



Through devastation stems opportunity

Chaos and devastation were two words frequently used to describe the floods in Alberta this past June. And while those words certainly applied to the impacts on research programs in the Department of Renewable Resources, Dr. Mark Poesch is also adding an additional word to the mix – opportunity.

Since 2010, Poesch and his colleagues have been studying movement patterns and behaviours of lake sturgeon – an iconic, prehistoric looking fish that can reach lengths of 1.5 metres – on the Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan Rivers. But when Poesch heard reports of the floods he assumed his monitoring stations in the river, and the data they contained, were lost. He even began discussing options for alternate projects with his students.

However, thanks to the extensive help from his partners at the provincial and federal government

he was able to retrieve 70% of his monitoring stations. With the data now in hand, Poesch sees a unique opportunity. “These types of extreme events are projected to increase in the face of climate change. This presents an opportunity to quantify what type of changes we might expect to see in our rivers and to the species that inhabit them” said Poesch.

“You just can’t plan for these types of events and so when they do occur it can make for an interesting study” said Terry Clayton with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. Studying the movement and behaviors of this species before and after the floods will undoubtedly help to better understand the iconic lake sturgeon.