

***Area 3 Halifax and Lunenburg Counties***

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**Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council  
Minutes of the 2010 Fall RFAC Meeting**

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The RFAC meeting for Area 3 was held on November 2, 2010 at the Park Plaza Hotel/ Ramada Plaza (Mosher Room) Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture staff, there were 26 people in attendance. John MacMillan, Inland Fisheries Division chaired the meeting; other staff included Jason LeBlanc, Al McNeill, Anthony Heggelin, Don MacLean, Mike MacNeil, and Tara Marshall. Greg Stevens (DFO) and Chris MacLean (DNR) were also present. The meeting began at 7:05 pm with a brief introduction of those present, and a review of the agenda by the Chair. Carl Purcell was added to the agenda to talk about Atlantic salmon. Ron Seney asked to be added to the agenda to talk about a river watch on the LaHave River. Two Guest speakers, Edmund Halfyard, pH D candidate, Dalhousie University and Dr. Sean Mitchell, St. Francis Xavier University were introduced. Al gave an update on our mailing list. We are going to update our list and start sending out minutes by email unless you request them by mail.

**Proposed Regulation Changes for 2010**

Al McNeill reviewed the 2010 regulation changes from page 3 in the Angler's Handbook. Regulation changes for 2010 included Round and Lewis Lakes, Halifax County, are now open all year for rainbow trout, white and yellow perch.

Al also reviewed the Proposed changes for 2011. Proposed regulation changes for 2011 in RFAC 3 included reviewing High Harvest regulations for smallmouth bass and reducing the bag limit for rainbow trout to two per day from September 1 through March 31. Al noted that Jason LeBlanc will discuss the high harvest regulations for smallmouth bass and the proposed increased bag limit for bass under the Warmwater Fisheries update.

Al asked if there were any objections to the proposed province-wide reduction to the bag limit for rainbow trout from 5 to 2 during the period September 1 through March 31 to spread out the catch of stocked rainbow trout. There were no objections. Ron Seney supported the reduced bag limit for rainbow trout to two.

There were some questions and concerns about regulations in other RFACs. Somebody asked if the 6 AM start time on the Margaree River would be applied to mainland rivers? Al answered no. Barrie Rennick opposed an early catch and release Atlantic salmon fishery on River Phillip. Regarding this proposed fishery, Carl Purcell noted the group which presented the proposal for the West River Antigonish may like to change the wording in the proposal. Al said that any organization which would like to change or withdraw a proposal should contact the agency responsible for implementing the proposal - in this case DFO as it related to a change in the salmon season.

Walter Regan from the Sackville River Association said that people are illegally fishing for trout and salmon in the Sackville River and say they are fishing for smallmouth bass in

October. He suggested closing all angling on the river in October or closing all angling on the river and streams in October , but keeping the lakes open.

### **Licencing**

Al McNeill discussed progress the Department has made on a number of licencing issues that have been raised in past RFAC meetings as well as some concerns brought forth by the Nova Scotia Salmon Association. These included regulation changes to reduce what has been termed “dirty fisheries”; that is anglers fishing intentionally for a species during the closed season for that species under the guise of angling for another species which has an open season. Al said the problem still exists but the Department is trying to find solutions to trouble spots without closing the entire season.

Other licencing issues were: difficulties in purchasing a licence from a vendor late in the season, under-reporting of catch and effort (poor returns for General and salmon licence stubs), and being able to purchase a fishing licence on-line.

Al provided a brief over view of the current state of electronic licencing and reporting. The Department has been working with the Departments of Natural Resources and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to build an electronic licencing system for roll out in 2012. Al also mentioned a mail-out survey of Sportfishing in Canada will be conducted in January, 2011 and we will be mailing questionnaires to 2800 anglers from Nova Scotia and abroad. Please respond if you receive a survey questionnaire.

### **Hatchery Report: Fall Stocking**

Mike MacNeil gave a brief overview of the provinces hatchery programs and reviewed the fall stocking program for RFA 3. He also noted that in 2010 and 2011 rainbow trout stocking will include sterile triploid fish which have the potential to grow larger and faster than is normally the case. All rainbow trout currently distributed are all-female stock. Mike also said volunteers adipose clipped 50,000 sea trout at the McGowan Lake Fish Hatchery. They were later released.

