



Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council

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Help on the Way for Moon River Walleye

The once renowned walleye fishery of the Moon River needs help. Ministry of Natural Resources data indicate in the late 1960s the population numbered around 30,000. Recent estimates (2004 and 2005) now place the number at historical lows - somewhere between 2 - 5,000 fish.

The Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council (EGBSC) in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources, have formulated a draft plan to rehabilitate the Moon River walleye fishery. Key action items in the plan focus on:

- Optimizing the flow regime in the Moon River during the spring freshet to improve walleye spawning success
- Enhancing walleye spawning habitat at Moon Falls on Georgian Bay
- Rehabilitative walleye plantings, and
- Continued monitoring and assessment of the population and fish community.

This spring's live capture, netting survey of the spawning population generated positive indicators that this population is "ripe for rehabilitation", said Eric McIntyre, the Stewardship Council coordinator. McIntyre noted: "We caught over 400 walleye, many of which were small and new recruits to the spawning population. We have a reasonable size spawning population to work with and we know some degree of successful reproduction and recruitment is occurring. We think we can increase reproduction, recruitment and the number of spawners substantially."

A component of the netting survey also entails the collection and fertilization of walleye eggs that are subsequently raised at the community hatchery at Moon River Cottages. Bill McRobb, the hatchery manager stated: "This was a bumper year for the egg collection. We essentially filled the hatchery and had a very successful hatch rate." Hatched walleye fry are returned to the waters of the Moon River. A small number of fry are further reared to the fingerling stage in the culture pond at Moon River Cottages and then released. McRobb has been diligently fulfilling his volunteer role as hatchery manager for the past decade.

McIntyre further noted: "The Moon River walleye population is the starting point for an ambitious agenda by the Stewardship Council to rehabilitate other walleye populations in south-eastern Georgian Bay. The Musquash River, Go Home River and McCrae Lake outlet are amongst those walleye populations that the Stewardship Council hope to improve in the near future.

The draft Moon River Walleye Rehabilitation Plan is currently being circulated for public comment. You can view the plan on the EGBSC web site at www.helpourfisheries.com. Members of the public who have questions or wish to comment on the plan, are asked to please contact Eric McIntyre, EGBSC Coordinator at (705) 773-4218, or by e-mail at Eric.McIntyre@Ontario.ca.

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Media Contact:

Bill McRobb
Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Councillor
375-2081