
Area 5 Annapolis, Kings and Hants Counties

Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council Minutes 2008 Fall RFAC Meeting

The RFAC meeting for Area 5 was held on October 7, 2008 at the West Hants Wildlife Association's Club. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Inland Fisheries Division staff, there were 11 people in attendance including Greg Stevens with the Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Amy Weston with Adopt-A-Stream, and Orlando Fraser and Marty Gatien with Department of Natural Resources. Jason LeBlanc chaired the meeting while Don MacLean and Mark Hamilton from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture were also present. The meeting began at 7:00 pm with a brief introduction of those present, and a review of the agenda by the Chair.

Review of 2008 Field Activities Cold Water Sportfish Management

Jason LeBlanc provided an overview of cold water species management and the importance of research and Special Trout Management Areas. Jason reviewed the work from projects in River Denys, West River Antigonish, Cape Breton Highlands and rainbow trout assessments in the Bras D'or Lakes. In the River Denys Special Trout Management Area staff captured, tagged and released 341 anadromous brook trout prior to the opening of the angling season. Angler interviews were conducted to determine harvest, preferred angling methods, tag recaptures, angler demographics, and catch per unit effort. A total of 250 anglers were interviewed over the course of the River Denys study. Data was also collected from the capture of upstream migrating trout caught with live-release nets. Jason explained that Cape Breton Highland lakes trout suffer from overcrowding and therefore have slower growth rates. A very small percentage of trout in this area exceed 25 cm in length compared to mainland Nova Scotia lakes. Creating additional angling opportunities on lakes in the Highlands may be considered in the future.

Jason discussed the ongoing tagging study of the West River Special Trout Management Area and explained that over 130 anadromous brook trout were captured, tagged and released prior to the opening of the angling season and angler surveys were conducted to examine harvest and angling effort.

Detailed reports from major field work projects are available on our Departmental website : <http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports/>.

Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative (FFRC)

Jason gave an overview of this new initiative. The objective is to partner with other government departments and universities to assist in the collection of data that is relevant to our management objectives. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture will provide \$30,000 annually to support the FFRC. Funds will be used to support research projects designed to address concerns related to the management of fisheries including issues raised at Recreational Fishing Advisory Council meetings. Terms of Reference for FFRC will be developed over the winter. In an effort to increase knowledge on the species and abundance of external and internal fish parasites, the Inland Fisheries Division partnered with two parasitology researchers; Dr. K. Martha Jones from the University of Cape Breton and Dr. David Cone from Saint Mary's University. This joint effort will facilitate research on fish parasites, ultimately aiding in better understanding the health and status of Nova Scotia's fish populations.

Warm Water Sportfish Management

Jason went on to review a recently released report for smallmouth bass in Little River Lake, Kings County. The report summarizes data collected from tournaments from 1995-2005. Only 3% of all bass weighed in were longer than 45.5 cm. Growth rates are near the provincial average with younger fish exhibiting faster growth. Bass grow to 25.4 cm in 5 years, 30.5 cm in 7 years and 35.5 cm in 9 years. The relative weight, a measure of condition or plumpness, of bass in Little River Lake is slightly lower than the average for Nova Scotia (RW = 77) and averaged 76.4 over the time series. Little River Lake continues to be a popular tournament lake and is managed as a Special Bass Management Area using trophy regulations. Jason addressed concerns that there are fewer large bass available to the fishery in recent years, noting that, recent data has shown an increase in the number of large bass with strong cohorts of fish over 37.5 cm. Detailed reports on these lakes and others are available on our Departmental website: www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports

Hatchery Program

Don MacLean spoke on the Fall Stocking Program. He explained that the fall stocking program usually covers 200 sites province-wide and that about 500,000 fall fingerlings are released. In Area 5 there are 16 stocked lakes in Kings County and 5 each in Annapolis and Hants. He reminded the audience about the free fishing week-end in February and encouraged clubs to sponsor an event.

Sportfish Extension Programs

Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program

Don provided an update from the Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program. Four rivers (Mabou River, St. Francis Harbour River, West River Pictou and River Phillip) were stocked with 80,000 salmon fry or parr in the spring and fall of 2007, while in 2008

these four rivers were stocked with 65,000 juvenile salmon. Fifty-two adult salmon broodstock were collected in October, 2008.

He also provided an overview of the Sportfish Habitat Fund activities in 2007. Don indicated that with a slight increase in fishing licence sales this year, there is about \$240,000 in projected revenues for the Fund in 2008. Amy Weston spoke about a wet season this summer with 23 clubs trying hard to find windows of good weather to get work done.

Don also provided the group with an update on the Atlantic Salmon Endowment Fund. Fifty thousand dollars was allocated to four projects in 2008. The organizations which were eligible for funding included the Cumberland County River Enhancement Association, Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation, Sackville River Association, and the Mulgrave and Area Lakes Enhancement Association.

Sportfish Promotion and Development

Mark Hamilton provided an overview of the Learn to Fish (L2F) Program. There is a recognized need to foster the next generation of stewards of our resource, which is most effectively done through early introduction to angling. He covered the curriculum of the L2F program and spoke of the positive response of teachers, recreation leaders, and the kids themselves. This has led to a rapid expansion of the L2F program, from 60 kids participating in 2006 to 525 taking the L2F course in 2008. The next step in the program's development is to train volunteers to present the program, which will enable Inland Fisheries staff to expand efforts into new regions. Mark outlined what would be expected of clubs participating in these presentations and what the Division can offer by way of training and support. He encouraged volunteers to contact him about training. The L2F program has enjoyed generous support, and Mark thanked program partners Shakespeare Fishing Tackle, Shimano, Lucky Strike Bait Works, Mark Weare First Cast Radio Show, Hammerhead Lures, Sportfishing Organizations (Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers & Hunters, Port Morien Wildlife Association & Hants West Wildlife Association) Community Groups/Boys & Girls Clubs, HRM Community Development and MetroTransit.

Mark gave an overview of the Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) program, having just returned from a very successful Fall BOW weekend in Cape Breton. The program is in its 11th year and has had more than 1,000 women participate. He encouraged attendees of the RFAC meeting to introduce their female friends and family to this exciting and informative program, and announced the date of the next BOW program: September 25 - 27, 2009 at Mount Traber Bible Camp, Cooks Brook (near Middle Musquodoboit). For more information see the website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/outdoor/> or contact Pam Grace at (902) 424-5832 . Mark then spoke about the new Families United with Nature (FUN) outdoor skills programs, designed to encourage families to get involved in active outdoor recreation. The first presentation is tentatively booked for Oct 18, 2008 at Jerry Lawrence Provincial Park (Formerly known as Lewis Lake Provincial Park.) For information contact Mike Pollard (902) 434 -1925, or email mikepollard@ns.sympatico.ca [Please

note that this date has been changed. The first FUN event will be held on May 23, 2009.]

Discussion/Agenda items from floor

Greg Stevens of DFO indicated that violations were up in the striped fishery, with more charges laid this season. Enforcement presence is up also. He encouraged people to call if they spot violations; Greg assured the audience that those reporting would remain anonymous. On the COSEWIC designation on striped bass, Greg indicated that part of the consultation process must include First Nations, and he hasn't been able to get a meeting with anyone. He is not anticipating a closure. The fishery has 5,000 participants in Nova Scotia and is worth millions to the province. There was a meeting in Stewiacke around changing regulations for fishing on the spawning grounds; about 100 people showed up. Rod Bradford has been setting up a population estimate study using sonic tags.

Meeting Adjourned

Jason thanked attendees and the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.