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Invasive Species Liaison

End of Contract Report

Submitted July 26, 2008

Duration: 11 weeks

Dates: May 12, 2008 – July 26, 2008

**Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council
Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve**

1.0 Overview

Many are aware of the importance water and water-based recreational activities have in the Parry Sound area, making the maintenance of water ecosystem health crucial on an aesthetic as well as economical level. Due to the high level of traffic during the summer season, it is essential that a public awareness program be launched and followed-up in the area, since most invading species are spread through human activities. For this reason, the Invading Species Awareness Program in the Parry Sound District had a strong focus on public education and involvement, creating attention within the community, and developing creative methods to capture public interest. This was done in a variety of ways which will be outlined in the following report, with the final result being that the program influenced a broad spectrum of people and organizations throughout its 11-week duration.

1.1 Organization of Time



The program being in its second year, less time was required for general organization, though several weeks were still needed to fully establish the program and reconnect with contacts in addition to further building the database and reaching out to new groups and organizations in the area. As a base for the program, the town of Parry Sound was targeted and many events were attended here with high levels of interest, though an effort was made to establish and maintain contact in many other towns and areas in the district,

both directly (involving immediate communication on behalf of the program) and indirectly (via Cottage Associations, media contacts, and volunteers). A great deal of time was spent in the community, communicating program objectives and disseminating information. Time was also devoted to administrative work, such as recording data, communication efforts, creation of documents, scheduling of events, and research.

1.2 Overview of Major Events attended and/or hosted

- June 6-12 – Public School Presentations
- June 14 – Parry Sound Dragon Boat Festival
- June 16 – Dragon Boat Races
- June 23 – Pointe Au Baril Marine Patrol Unit spring training
- June 26 – EGBSC Workshop
- June 29 – Orrville Canada Day celebrations
- July 1 – Parry Sound Canada Day celebrations
- July 5 – Parry Sound Kite Festival
- July 8 – Wasauksing Youth Summer Camp
- July 17 – SCCY Youth Education Day

July 18 – Rosseau Farmer’s Market

July 23 – Beach Education Day & Native Plant Workshop

Note: Additional dates and events are mentioned on individual biweekly reports, including scheduled AGMs and OCA meetings.

2.0 Training

Formal training was given by the OFAH for all summer students on June 23-24. New ideas were presented and new information brought to light as the program was explored in detail. This training is useful in allowing for establishment of contacts and communication of ideas among students, which is a valuable process when developing public education programs. Certain protocol was updated and documentation modified as a result. For the Parry Sound program, this would have been useful earlier in the program development, but was an important aspect nevertheless.

3.0 Public Outreach Activities



Activities and material dissemination have proved the most successful way of reaching large groups with maximum effectiveness in the Parry Sound District. The general awareness of the summer population with respect to invading species is not incredibly high, though there is a considerable amount of interest. Environmental groups and Cottage Associations were quite involved and certainly

aware of certain risks and issues pertaining to invading species, though the general public showed less knowledge and therefore had to be approached at a more basic level. That said, public activities allowed for the flexibility needed when addressing groups of varying levels of interest and awareness, as a range of information and material could be accessed and distributed, and certain points presented in ways that both capture attention and create a foundation for future inquiry. The size and breadth of the district made it a challenge to communicate thoroughly, though attending large events certainly enabled direct exchange with members of the public not involved in interest groups. This is particularly important since these are people taking advantage of the area’s waterfront location and the activities provided here, making it especially important to create awareness and spread the message of prevention and conservation.

3.1 Mail

Packages including a diverse array of material were again distributed to parks, shops, and organizations, with a final count of over 50 distributed. As result, several new contacts were established, and many made aware of certain threats pose to Georgian Bay biodiversity. During this program, it was found that mail is an effective method for information distribution, though not nearly as useful as electronic distribution, and nowhere near as effective as direct person-to-person communication. In the Parry Sound district, mail of material was quite useful when used to distribute information to groups which had expressed interest previously, but should not be relied upon as a primary method of peaking individual interest.

3.2 Presentations



Approximately 30 public presentations were delivered throughout the summer, the audience among these being school children and teachers, youth groups, cottage or conservation associations, and interested groups. Information was made available at about 15 public events, as well as an activity organized in partnership with Service Canada Centre for Youth (SCCY), to peak interest and involve the public in the Invading Species Awareness program (this is discussed further in section 3.4).

