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***Area 4 Digby, Queens, Shelburne, and Yarmouth Counties***

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## **Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council Minutes 2009 Fall RFAC Meeting**

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The RFAC meeting for Area 4 was held on November 16 2009 at the Shelburne Fire Hall (Mens Auxiliary Room) in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture staff, there were 12 people in attendance. Jason LeBlanc chaired the meeting while Tara Marshall, Anthony Heggelin, and Mike McNeil from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture were also present. John Momberquette with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources was 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.

### **Sportfishing Proposed Regulation Changes for 2010**

Jason LeBlanc reviewed the proposed regulation changes from Page 5 in the Angler's Handbook.

Jason explained the proposed change regarding number of rods and/ or tip ups by up to four in the winter fishery for rainbow trout, chain pickerel, yellow perch, and white perch. He explained the process involving the other maritime provinces and that this was a maritime fishing regulation and it takes time to put it through. There were no comments on this issue and Jason informed everyone that we will go ahead and work towards this initiative.

Jason explained the proposed change for the Medway River, Queens County. From the 103 highway bridge upstream to, but not including Ponhook Lake or tributaries: change to a single hook lure or artificial fly only from April 1<sup>st</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup> to make it the same as the DFO regulation at Harmony Bridge. Dave Dagely objected to this change stating that there would be a major impact on the brook trout fishery. He stated that this regulation was being proposed to protect Atlantic Salmon even though there was not an Atlantic Salmon fishery on this river. He suggested that there should be more enforcement in the areas of the river that slink salmon seem to be illegally targeted and that more enforcement would fix the problem. Darrell Tingley agreed with the proposed regulation change suggesting that slink salmon can be caught everywhere on the Medway River and that a regulation change would be more effective in protecting illegally targeted slink salmon. He said that slinks can be more successfully released on fly and single hook lure than a hook with bait that gets swallowed deep by fish.

Darrell Tingley mentioned that the Mersey River Salmon Association wanted to put two lime dosers on the Medway river and it would be all for not if this proposed regulation was not accepted. Jason LeBlanc mentioned that West River in Pictou County benefited from similar regulation changes but that it may not be suitable for the Medway River. Dave Dagely asked again why we were proposing regulations changes to manage Atlantic Salmon when there is no salmon fishery.

### **2008 General & Salmon Licence Sales**

Jason LeBlanc reviewed the 2008 General and Salmon fishing license sales. General fishing licence sales were up from 2007 at 57,618 licences sold, while salmon licences were down slightly at 2,026 licences sold in 2008. Both General and salmon licences sales have been fairly

consistent over the past five years. There was a suggestion from the crowd; we could boost license sales by spending more money on the Atlantic Salmon Enhancement program. Norway spends 20 million on salmon fishery. For every dollar they spend, they get four back.

## **Review of 2008 Activities and Preview of 2009 Field Activities**

### **Coldwater Unit**

Jason LeBlanc reviewed the results from current and past studies on brook trout populations in lakes in Nova Scotia. Fisheries in Nova Scotia lakes are diverse and understanding factors that influence fish populations is a challenge. Large differences among trout populations are found across Nova Scotia, CB highland Lakes tend to be inhabited by many small trout whereas in mainland lakes growth is rapid and trout obtain larger sizes. Important parameters that relate to size of trout are the level of crowding in the populations and the presence of competitors species such as perch, eel, and white sucker. The importance of competitors is one of the main reasons that our Department is very concerned about the spread of Invasives such as pickerel and smallmouth bass and the impact on our trout resource.

Jason reviewed Special Trout Management Area program. West River Antigonish and River Denys are two important systems that support a large sea run trout fishery. Past studies include angler creel surveys and sampling with live trap nets. Data were preliminary and analysis will be completed after the 2009 field season. Harvest and population estimates have been calculated. Assessments will continue in the West River of Antigonish in 2010. Plans are to reassess River Denys in 2012 or 2013.

Jason described the Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative (FFRC). The objective of the FRCC is to partner with other government departments and universities to assist in the collection of data that is relevant to inland fisheries management objectives. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture will provide \$30,000 annually to support the FFRC. Applications are available online at [gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/](http://gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/)

### **Warmwater Unit**

Jason LeBlanc reviewed the 2009 field activities for the warm water species section including the first annual Inland Fisheries smallmouth bass tournament and workshop. The purposes of the event were to: promote bass fishing in Nova Scotia, increase awareness of responsible bass fishing, provide a forum for organized bass anglers to develop connections with those who don't usually fish smallmouth bass, provide an opportunity for non-bass anglers to learn from those who have experience, and finally to utilize a workshop format to discuss topics relevant to bass management in Nova Scotia.

