Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council
Minutes of the 2010 Fall RFAC Meeting

The RFAC meeting for Area 5 was held on November 4, 2010 at the Nova Scotia Community College Kingstec Campus, in Kentville, Nova Scotia. In addition to Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture staff, 14 people were in attendance. Al McNeill, Inland Fisheries Division chaired the meeting and Reg Madden, Anthony Heggelin and Tara Marshall from the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture were also present. Greg Stevens, Department of Fisheries and Oceans was present. The meeting began at 7:00 pm with a brief introduction of those present, and a review of the agenda by the Chair.

Proposed Regulation Changes for 2010
Al McNeill reviewed the 2010 regulation changes from page 3 in the Angler’s Handbook. Al also reviewed the Proposed changes for 2011. Al noted that Anthony Heggelin will discuss the high harvest regulations for smallmouth bass and the proposed increased bag limit for bass under the Warmwater Fisheries update. Al asked if there were any objections to the proposed province-wide reduction to the bag limit for rainbow trout from 5 to 2 during the period September 1 through March 31 to spread out the catch of stocked rainbow trout. There were no objections.

Licencing
Al McNeill discussed progress the Department has made on a number of licencing issues that have been raised in past RFAC meetings as well as some concerns brought forth by the Nova Scotia Salmon Association. These included regulation changes to reduce what has been termed “dirty fisheries”; that is anglers fishing intentionally for a species during the closed season for that species under the guise of angling for another species which has an open season. Al said the problem still exists but the Department is trying to find solutions to trouble spots without closing the entire season.
Other licencing issues were: difficulties in purchasing a licence from a vendor late in the season, under-reporting of catch and effort (poor returns for General and salmon licence stubs), and being able to purchase a fishing licence on-line.
Al provided a brief overview of the current state of electronic licencing and reporting. The Department has been working with the Departments of Natural Resources and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to build an electronic licencing system for roll out in 2012. Al also mentioned a mail-out survey of Sportfishing in Canada will be conducted in January, 2011 and we will be mailing questionnaires to 2800 anglers from Nova Scotia and abroad. Please respond if you receive a survey questionnaire.
Hatchery Report: Fall Stocking

Tara Marshall stood in for Mike McNeil and gave a brief overview of the McGowan Lake hatchery programs. Tara also reviewed some of the fall stocking program for RFA 5.

Review of 2010 Field Activities

Coldwater Unit
Reg Madden provided an overview of: Examining the Occurrence of Wild Rainbow Trout in the Bras d’Or Lakes, Nova Scotia: Using Scale Pattern Analysis to Differentiate Hatchery and Wild Populations. Rainbow trout, a known invasive species and the second most popular sport fish in Nova Scotia were assessed to determine the contribution of wild rainbow trout to the angler catch. Wild juveniles from the Bras d’Or Lakes watershed were directly compared to unknown (angled) and known origin (hatchery) rainbow trout. Rainbow trout reared under aquaculture conditions experience rapid growth resulting in morphological differences from wild juveniles. Mean length and weight at age 1+ of known origin wild and hatchery trout were 13.1 cm (29.5 g) and 27.6 cm (252.8 g), respectively. Scale analysis revealed hatchery samples had more circuli spaced farther apart. The Stepwise Logistic Regression Model used in this project classified 29% of the angled sample as wild origin suggesting that rainbow trout reproducing in the wild contribute significantly to the angler catch.

Reg also discussed that research has shown that densities of juvenile rainbow trout are currently far below those of native brook trout and Atlantic salmon. Compared to other invasive species such as smallmouth bass and chain pickerel, rainbow trout are believed to have minor influences on native species. For example the catch per unit effort (CPUE) of smallmouth bass in Lake Ainslie increased from 0.3 bass/h in 2003 to 1.63 bass/h in 2008 while brook trout decreased from 1.5 trout/h to 0.11 trout/h during the same time period. Stocking triploid (sterile) rainbow trout into the Bras d’Or Lakes has been initiated to conserve native species while maintaining this popular sport fishery. The full publication can be found at: http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/reports/maddenWT10V4.pdf

Reg Madden also provided an overview of research activities for 2010 and the four Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative (FFRC) projects for 2010. Projects consisted of acoustic sea run brook trout tracking, trends in parasite prevalence and distribution, impact assessment of habitat structures and impacts of invasive chain pickerel. Reg also discussed the importance of Special Trout Management Areas and how they have benefited trout populations.

An angler asked if we could do some research in RFA 5 and suggested the Shannon River?

Angler suggested that the Gasperaux River would be a good candidate for a FFRC project. Two anglers commented that they were very concerned about smallmouth bass in Lake Ainslie and concerned about smallmouth and pickerel in other Cape Breton lakes. Angler voiced concern: why bother with Special Trout Management Area regulations when the spread of smallmouth or pickerel may devastate all our trout resources?
Warmwater Unit

Anthony Heggelin discussed the rationale for revoking the high harvest regulations for smallmouth bass. In most areas they were not accomplishing the desired effect which was reducing abundance and consequently increasing overall size of the bass remaining. Anthony also went over the proposed increase in the bag limit for smallmouth bass in some areas to twenty-five/day. Anthony discussed that in many cases, increased harvest would be ineffective in controlling smallmouth bass numbers but suggested that it could slow down their establishment in newly populated lakes where reproduction has not yet occurred.