3.3 Table of Presentation/ Information Table Details

DATE	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
May 22	Purple Loosestrife Monitoring	Parry Sound	Presentation/information (informal)
June 6-12	Public School Presentations	5 area public schools, grades 1-8	Educational games/ppt/video
June 14	Dragon Boat Festival	Parry Sound	Information booth
June 21	Six Mile Lake AGM	Six Mile Lake Provincial Park	Presentation/information
June 23	Pointe Au Baril Marine Patrol Unit spring training	Ojibway Island	Presentation/information
June 24	OFAH Training	Peterborough	Presentation
June 26	EGBSC Workshop	Parry Sound	Information

June 27	Crayfish monitoring	Georgian Bay	Group info.
June 28	Orrville Canada Day celebrations	Orrville	Information
July 1	Parry Sound Canada Day celebrations	Parry Sound	Information
July 5	Parry Sound Kite Festival	Parry Sound	Information
July 8	Wasauksing Youth Summer Camp	Parry Island	Presentation/information
July 10	Y Children's Group	Parry Sound	Educational games
July 15	HR Youth BBQ	Parry Sound	Presentation
July 17	SCCY Youth Education Day	Parry Sound	Information booth
July 18	Rosseau Farmer's Market	Rosseau	Information booth
July 23	Beach Education Day & Native Plant Workshop	Parry Sound	Activities, information, games, presentation

Note: Listing of significant events only, not including meetings where no presentation was given or distribution of materials where no event was taking place.

3.4 Distribution of Information



Several boxes of material were distributed to local businesses, boat/recreation shops, and public locations (libraries, town offices, etc.) throughout the summer. Watch cards were the most effective way of developing interest and encouraging monitoring on public property in the Parry Sound Area. By identifying invading species in local water bodies prior to attending events, people were more interested and concerned about the impacts of these species and the

governmental efforts in terms of monitoring and control. For example, Spiny Water Flea is known to be in many lakes in Christie Township, and by highlighting this species at a festival in the area, residents were interested in learning about this species, and more likely to participate in monitoring efforts.

In addition to distribution of information manually, articles were also distributed to local papers and media with success, and a public event organized on July 23rd, 2008. The event involved a free barbeque (hosted by SCCY), native plant workshop, and invading species talk. The workshop involved the painting and potting of local plant species such as Blue Vervain, which was incredibly successful and stimulated public interest in invading species and local solutions. The “Beach Education Day” was held at Waubuno Public Beach, Parry Sound.

4.0 Monitoring Activities

Lake sampling was incredibly low due to the time frame of the program and the late arrival of sampling equipment, though volunteers which have shown interest in the remaining summer months will have access to the monitoring kit and be provided with very clear steps on performing lake monitoring on their own. This did not impact the success of the program however, as more interest was generated this year via public outreach and community events than in the previous year.

4.1 Identified Invaders

Round Goby spread north into the Twelve Mile Bay region was reported. Eurasian Watermilfoil and Spiny Water Flea continue to be reported in many local lakes, and campers along Georgian Bay coast have reported multiple sightings of Rusty Crayfish. A camper in Six Mile Lake Provincial Park reported sighting a Northern Snakehead in the lake, though confirmation is needed, and he has been provided with contact information and will provide the OFAH with evidence if the fish is spotted again. Additionally, Clasping-leaf pondweed has been confirmed in Stewart Lake, and is reportedly quite aggressive in the area. Throughout the summer there have been several reports of Purple Loosestrife occurring in low density. All individuals reporting invading species were encouraged to contact the OFAH with specific details and photo/physical evidence for identification.

5.0 Career-Related Experience



Certainly the development of a program demanding the use of creativity and independent thought greatly benefits any participant. Communication, networking, planning, and organization are among the many skills developed while participating in a program such as this, which is incredibly useful to any student pursuing studies in the fields of science and research. Among personal skill and experience, a sense of responsibility and passion for issues of environmental and public importance is

easily developed. Student participation in such programs is a fundamental piece of an effective education, formed by experience and research as much as by textbook studying, and is a wonderful way of “learning by doing”. The knowledge assimilated and information digested during such experiences are bound to form solid foundations for lifelong interest and activity in areas such as stewardship and conservation, and is a critical part of the establishment of effective government programs, for it prepares individuals for a future in related fields. The Invading Species Program provides this, and more, and expands beyond individual benefit.

6.0 Media Contacts

Beacon Star – Jack Tynan
North Star – Charlene Peck
Moose 103.3 FM
Parry Sound Town Office – April Heidman

7.0 Recommendations for Future Programs



Enforcement on a provincial level of certain rules and protocol would make the program much more successful. It was reported, for example, that government groups such as the OPP were entering lakes with potentially contaminated watercraft, which makes residents and property owners frustrated, and brings into question the principle of responsibility (if the government isn't taking precautions to prevent the spread of invaders, what good does the collective public effort

do?). After all, it takes only one person to transfer an invader from an infected water body. Ensuring all government representatives project an example worthy of following is a strong and important step, and avoids any hypocrisy. As a repetition of the previous year's report, use of a water craft would make sampling a certainty, though could in itself present problems. Ensuring students have immediate access to training, equipment, information, and data would get the program up and running much sooner, and allow for complete and thorough distribution of information.

APPENDIX A

1) Sample of articles published:
<http://www.parrysound.com/fun/1210955272/>
<http://www.parrysound.com/fun/1216993575/>
<http://www.parrysound.com/fun/1216993486/>