
Area 4: Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne and Queens Counties

Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council Minutes 2008 Spring RFAC Meeting

The RFAC meeting for Area 4 was held on March 18, 2008 at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Office in Digby, Nova Scotia. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture staff, there were 6 people in attendance. Mike McNeil chaired the meeting while John MacMillan, Jason LeBlanc, Tara Marshall, and Alan McNeill from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture were also present. Kevin Juteau with Department of Fisheries and Oceans was present while Jason Potter and Kevin Totten from NSDNR 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.

Sportfishing Regulation Changes for 2008

Mike McNeill reviewed the 2008 regulation changes from Page 4 in the Angler's Handbook. The natural bait prohibition during the spawning season for smallmouth bass has been removed across the Province. The slot limit for bass has been replaced by a maximum length limit of 35 cm (13.8 in.) for trophy bass lakes in RFA4. The maximum length limit for high harvest lakes is now 30cm (11.8 in). Ogden, Parr and Petes Lakes have been included as trophy fisheries under the Special Smallmouth Bass Management Areas, while high harvest bass fisheries have been created in Raynards and Vaughn Lakes, Yarmouth County (page 28 in the Anglers Handbook). Lake George in Shelburne County is now open all year for Chain Pickerel, White perch and yellow perch.

Across the Province, various regulations have been used to improve fisheries in Special Management Areas. Anglers have raised concerns regarding the complexity of some of these regulations. The Inland Fisheries Division intends to implement minor changes to regulations to improve consistency among specially managed fisheries over the next three years.

2007 General & Salmon Licence Sales

Mike McNeil reviewed the 2007 General and Salmon fishing license sales.

Preview of 2008 Field Activities Coldwater Unit

John MacMillan reviewed the results from Tangier Grand Wilderness Area Study and Mooseland Creel Data. Results indicated that exploitation did not seem to have detectable impact on the size and age structure of the catch. Catch and release rates were 25% greater compared to 30 years ago. In the three intensively studied Tangier lakes, crowding or trout population density was related to growth rate and size structure of the trout population.

John also reviewed the results of several years of creel data from the South River of Antigonish that indicated a dramatic increase in the number and size of trout caught since establishment of the West River of Antigonish Special Trout Management Area. Increased enforcement in this area and other Special Trout Management areas have benefited trout fisheries. Detailed reports are available on the Departmental website : <http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports/>

John 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. Funds will cover 50% of total project cost and the research projects will be designed to address concerns related to the management of fisheries including issues raised at RFAC meetings. A Terms of Reference for the FFRC will be developed in 2008.

John also provided a preview of the upcoming field season highlighting his plans for work in the Cape Breton Highlands, River Denys, and Antigonish Harbour.

Warmwater Unit

Jason LeBlanc reviewed the smallmouth bass nesting project and went over some results from fieldwork in Lake Ainslie in 2007. Jason previewed his fieldwork plans focussing on the joint project with Waycobah First Nations on smallmouth bass nesting activity in Lake Ainslie, and some smaller projects (white perch, lake whitefish and goldfish).

There was a discussion about predation on bass fry. And a comment on the lake level regulation by Nova Scotia Power and the effect that has on bass populations. Jason explained the Department works closely with NSP to minimize the impacts of drawdowns and power production on water levels. There was a question about a plan by NSP to generate power each way at the Annapolis River Tidal power plant, and how it may affect striped bass. Kevin Juteau said Mike MacKay or Tom Foley of NSP would be able to answer these questions.

Extension

Atlantic Salmon Enhancement

Al McNeill provided an update from the Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program, Sportfish Habitat Fund and the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation. Four rivers were stocked with 80,000 unfed salmon fry or parr in the spring and fall of 2007. Fifty-nine adult Atlantic salmon were collected for broodstock in October, 2007. The Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund raised \$245,000 in 2007 resulting in 20 volunteer groups receiving funding to work on over 50 watercourses. The liming project in the West River Sheet Harbour and two angler access projects were also funded. Al also provided an update on the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund explaining the Provincial Advisory Committee role and a list of eligible project types. A provisional disbursement of \$50,000 will be made available to each province in 2008 to initiate the program. 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 will be forthcoming from the Foundation soon. The ASCF website is: <http://www.ascf-fcsa.ca/index-en.html>.

Promotion and Development

Tara Marshall reviewed the winter Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) program and explained the Winter Sportfishing Weekend.

The weather cooperated for winter BOW and smelt fishing was a big hit thanks to our guide Gordie

MacInnon and all the other volunteers who helped make the weekend a success. The Fall BOW for 2008 will be held at the Gaelic College in At. Anns, Sept 19 - 21. In response to tremendous interest, a new program similar to BOW involving the entire family is in the planning process. The Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters (NSFAH) and their partners in government want to make that same kind of experience available to the whole family.

Tara also talked about the upcoming Nova Scotia Sportfishing Weekend in June 7 and 8 and the L2F (Learn to Fish) program. Twenty-eight L2F events and 4 summer nature camps are planned for 2008 and 2009 is already booked. The Inland Fisheries division is exploring ways to meet the increased demand for L2F. Tara has been invited by DNR to attend upcoming Hunter Education Course meetings across the province to see if any of the Hunter Ed. Instructors may be interested in helping out with the classroom or outdoor component or both of our Learn to Fish program.

Trout Fecundity Study

John MacMillan gave a presentation on the Trout Fecundity Project. Fecundity is the number of eggs produced by a female and is important information that will be used to develop a trout production model for Nova Scotia. Larger females produced more and larger eggs. For example, a one year old mature trout at a length of 11cm would produce about 100 eggs while a 30 cm, three-year-old will produce about 850 eggs. Brown trout matured at an older and larger size than brook trout. A detailed report is available on the Departmental website: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports/>.

Hatchery Report Spring Stocking

Mike McNeil reviewed the spring stocking program for RFA 4.

Sportfish Survey Results

Al McNeill reviewed some of the highlights from the 2005 Survey of Sportfishing in Nova Scotia. This is the seventh in a series of mail-out angler surveys conducted across Canada. In 2005 over 63,000 anglers spent a total of \$53 million dollars on their sport. The survey highlights catches, species preferences, angler opinions on regulations, motivations and expenditures.

2007 Enforcement Summary

Mike McNeil reviewed the 2007 Enforcement Summary provided by the NSDNR. In 2007, a total of 4,418 anglers were contacted by Conservation Officers resulting in 51 warnings and 31 charges.

There was a discussion about enforcement and the state of trout resource in this area. There is still a large effort directed to trout in the Spring, otherwise it is mostly bass fishing. The Shelburne River still has good trout angling in the Spring. Jason Potter expressed concern over the size limit of trout and thought over-harvesting is still a concern. Kevin Juteau indicated they (DFO) would like to know when lakes are stocked so they could have a greater enforcement presence. Mike McNeill said he usually faxes the offices where lakes are stocked. It was suggested that for DNR, Mike fax the list to Shubie and have the DNR coordinators distribute the information to the district offices.

There was discussion about the striped bass in the Annapolis River. One angler suggested a gear

restriction to single barbless hook catch & release for Digby Gut and the Annapolis River. Kevin Juteau suggested that if anglers wanted to form a striped bass association they should contact Greg Stevens, with Fishery Management, DFO in Dartmouth.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25. NSDAF wishes to thank Kevin Juteau for providing the board room at the DFO office to hold the RFAC meeting on short notice.