



Go Home Bay Walleye Spawning Investigation Report

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Executive Summary:

From one trap-net night of fishing effort and visual observations conducted during the night of April 22, 2009, we were unable to catch or observe a single walleye in the vicinity of Go Home Chutes. This, notwithstanding our netting location and conditions for observing fish were ideal. Also, we were aware that walleye spawning activities were underway at Moon River and if walleye were present in Go Home Bay they should be likewise engaged. We conclude no walleye are spawning at Go Home Chutes of eastern Georgian Bay.

1.0 Introduction:

The Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council in cooperation with various partners is planning to reintroduce a walleye population to the Go Home Bay area of eastern Georgian Bay.

The reintroduction plan basically comprises five steps or components:

1. Pre-treatment assessment to determine if there is a remnant or existing walleye population in this area.
2. Walleye spawning bed creation/enhancement work at Go Home Chutes
3. Re-introductory plantings of walleye fry and fingerlings originating from the closest Georgian Bay population (Moon River)
4. Post-treatment assessment to monitor progress in creating a self-sustaining walleye population
5. Regulatory review in light of assessment results; and if warranted regulatory changes.

This report represents the completion of step 1 above.

2.0 Methods:

We attempted to ascertain the presence and size of the walleye spawning population in Go Home Bay using two methods:

1. During the walleye spawning period, setting 6' trap-nets in the vicinity of Go Home Bay Chutes (Figure 1) to capture spawning walleye. Anecdotally, Go Home Chutes is reputed to have historically been a walleye spawning site. Although there is no record of this in Ministry of Natural Resources' files, Go Home Chutes provides the best spawning habitat for walleye in the area.

We also intended to set an additional 6' trap-net in the vicinity. However, we were unable to find any suitable netting site within 3 kilometres of Go Home Chutes due to steep near-shore contours. Consequently, a second net was not set.

Figure 1. Location of visual observations and 6' Trap-net adjacent to Go Home Chutes



2. During the walleye spawning period at night, we used high-intensity lights to visually spot spawning walleye. We searched the area at the mouth of Go Home Chutes and upstream to the first set of falls that would prevent further walleye migration.

3.0 Results:

3.1 Trap-net results:

We set April 22, 2009, at a time when we knew walleye spawning activities were underway at the Moon River (Bill McRobb, pers. comm.). Water temperature at the time was 7 deg. Celsius.

From one night of netting effort we captured: 6 rock bass, 3 common white sucker and 2 northern pike. No walleye were captured. Fork lengths of pike captured were 63.5 and 54.5 cm. Gametes were not apparent from either fish.

3.2 Visual (night-time) observations:

On the night of April 22nd, from dusk and for a period of approximately one hour thereafter, we searched the waters for spawning walleye in the vicinity of Go Home Chutes and upstream to the first barrier for fish passage (Figure 1). No walleye, nor any other fish species for that matter, were observed.

At this time, conditions for visual observations were ideal. There was no wind or rain to cause the water to be rippled and visibility into the water was excellent.

We viewed the upstream filter dam (Figure 1) and estimated less than a cubic metre per second of discharge from the dam to the downstream spawning site. This low volume of discharge did not impede visual observations.

4.0 Conclusion:

Although our netting and visual observations encompassed but a single night, we were thoroughly convinced there were no spawning walleye in the vicinity and further attempts to capture or view them would be futile. We were convinced of this because:

1. We knew the Moon River walleye population was actively engaged in spawning activities, consequently it was reasonable to believe walleye in the Go Home Bay area would likewise be spawning. Our netting site was ideal in terms of depth (6 feet) and close proximity to Go Home Chutes. If there were walleye spawning in the vicinity of Go Home Chutes they would have been highly vulnerable to capture in the trap-net. The fact that other species were caught, indicate the net was fully functional.
2. It is possible that a small remnant spawning population might elude capture in the trap-net. However, under ideal conditions, we thoroughly searched all possible walleye spawning locations from Go Home Chutes to the upstream falls. The absence of any walleye was to us persuasive evidence that none existed.

In light of the foregoing, we concluded no spawning walleye were in the vicinity of Go Home Chutes and ceased operations on the premise that further investigations were futile.