Preliminary data for size of young of the year (YOY) bass was presented. The project is being developed to document the average size of YOY bass heading into their first winter as it is thought that they need to attain a critical size (approximately 50 mm) to survive. Early analysis suggests there are differences between lakes and between regions. The project will continue in 2010.

We were asked if our department supported the establishment of new bass lakes. Jason replied that our department does not encourage or support new bass lakes. Jason also added that bass angling clubs do not support this either.

Somebody asked if Cannon Lake or Turtle Lake had bass. Jason replied that we had been there

in 2008 and did not find any.

## **Extension**

### **Atlantic Salmon Enhancement**

Tara Marshall provided an update from the Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program, Sportfish Habitat Fund and the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation. New salmon stocking programs were initiated in the Waugh's River, and the Baddeck and Middle Rivers in Cape Breton, while efforts on the Margaree, St. Francis Harbour and Mabou River continue. The salmon stocking program was concluded on the West River (Pictou) and the River Pjhilip. Five rivers (West River (Pictou), River Philip, Mabou River, St. Francis Harbour River and the Margaree River) were stocked with 296,000 salmon fry, parr and smolt in the spring and fall of 2009. A total of 365,000 eggs were collected from 84 wild adult Atlantic salmon broodstock from five rivers in September and October, 2009.

The Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund raised \$242,000 in 2008 resulting in 22 volunteer groups receiving funding to work on 45 watercourses. 85,000 square meters of fish habitat was restored and 73,000 square meters of riparian habitat was protected. The liming project in the West River Sheet Harbour also received funding. Since its inception in 2005, the Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund has contributed \$1.1 million dollars to fish habitat restoration projects across Nova Scotia. Matching cash and in-kind contributions have totalled \$2.4 million for a grand total of \$3.5 million.

Tara provided an update on the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund explaining the Provincial Advisory Committee role and a list of eligible project types. A disbursement of \$52,800 was allocated to each province in 2009. Seventeen project proposals were received for Nova Scotia, of which six were funded. The amount of funds available in subsequent years should be greater and will depend on the investment income from the Fund. A call for proposals and the application process began November 1, 2009 and will close December 18, 2009. The ASCF website is: <http://www.ascf-fcsa.ca/index-en.html>.

An angler asked if Southern Upland rivers would ever be considered for our salmon enhancement program. Jason replied that it was not likely because the rivers do not meet the criteria required for selection.

### **Promotion and Development**

Tara Marshall reviewed the 33 L2F (*Learn to Fish*) events that took place through the province in 2009. The program was held in schools, youth clubs such as Big Brothers and Sisters, recreation camps and cub packs. Tara explained how the program has grown from 60 students in 2006 to just under 1000 students taking part this year. This past summer and fall Tara trained 2 groups to deliver the L2F program in their area. Tara mentioned that she still has one group left to train in the program. Tara also thanked all the sponsors and volunteer organizations who supported L2F.

Tara reviewed Nova Scotia's first FUN (*Families United with Nature*) events. She explained that this initiative resulted from other programs such as BOW and L2F. FUN provides families the opportunities to learn outdoor recreational activities together. The first event was held this summer in Digby and the hosts were the Digby East Fish and Game Association. Families signed up and participated in the fishing program and an introduction to camping. The second FUN event

was held at Murphy Lake, with seniors from Dykland Lodge.

Tara explained the very successful fall 2009 Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) program at Mount Traber Camp in Musquodoboit. She also mentioned the upcoming winter BOW program will be held February 19-2, 2010 at the Gaelic College in St. Ann's, Cape Breton. Tara also reminded those present of the upcoming winter Free Sportfishing Weekend on February 20-21, 2010.

Tara also reminded anglers about the 2009 Fishin' Nova Scotia Photo Contest and showed some of the winning photos from 2008. Contest details and entry forms are available online at [www.gov.ns/fish/sportfishing/photocontest](http://www.gov.ns/fish/sportfishing/photocontest). Entries must be received by December 31, 2009. Tara said the Department will be introducing a "Kids Art Contest" this spring.

## **Hatchery Report**

### **Fall Stocking**

Mike McNeil reviewed the fall stocking program for RFAC 4. Mike was asked if there were any plans to stock speckled trout in the area instead of sea run trout. Mike replied there was not because there hardly any lakes left in the area that were suitable because of illegally introduced species. Somebody asked if we stocked trout in Kej National Park. Mike said no and we did not have authority to do so.

### **2008 Enforcement Summary**

Mike McNeil indicated that charges had been laid against individuals that had exceeded their bag limits at Christopher Lake and St. Croix Pond.