



Release Date: March 22, 2016

Positive Alberta Fisheries Recovery Actions

On the eve of the 2016 sportfishing season, the Alberta government will put in place a 5 year 'recovery rest period' in the upper Pembina River that will combine no-fishing and habitat restoration measures. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) commends the Alberta government on this important step to protect a high risk Arctic grayling population.

"This new 'recovery rest period' approach has real potential to bring the valuable arctic grayling fishery in the upper Pembina River back from the brink of local extinction," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "In addition to the 5 year fishing closure, we are pleased there are plans to work closely with regulators and industrial users on restoring watershed health during this recovery rest period."

Arctic grayling were once abundant in many northern foothills waters, including in the Pembina River and its tributaries. In 2014, the Pembina River watershed was rated by the Alberta government as having a 'very low' current arctic grayling population density and 'very high' need for habitat protection and overharvest protection.

AWA also welcomes other positive fisheries conservation actions set for 2016. Several walleye and northern pike lake fisheries have changed to zero limit catch-and-release status. While 'catch and release' indicates a regrettable decline in fish populations that would be better to prevent, AWA supports decisive actions including fishing limits to recover these populations.

Important remaining populations of native Alberta fish such as arctic grayling, westslope cutthroat trout, bull trout and lake walleye face ongoing habitat loss and degradation. Land use risks include excessive sediment and nutrient runoff from lands near rivers and lakes, stream fragmentation, loss of vegetation buffer areas, and loss of sustaining groundwater connections. These issues all point to the urgent need to manage cumulative development impacts more effectively throughout Alberta.

For more information:

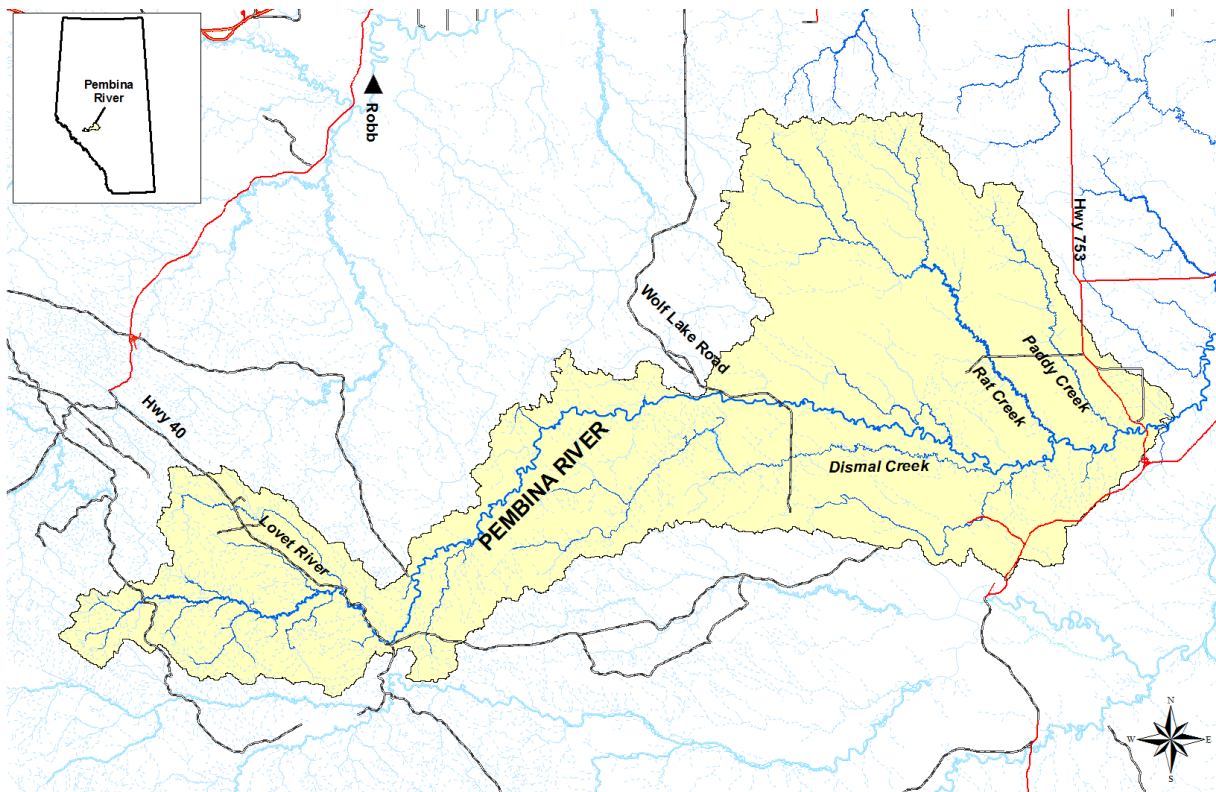
Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 283-2025

Attachment: Map of Pembina River headwaters 5 year Recovery Rest Period area





Map: Pembina River Headwaters 5 year Recovery Rest Period Area



Source: Government of Alberta, March 2016.

