



# Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council

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## Media Update – 2010-02

(Submission to Lifestyles – May 2010)

### There's Life on the Moon!

The Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council (EGBSC) along with many other Georgian Bay partner organizations and Ministry of Natural Resources partners are working hard to ensure there's life on the Moon! That is – the Moon River and the "life" is of the piscatorial kind in the form of a healthy walleye population.

Rehabilitation of the Moon River walleye population has been a primary objective of the EGBSC since its inception in 2006. However, this project has much deeper roots with community stewardship going back to the 1990s when it was spearheaded by Bill McRobb and a group of local residents known as the Moon River Walleye Association (MRWA). Even deeper still are rehabilitation efforts dating back into the 1980s under the Ministry of Natural Resources Community Fisheries Involvement Program.

The program now spanning three decades points to the difficulties and challenges associated with fisheries rehabilitation. But, as EGBSC coordinator Eric McIntyre says: "We've still got a long way to go, but we are definitely seeing positive signs that things are improving and likely to continue to improve on the Moon."

This year's spawning population survey and egg collection has been completed. Bill McRobb, project leader for the EGBSC and also a member of the Moon River Walleye Association commented: "The remarkably warm weather we had this spring prompted us to start netting operations earlier than we ever have. We commenced operations more than two weeks ahead of a typical spawning run. Egg collecting began on April 8<sup>th</sup> and we had our target of 1 million eggs by April 13<sup>th</sup>; unbelievable!"

Insert photograph

**Parry Sound High School co-op student, Shawn Payerl - with a lunker walleye captured during the spring 2010 spawning population monitoring and egg collection project.**

Unfortunately Mr. McRobb also lamented some highly regrettable actions by individuals over the Easter long weekend: "On Easter Monday we arrived to see our net having been pulled to shore and all the fish gone. This was a heavy blow to our rehabilitation efforts as we undoubtedly lost a good number of prime spawning fish right at this critical time of renewal for the future. I can't tell you how devastating and disheartening this

was. So many volunteers and supporters have worked tirelessly for years to help bring this population back; to see this was heart-breaking.”

Council coordinator – Eric McIntyre added: “My first reaction was one of anger, but upon further reflection it just turned to sadness. The person or persons who did this have no sense of community; they have no love or respect for Mother Earth; they are poor in spirit. I really have a genuine degree of pity for them; they are lone wolves with no sense of being part of a community effort for the common good - it is a sad state of mind to be in.”

Despite this serious setback the Council retains its determination and optimism. Council chairperson Terry Crawford noted: “On the positive side however, our catch was up considerably this spring and we saw an encouraging wide size range of fish in the spawning population. Most promising were a number of small male walleye showing up for the first time. It’s a positive sign of successful reproduction and recruitment to the population.”

Another encouraging sign was the observation that walleye have readily adopted enhanced and newly created spawning areas constructed in 2008. Bill McRobb explained: “The spring run-off down the Moon River was not ideal this year. Flow volumes were way below normal, but they were at least consistent and the spawning habitat was always covered. We had no eggs left high-and-dry from fluctuating flow volumes. The low flow made it quite easy to spot spawning walleye using the new spawning areas we created for them. On the whole, environmental conditions for a successful hatch were pretty good.”

Mr. McRobb is also the manager of the community walleye hatchery located on his property at Moon River Cottages and operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources Community Fisheries Involvement Program. He further stated: “This year’s egg collection went very smoothly and we had no problem collecting our target of one million eggs.” A portion of these eggs are raised to the advanced summer fingerling stage and then stocked in the Moon River, but most are planted as emergent fry – just freshly hatched after about ten days incubation in the hatchery.

Insert photograph of Bill McRobb in front of hatchery jars

Caption: Bill McRobb with his brood of a million incubating walleye eggs collected in 2010.

Last year, over half a million fry and 5700 summer fingerlings were stocked in the Moon River. The EGBSC is looking to increase considerably the number of advanced fingerlings stocked this year and have contracted a private hatchery to help achieve this. Chairperson Terry Crawford noted: “Raising and purchasing walleye – especially from a private hatchery is expensive! We have received many generous donations from individuals and cottage associations who have been true partners in this rehabilitation effort. The Upper Great Lakes Management Unit and the local office of the Ministry of Natural Resources have also been very supportive financially and in terms of manpower. And, for the next two years the Canada – Ontario Agreement (COA) respecting the health of the Great Lakes will be a welcome source of revenue for our stocking program.” Mr. Crawford went on to say that rehabilitation efforts are not only being directed at the Moon River. The EGBSC is also working on similar projects at Tadenac Bay and Go Home Bay along the Georgian Bay coast.

Additional information about the EGBSC and the various projects they are working on is available on their website at [www.helpourfisheries.com](http://www.helpourfisheries.com).