### **Review of 2010 Field Activities**

#### **Coldwater Unit**

John MacMillan provided an overview of research activities for 2010. River Denys is a Special Trout Management Area and the opening of the fishing season was delayed to 15 May. As a result of the increased popularity of this fishery, angler activity has increased dramatically and resulted in a greater harvest compared to 2008. As a result, additional measures will be considered to reduce harvest in future to address the increase in effort (angler hours) and subsequent harvest. John thanked all the volunteers for their assistance during mark-recapture and creel survey projects. John also thanked the Departments of Natural Resources and Fisheries and Oceans enforcement staff for an increase in activity.

Additional surveys on lakes in the Cape Breton Highlands have indicated consistent results with previous studies. Highland lakes tend to produce large numbers of small trout and this

is believed to be the result of overcrowded conditions leading to stunted populations. Opportunities exist to expand the number of lakes included in the winter trout season in the Cape Breton Highlands.

Important factors that influence trout production in lakes include water quality (pH), overfishing, and the presence of competitor species. Large differences among trout populations are found across Nova Scotia. For example, habitat in mainland lakes is influenced by more factors that reduce the number in the trout population compared to habitat in Cape Breton Highland lakes. In mainland lakes, the level of crowding in trout populations is low and trout growth tends to be more rapid and trout can obtain large sizes. Brook trout are poor competitors against other fish species such as perch, smallmouth bass, and chain pickerel. Where heavy competition exists, the trout population can be minimal or absent. For this reason we are very concerned with the rapid rate at which invasive smallmouth bass and chain pickerel are being illegally introduced into lakes across the province. Jason LeBlanc and Edmund Halfyard, will elaborate on this issue and initiatives to address concerns that relate to invasive species.

John provided an overview of the Nova Scotia Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative. The results of one FFRC project is being presented tonight by Dr. Sean Mitchell, St FX University. Sean Mitchell has been assessing the impacts of chain pickerel on native fish populations.

Ken Nickerson suggested that we try and reduce or eradicate yellow perch in the Woodens River by sterilization or opening a year round fishery for yellow perch.

## **Warmwater Unit**

Jason LeBlanc discussed issues surrounding aquatic invasive species in Nova Scotia. There are seven key pathways for introduction or spread in Canada and understanding these primary pathways is important for taking effective action and minimizing the effects of invasive species. They are: (1) shipping, (2) recreational and commercial boating, (3) use of live bait, (4) aquarium and water garden trade, (5) live food fish (6) unauthorized introductions and (7) canals and water diversions. Of these, unauthorized introductions is the most problematic in Nova Scotia followed by recreational and commercial boating and the use of live bait. Aquatic invasive species issues are extremely complex, biologically, socially and economically. They involve a wide variety of leadership, coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, all levels of government, many industry sectors (ex. sportfishing organizations) and non-government organizations. Jason outlined the Canadian Action Plan to Address the Threats of Aquatic Invasive Species which can be found at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/enviro/ais-eae/index-eng.htm>. There are many aspects of this plan that could be implemented in Nova Scotia. The Department is currently involved in many of these and will look at how best to use them to address issues specific to Nova Scotia such as outreach and education and rapid response frameworks. Jason also indicated that regulation changes and amendments to the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act would be considered to better address issues in Nova Scotia.

Jason also discussed the rationale for revoking the high harvest regulations for smallmouth bass. In most areas there were not accomplishing the desired effect which was reducing abundance and consequently increasing overall size of the bass remaining.

There was a question about the proposed increase in the bag limit for smallmouth bass in some areas to twenty-five/day. Jason responded that in many cases, increased harvest would be ineffective in controlling smallmouth bass numbers but suggested that it could slow down their establishment in newly populated lakes where reproduction has not yet occurred. Larry Shortt suggested a catch and kill regulation on all new smallmouth bass lakes because other provinces do it.

