for several years but was replaced with perch in later years. Pike were either stocked or inadvertently introduced into the ponds at the same time. The ponds have not been restocked with fish since the 2013 flood.



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A two-acre lagoon has been designed for paddle boating in the summer and ice skating throughout the winter months. Adjacent to one of the larger lakes, picnic facilities for up to 95 families include barbecue pits, picnic shelters, children's play areas, and washrooms. Bicycle paths and walkways are evident throughout the park with some paths connecting.

Fish Stocking Considerations

The fish stocking practices of Carburn Park ponds have been controversial considering the proximity to the Bow River and its unique population of wild trout. Although biologists have felt that stocking of sterile, triploid trout would not pose a threat to a thriving wild trout population, the early trout stocking practices were suspended and replaced with warm water native species of perch and pike. The situation has changed in recent years. Firstly, the 2013 flood illustrated that under high water flows the containment of stocked fish in Carburn Park ponds was at risk. And secondly, the Bow River trout population has dropped by more than 50% in the past 10 years making it vulnerable to new species introduction. Although triploid trout cannot reproduce, they do compete with wild trout populations and have been shown to negatively impact wild trout populations. Therefore, at best, the need and the benefit of stocking Carburn Park lake needs to be discussed in the context of the Bow River trout recovery initiatives.

It is also worthy of note that Carburn Park was considered as a possible river access boat ramp site in the Calgary River Access Strategy (RAS). But was quickly abandoned due to the opposition from local stakeholders to preserve the park for what had become a primary day-use site for paddlers, bird watchers, and picnickers. And besides, the adjacent river is considered a primary brown trout spawning area. The City of Calgary has also embarked on a Bow River fish habitat enhancement program in recent years that would suggest that any negative impact on Bow River trout populations that could occur from triploid-trout inadvertently introduced from Carburn Park would be rejected.

There are several lake and pond stocking programs within Calgary and neighboring communities, both public and private access. The objectives are principally to allow the children to experience one of Alberta's cherished outdoor pursuits. But historically without age restrictions being put in place any publicly accessible fishery becomes a fish harvest opportunity for the adult population. The GOA has embarked on an enhanced fish-stocking program in 2020 and needs to address several regulation changes to meet this commitment. Should there be a "put-and-take" angling license? Should there be an age restriction on harvest opportunities and possibly mandatory kill policies on still water fishery that is in close proximity to foothill zone flowing water fisheries?

At this point in time it is inadvisable for Calgary Fish & Game to move forward on advocating for what was considered a unique opportunity to expand fishing opportunities within Calgary. A more detailed assessment of the impact of stocking Carburn Park within an expanded scope of sustainable fish populations and the ethics of stocking a pond on a flood plain within the Bow River Basin.