

Recreation

While Cavan Lake Reservoir is a popular destination for fishing enthusiasts and campers, its primary purpose remains water supply for irrigation.

The reservoir is not a Provincial Park or operated as a Provincial Recreation Area, however there is a campground adjacent to the reservoir, which is operated and maintained by Cypress County. The campground offers water access for boats and provides a beautiful view of Cavan Lake Reservoir and its natural surroundings. Recently expanded, there are new camp sites with power hook-ups and fire pits.



Fish Management

Cavan Lake Reservoir has a successful Fisheries Management Plan and sport fish stocking program. The reservoir is generally stocked with Rainbow Trout each spring.



Photos courtesy of Mike Bryski

Cavan Lake Reservoir



Alberta Environment and Parks



Cypress County

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Cavan Lake Reservoir is located 25 km southeast of Medicine Hat. Constructed by the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration in 1949-50, the reservoir was created by joining three existing sloughs, then constructing shoreline dykes and a dam at the downstream end to impound water.

The Cavan Lake Reservoir Headworks System consists of a diversion weir and headgate on Gros Ventre Creek, a 6.5 km long diversion canal, five earth fill dykes and the Cavan Dam, which includes the outlet control structure. Operation and maintenance of the Cavan Lake Reservoir Headworks System was transferred to Environment and Parks (Alberta Environment at the time) in 1992.



Water diverted from Gros Ventre Creek is stored in the Reservoir under the authority of a *Water Act* License, which has been issued to the Ross Creek Irrigation District (RCID) for the purpose of irrigating approximately 1200 acres of crop land in the Ross Creek basin between Hwy 41 S and Hwy 41 N.

Water levels rely on inflows from Gros Ventre Creek and local surface runoff. This means water levels in the reservoir can fluctuate dramatically throughout the operating season. A significant contributor to water level reduction during summer is evaporation and reservoir bed seepage.



In 2005-06 the RCID invested in a closed pipeline water delivery system, which was connected to the dam's outlet control structure. This pipeline replaced their original open ditch and dyke delivery system. This modernization and improvement to the District has resulted in many positive benefits to Cavan Lake Reservoir, such as:

- Water conservation through minimized canal bed losses, and the elimination of coulee erosion,
- Reservoir water level stabilization by reducing water use with a closed pipe delivery system, pivots, and wheel moves in lieu of flood irrigation, and
- Improved recreational and fishing opportunities through water conservation and water level stabilization.

A buffer zone is in place around Cavan Lake Reservoir and headworks structures, which is known as the Provincial Land Corridor. This corridor is Crown land, and is accessible to the public by foot only. The corridor accommodates the department's operation and maintenance activities, as well as fluctuating water levels, occasional flooding, bank erosion, and environmental mitigation activities. A recent fencing program was undertaken at the reservoir with good intent. Fencing has minimized damage to the shoreline from direct vehicle access, and is facilitating the recovery of previously damaged areas.



By fencing and protecting this buffer zone, we are also protecting important habitat for fish and other animals and birds that rely on this important water source. There is also potential for significant habitat creation for a greater number of species if the shoreline is given the chance to recover and grow. A healthy habitat along the reservoir shoreline could also help to sustain and protect endangered species like the Northern Leopard frog.