Somebody asked how new legislation will affect people that sell bait? Jason replied that it shouldn't. You can continue to sell bait of species that are legal. The intent of the new legislation is to stop the transfer of live fish intended for illegal introductions. Jason said we are focusing on live transfers for now and not bait because we consider the bucket brigade to be more a more likely vector for introduction.

### **Management Options for non-native fish - Eddie Halfyard**

Eddy Halfyard presented "Options for containment, control, and eradication of unwanted fish". His presentation examined options and considered the effectiveness, applications, and potential drawbacks of containment, control, and eradication of unwanted fish. Eddy made it clear that his presentation was not an assessment of whether action should be taken or not. Options presented were do nothing, containment, control, and eradication. Containment prevents further dispersal but does not address impacts in a colonized ecosystem. Containment can be achieved with physical (screens, nets, and weirs) and behavioral (electric, acoustic, bubble, and light based) barriers. Eddy said that physical barriers are effective but are high maintenance. Physical barriers are largely ineffective. Eddy summed up barriers; they slow the spread of unwanted fish but usually don't stop them.

Control and eradication often deploy similar technologies but differ in intensity and duration of effort. Control reduces abundance of the target species and negative impacts on native species and eradication eliminates the target fish species and impacts on native species. There are four different techniques for control/eradication: mechanical, biological, chemical, and environmental. Mechanical methods include electrofishing, netting, trapping, angling, and explosives. Chemical methods include using Rotenone and Antimycin. Biological methods include the introduction of predatory organisms. Environmental includes water level manipulation or de-watering. The biology and ecology of the target species must be understood for control and eradication methods to be effective. There are many methods for control; they are not suitable for all species and situations. Eddy said that many authors suggest that de-watering and piscicides are the most effective methods for eradication. Paired technologies along with high intensity and long duration programs in confined or isolated treatment areas seem to be most successful. Eddy estimated that it would cost \$30 million just for Rotenone to treat Lake Ainslie in Inverness County.

Eddy was asked if triploid rainbow trout could reduce the abundance of yellow perch in the Woodens River. He answered that it could work.

## **Chain Pickerel in the East River Watershed - Sean Mitchell**

Dr. Sean Mitchell also presented a talk entitled “Chain Pickerel Abundance and Distribution in the East River, Pictou”. Seans work was also supported by the Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative with assistance from Jason LeBlanc and Anthony Heggelin. The purpose of Seans Study is to determine the distribution of chain pickerel in East River Pictou, assess the impact of pickerel on lake fish communities, and document the basic biological characteristics in two lakes in which they are known to be established. Sean found that in lakes where chain pickerel had become established, only chain pickerel and larger white suckers were found. In lakes where chain pickerel were not found, at least three or four fish species were present including trout, brown bullheads, suckers, and shiners or other minnows. Sean conclude that pickerel both simplify fish communities by eliminating other species and reduce overall fish biomass. Thus pickerel are affecting the whole lake ecosystem and not just sportfish, and any restoration efforts to repopulate lakes from which pickerel had been removed would require more than just stocking trout back to the lake.

There was a question about how chain pickerel move from lake to lake. Sean answered it was likely the bucket brigade in the East River system due to lengthy migrations pickerel would have to make. Pickerel are poor swimmers. One angler said he finds that after pickerel are introduced into a lake their population explodes, they eat everything, their population crashes, and you eventually find some larger individuals of other species present in the lake.

## **Extension**

### **Atlantic Salmon Enhancement**

Al McNeill gave a report of the salmon stocking and broodstock collection activities from 2010. Approximately 45,000 smolt, 35,600 fry/eggs, and 172,000 salmon parr were stocked in spring and fall, 2010 into five rivers - the Waughs, St. Francis Harbour, Margaree, Middle and Baddeck rivers. Broodstock collections in the fall are expected to yield close to 300,000 salmon eggs for stocking out at various stages in 2011.

The Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund received allocations for \$266,581 in 2010, based on 2009 revenues. Amy Weston provided Al with some slides from the Adopt-a-Stream program. Twenty-four community groups were involved in 2011. Total funds were \$291,600 which included \$100,000 in funding from the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission. Amy organised the second annual Adopt-a-Stream Workshop in Truro in April which allowed many groups from around the province to network and share ideas.

