

# Buffalo Lake stabilization raises fish kill concern

By **ANDREA MAYNARD**  
of The Advocate

Work on Buffalo Lake stabilization may be killing fish, says a retired botanist who lives on the water's edge.

An 11-km channel is now being finished to raise the level of Buffalo Lake with water from the Red Deer River.

But clouds of silt are filling the west side of the lake as the project nears completion, says Charles Bird, who lives along Buffalo Lake.

"It certainly bothers me," said Mr. Bird, a retired professor from the University of Calgary.

"A lot of dirt is being carried into the lake and dumped there, and the government has never looked to see if it's good or bad," he said, adding that local fishermen have told him there is a problem.

Since excavating Parlby Creek to create better water channels began in 1988, more mud and silt has been moving down the creek with spring runoff.

"It gets really muddy in the spring.

Muddy water isn't good water for fish to come up and spawn in."

Mr. Bird has drafted several recommendations for the provincial government, which he will present to the public Thursday at Kerry Wood Nature Centre.

One of his suggestions is to line the sides of Parlby Creek with fine gravel after it is excavated. That would reduce erosion, he said.

"I'm not suggesting they stop the project — I'm saying let's have a look at these things."

But Douglas Neis, Alberta Environment construction inspector, said he hasn't noticed any erosion into the lake in recent years.

There was erosion during Phase 1 of the project, which began in 1985, but it has since stabilized and vegetation in the creek has regrown.

The initial channel work was close to Buffalo Lake, while the current project, Phase 4, is about 15 km away, he said.

"The channel is well upstream from the

lake," said Mr. Neis. "There has been some erosion on the lower end of the channel but the remainder of the channel has been very stable."

According to a government review board, the project will result in a "slight loss" of fish habitat.

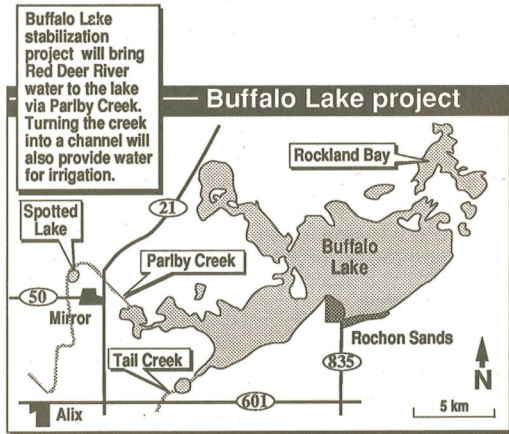
But a backflood device on Spotted Lake will increase spawning of northern pike, the review board said this summer. Low water levels have caused severe winter-kill among fish species in the lake.

Work crews are now excavating the longest portion of Parlby Creek, from Hwy 50 to Alix. Initial work on an 11-km section should be complete in December, said project manager Ken Looten.

Once the channels are finished, work will start on construction of a backflood structure to irrigate farmland and provide flood control.

In total, more than 20 km of channelling is included in the project.

Mr. Bird's presentation will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday.



Graphic by GREG NEIMAN

Nov 26, 1991