Jason LeBlanc discussed issues surrounding aquatic invasive species in Nova Scotia. There are seven key pathways for introduction or spread in Canada and understanding these primary pathways is important for taking effective action and minimizing the effects of invasive species. They are: (1) shipping, (2) recreational and commercial boating, (3) use of live bait, (4) aquarium and water garden trade, (5) live food fish (6) unauthorized introductions and (7) canals and water diversions. Of these, unauthorized introductions is the most problematic in Nova Scotia followed by recreational and commercial boating and the use of live bait. Aquatic invasive species issues are extremely complex, biologically, socially and economically. They involve a wide variety of leadership, coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, all levels of government, many industry sectors (ex. sportfishing organizations) and non-government organizations. Jason outlined the Canadian Action Plan to Address the Threats of Aquatic Invasive Species which can be found at http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/enviro/ais-eae/index-eng.htm. There are many aspects of this plan that could be implemented in Nova Scotia. The Department is currently involved in many of these and will look at how best to use them to address issues specific to Nova Scotia such as outreach and education and rapid response frameworks. Jason also indicated that regulation changes and amendments to the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act would be considered to better address issues in Nova Scotia.

Angler wanted to know why we even have a bag limit on pickerel and bass?
Angler asked if we could put a bounty on pickerel?
Angler asked if we would have the authority to make a bounty on bass and pickerel with the new legislation?
Angler asked if new legislation would make it possible for a mandatory kill of smallmouth and pickerel?

Extension

Atlantic Salmon Enhancement

Al McNeill gave a report of the salmon stocking and broodstock collection activities from 2010. Approximately 45,000 smolt, 35,600 fry/eggs, and 172,000 salmon parr were stocked in spring and fall, 2010 into five rivers - the Waughs, St. Francis Harbour, Margaree, Middle and Baddeck rivers. Broodstock collections in the fall are expected to yield close to 300,000 salmon eggs for stocking out at various stages in 2011.

The Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund received allocations for $266,581 in 2010, based
on 2009 revenues. Amy Weston provided Al with some slides from the Adopt-a-Stream program. Twenty-four community groups were involved in 2011. Total funds were $291,600 which included $100,000 in funding from the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission. Amy organised the second annual Adopt-a-Stream Workshop in Truro in April which allowed many groups from around the province to network and share ideas.

Al also provided the names of the six groups which qualified for the 2010 Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund for Nova Scotia and mentioned that the 2011 Call for Proposals was now open. Interested groups can visit the website: www.salmonconservation.ca for details.

**Striped Bass Tracking - Jeremy Broome**

Jeremy Broome, an MSC student attending Acadia University presented his research on the movement of striped bass in the Minas basin in relation to the Open Hydro/NSPI turbine test area. The objective is to document dispersion and avoidance behavior of tagged fishes moving in close proximity (< 500 m) of the Open Hydro turbine. From 2008 through 2010, 1200 striped bass have been tagged and sampled. Length, age and recapture locations were recorded. Jeremy has set up a network of acoustical receivers across the Minas Basin and surrounding the hydro test area. 36% of recaptures were reported by recreational anglers and 84% of recaptures were taken at site of original capture. Most tagged bass were detected swimming near the Guzzle, with some near Blomindon, Five Islands and a few near the turbine site. Jeremy indicated these data are preliminary and he still has receivers to retrieve data from. Jeremy thanked his partners especially all the bass anglers who reported tags.

Angler asked how long will your project go on.

One angler asked if the striped bass are hitting the turbine blades. Jeremy indicated that although some fish were tracked at the same depth as the blades, it is not possible to determine if they can avoid them or not from his data.

**Striped Bass Using Local Knowledge- Trevor Avery**

Trevor Avery, a marine biologist and biostatistician from Acadia University gave a presentation on using local ecological knowledge for striped bass assessment, management and stewardship. Trevor outlined the directives of the Striped Bass Research Collective and introduced the new conservation group: the Striped Bass Anglers Association of Nova Scotia. The premise of the Collective is to record and catalogue the wealth of information from recreation anglers and other stakeholders to benefit wise management of striped bass. Short term objectives include log books, on-line, phone and creel surveys, stewardship meetings and building a broad volunteer base. Longer term objectives include building a database portal (www.stripedbass.ca) to host angler and fish surveys, stewardship and data verification. Trevor gave some preliminary catch and effort results from angler logbooks. One of Trevors Honours students has been doing egg/larval and juvenile surveys in the Annapolis River. Trevor thanked all his research partners, and encouraged all bass anglers to get involved.

**Extension Programs**

Tara Marshall
Tara reviewed the L2F (Learn to Fish) programs in this RFA 5. Thirty-eight L2F’s were delivered province wide from staff and volunteer instructors. Tara explained the fisheries education programs completed in the past summer with recreation camps and summer science camps (Shelburne/Whycocomagh). She also provided an updated of the Fall BOW (Becoming an Outdoors Woman) program. Fall BOW was held at Mount Traber Camp, in Cooks Brook, Halifax County. Fisheries classes consisted of a fly tying workshop, 2 fly fishing classes, 2 trout fishing classes and a tasty fish class. Tara thanked the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, Trout Nova Scotia and Canadian Association of Smallmouth Anglers for contributing to the Fall BOW scholarship foundation.

Tara provided an update on the FUN (Families United with Nature) program. One event was held in 2010 with seniors and their families at Murphy Lake, Mount Uniacke. Tara explained a variety of new initiatives for sportfishing development. They are as follows: two more groups trained for delivery L2F in their area, translation of L2F into French, partnership with DNR (Education Centre) to deliver fishing workshops in the parks/campgrounds as part of the Parks Education Program, partnership with DNR (Parks Division) to have fishing equipment and licenses available for visitors, and a partnership with Tourism to have more updated sportfishing information at the 10 Visitor Information Centres (VIC’s) across the province.

Discussion/Agenda Items from the Floor

Adjourned: 10:15 pm