Walter Regan commented that Adopt-a-Stream is a great program and that a new Adopt-a-Stream website will be online in November.

Al also provided the names of the six groups which qualified for the 2010 Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund for Nova Scotia and mentioned that the 2011 Call for Proposals was now open. Interested groups can visit the website: [www.salmonconservation.ca](http://www.salmonconservation.ca) for details.

## **Promotion and Development**

**Tara Marshall**

Tara reviewed the L2F (Learn to Fish) programs in this RFA. Thirty-eight L2F's were delivered province wide from staff and volunteer instructors. Tara explained the fisheries education programs completed in the past summer with recreation camps and summer science camps (Shelburne/Whycocomagh). She also provided an update of the Fall BOW (Becoming an Outdoors Woman) program. Fall BOW was held at Mount Traber Camp, in Cooks Brook, Halifax County. Fisheries classes consisted of a fly tying workshop, 2 fly fishing classes, 2 trout fishing classes and a tasty fish class. Tara thanked the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, Trout Nova Scotia and Canadian Association of Smallmouth Anglers for contributing to the Fall BOW scholarship foundation.

Tara provided an update on the FUN (Families United with Nature) program. One event was held in 2010 with seniors and their families at Murphy Lake, Mount Uniacke. Tara explained a variety of new initiatives for sportfishing development. They are as follows: two more groups trained for delivery L2F in their area, translation of L2F into French, partnership with DNR (Education Centre) to deliver fishing workshops in the parks/campgrounds as part of the Parks Education Program, partnership with DNR (Parks Division) to have fishing equipment and licenses available for visitors, and a partnership with Tourism to have more updated sportfishing information at the 10 Visitor Information Centres (VIC's) across the province.

### **Discussion/Agenda Items from the Floor**

Carl Purcell thanked Tara Marshall and Inland Fisheries for reaching kids and others with our promotional programs.

Carl raised two issues: 1) some anglers are fishing kelt salmon with a general fishing licence, and 2) some salmon anglers are fishing salmon for the entire season with a general licence and say they are fishing for trout. He made some suggestions. If a river is closed for conservation, there should be no fishing or retention of any species, or at least close salmon pools. We need more enforcement and current enforcement does not work because people say they are fishing for trout.

Barrie Rennick asked if anybody was charged for illegally fishing salmon on the St. Mary's River this year. Not as far as we know. He suggested that DFO do the same thing they did on the LaHave. DFO cleaned up the illegal salmon fishery in two weeks after they were informed. Barrie said DFO did a great job on enforcement.

Ken Nickerson requested that Inland Fisheries do something to the Woodens River System, bring it back to good fishing maybe with triploid rainbow trout.

Larry Shortt said that all of our minutes were not yet online for all RFACs. We replied that the applicable minutes would be posted before each meeting.

Someone asked to have the bait fishery removed on Wentzell's Lake because Atlantic salmon still use the lake.

Don Maclean confirmed there was an experimental bait fishery in Antigonish Harbour last year. Don said he would check about this year. There is concern because sea trout depend on the same food as the fishery is targeting.

Beth McGee suggested Inland Fisheries include more people in our decision making process. She said that many residents in the Woodens River area feel very badly about decisions we've made. Beth said we need to find more ways to include residents before decisions are made.

Anthony Bell asked if there had been any progress made on allowing more rods for the

winter ice fishery. Greg Stevens said no progress has been made but DFO is still talking about it. Anthony Bell suggested that all lakes that have pickerel or yellow perch lakes should be open for a winter fishery, except for lakes where Atlantic salmon are known to overwinter. He suggested high harvest perch lakes (eg Halfmile Lake in Timberlea).

Mike McNeil and Darryl Murrant were thanked for raising and stocking sea trout.

We were asked if we could get more staff. Don MacLean answered that there was no chance of that in the near future.

Somebody asked our position on Oat Hill Lake. We have a plan that addresses some concerns that Oat Hill Lake residents have. We have reduced the number of fish we stock.

Larry Shortt asked if lakes that have the new limit of 25 bass would also be open April 1<sup>st</sup> for angling. Jason LeBlanc replied yes.

The meeting Adjourned at 9:15 pm.