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

Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council Minutes of the 2010 Fall RFAC Meeting

The RFAC meeting for Area 4 was held on November 3, 2010 at the Rodd Colony Harbour Inn (Willow Room) in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture staff, there were 2 people in attendance. Al McNeill, Inland Fisheries Division chaired the meeting while sportfish development officer, Tara Marshall and fisheries technician, Reg Madden 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.

Proposed Regulation Changes for 2010

Al McNeill reviewed the 2010 regulation changes from page 3 in the Angler's Handbook. Al also reviewed the Proposed changes for 2011. Al discussed 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.

Licencing

Al McNeill discussed a number of licencing issues that have been raised in past RFAC. For example: 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 overview 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

Tara gave a brief overview of the provinces hatchery programs and reviewed the fall stocking program for RFA 4. Tara also noted that 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.

Review of 2010 Field Activities

Coldwater Unit

Reg Madden provided an overview of: Examining the Occurrence of Wild Rainbow Trout in the Bras d'Or Lakes, Nova Scotia: Using Scale Pattern Analysis to Differentiate Hatchery and Wild Populations. Rainbow trout, which are the second most popular sport fish in Nova Scotia were assessed to determine the contribution of wild rainbow trout to the angler catch. Wild juveniles from the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed were directly compared to unknown (angled) and known origin (hatchery) rainbow trout.

Rainbow trout reared under aquaculture conditions experience rapid growth resulting in morphological differences from wild juveniles. Mean length and weight at age 1+ of known origin wild and hatchery trout were 13.1 cm (29.5 g) and 27.6 cm (252.8 g), respectively. Scale analysis revealed hatchery samples had more circuli spaced farther apart. The Stepwise Logistic Regression Model used in this project classified 29% of the angled sample as wild origin suggesting that rainbow trout reproducing in the wild contribute significantly to the angler catch.

Reg also discussed that research has shown that densities of juvenile rainbow trout are currently far below those of native brook trout and Atlantic salmon. Compared to other invasive species such as smallmouth bass and chain pickerel, rainbow trout are believed to have minor influences on native species. For example the catch per unit effort (CPUE) of smallmouth bass in Lake Ainslie increased from 0.3 bass/h in 2003 to 1.63 bass/h in 2008 while brook trout decreased from 1.5 trout/h to 0.11 trout/h during the same time period. Stocking triploid (sterile) rainbow trout into the Bras d'Or Lakes has been initiated to conserve native species while maintaining this popular sport fishery. The full publication can be found at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports/maddenWT10V4.pdf>

Warmwater Unit

Al McNeill discussed issues surrounding aquatic invasive species in Nova Scotia. There are a number of ways for introduction or spread of invasives and understanding these pathways is important for taking effective action and minimizing the effects of invasive species. Of these, unauthorized introductions is the most problematic in Nova Scotia followed by recreational and commercial boating and the use of live bait. Al 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. Al also indicated that regulation changes and amendments to the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act would be considered to better address issues in Nova Scotia.

Al 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. Al explained the reason for the proposed increase in the bag limit for smallmouth bass in some areas to twenty-five/day. He said 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.

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 Waughes, 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.

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 for details.

Education/Outreach

Tara reviewed the L2F (Learn to Fish) Programs delivered in RFAC 4. There were a total of 6 events held in this area. Two in Shelburne, one in Queens, two in Yarmouth and one in Digby. Tara also reviewed the FUN and BOW program.

Discussion/Agenda Items from the floor

There was some discussion regarding anglers not coming out to participate in local fisheries meetings. There used to be 30 or more anglers present at RFAC meetings in Yarmouth. The issue seems to be that there is not a lot of initiatives going on from Inland Fisheries in the area, and therefore not much interest.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30