

In a time when angling pressure is increasing and exceeds the supply of fish, catch-and-release fishing is an important means of conserving fish resources. In order for catch-and-release fishing to be an effective management tool, the fish must survive after release.

Angling ethics play an important role in the survival of released fish, so please handle with care.

A Fish-handling Checklist

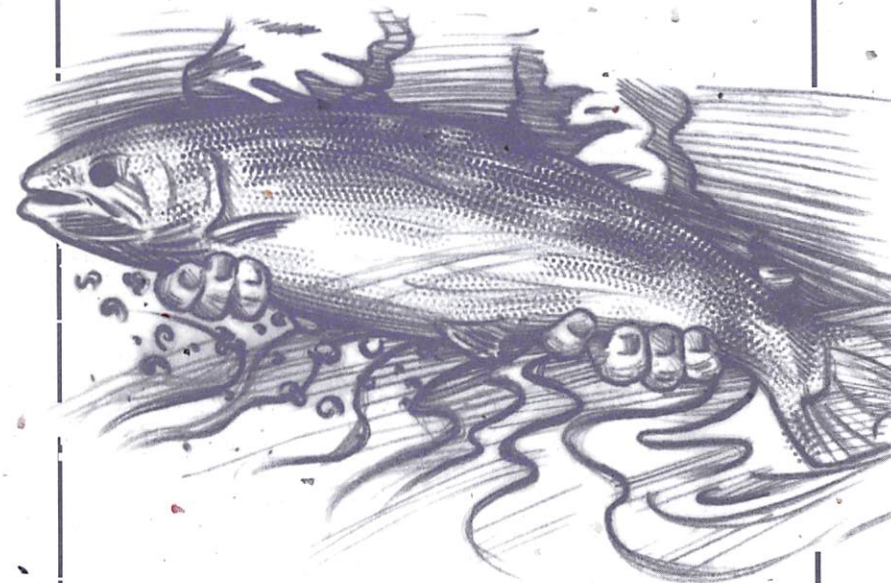
- Don't play fish to exhaustion.
- Keep fish in water.
- Wet hands completely or wear wet gloves when handling fish.
- Be quick.
- Be gentle.
- Don't touch a fish's eyes or gills.
- Don't cull fish.

Alberta
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Natural Resources



Pub. No.: I/648
ISBN: 0-7732-5118-9

Handle and Release Fish With Care!



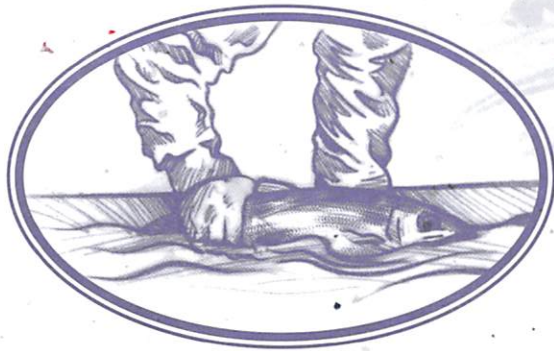
Be a Conscientious Angler.

Remember the "fair chase" principle:

Minimize the time that you play the fish once it is on the hook. Playing a fish to exhaustion may cause it to die later.

It is better to keep fish in the water while handling and releasing them.

If you must handle fish, wet your hands completely or wear soft cotton or wool gloves that have been soaked in water. This will prevent damage to the fish's protective mucous surface.



If you must measure or photograph your catch, have your measuring board or camera ready, and act quickly. Minimize the time the fish is out of the water.

Hold the fish gently under the belly and by the area in front of the tail. Never squeeze a fish or touch a fish's eyes or gills. If you are releasing the fish, hold it in the water for a few moments before letting go so the water oxygenates the fish. A fish is ready to be released when it maintains an upright position and actively swims out of your hands. Never just throw a fish back into the water.

When you are practising catch-and-release fishing, prepare in advance to release your fish.

Choose a hook that can be removed from the fish's mouth easily. Use landing nets when they aid quick release. Use needle-nose pliers to remove hooks. Never tear a hook from a fish. If the hook is deeply embedded in the fish's throat, snip the line and release the fish, leaving the hook in place. Alternatively, a pair of side-cutters can be used to cut the hook instead of the line.



Culling fish—the practice of holding live fish for a time, then releasing smaller fish as larger ones are caught—lowers survival rates. The risk increases significantly in warm water. Do not cull fish.

Be decisive and efficient when determining whether to keep a fish or release it.

If the fish you have caught is going to be used for food, the most humane practice is to dispatch the fish quickly and keep it on ice.



If you have any questions about handling and releasing fish carefully, please call Fisheries Management staff at your local Natural Resources Service Office.

Be gentle, be quick, and when in doubt, think of the fish first.