

Summer 2012

"News You Can Use"

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Meetings

2nd Wednesday of each
month, 6:30 p.m.
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Lakescape

newsletter of the



WABAMUN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The State of Wabamun's Fishery

Dr. Stephen Spencer, Area Fisheries Biologist for Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development spoke at the June 13 WWMC Board Meeting about the **Status of Fisheries in Wabamun Lake**. He described how Wabamun has been fished hard since the 1850s and that native walleye were fished-out by the early 1900s. Commercial fishing of lake whitefish continued but the whitefish population cycled wildly from low densities to high and back again because walleye were no longer controlling whitefish numbers.

As the number of anglers increased, the demand for whitefish and northern pike exceeded the capacity of the lake to supply. As a result, the government closed commercial fishing in 2004 and imposed catch-and-release only fishing in 2006 to allow fish stocks to rebuild.

Train Derailment

The 2005 oil spill from the CN train derailment had some effects on the fish. Most fish survived well. Alberta Health initially found low levels of polycyclic-aromatic-hydrocarbons (PAHs, indicating fuel oil contamination) in the tissue of fish in the lake. These chemicals did not persist in the fish. However, the PAHs did appear to affect the survival of whitefish eggs. Fish and Wildlife found a significant increase in deformities that affected the survivability of the fry. As a result, the whitefish population has not recovered as quickly as hoped.

Mercury

The presence of mercury in fish flesh continues to be a concern. ESRD has noticed an increase in mercury levels in the Wabamun northern pike population, exceeding consumption guidelines in some cases. This might be a result of catch-and-release fishing, allowing many older pike to survive and continue accumulating mercury. Whitefish have lower levels of mercury in their flesh.

Walleye Reintroduction

Fish and Wildlife has tried several times over the last few decades to reintroduce walleye into Wabamun Lake. However, those introductions were not successful because the fish could not successfully reproduce. The fish attempted to spawn too early in the spring because of the warm water outflow from the Wabamun power plant. When the eggs hatched much earlier than normal and the young fish entered the colder lake, they did not find enough food to sustain them.

With the lake now freezing over, introduced walleye may have a better chance at being reproductively successful.



Alberta Sustainable Resources Development with the support of TransAlta Utilities began transferring adult walleye from Lac Ste. Anne to Wabamun Lake in 2010. Hatchery-raised walleye were introduced into Wabamun Lake in 2011. The fish were produced from nearly two-million eggs taken from spawning walleye in Lac Ste Anne and raised at the Cold Lake Fish Hatchery. While most were released in

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Volume 2, No. 3.

Editor: Don Meredith
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Submissions

Lakescape welcomes contributions from WWMC members and others who wish to inform members about issues or events in the Wabamun area. Please keep submissions brief and to the point. All submissions are subject to editing for length and clarity. For more information, contact the editor: Don Meredith
wwmc@donmeredith.ca

Deadline for the fall edition is October 15, 2012.

Wabamun, a portion were returned to Lac Ste Anne so that lake's production would not be compromised. The spawn camp at Lac Ste Anne continued this year, and 6.5 million fry were released into Wabamun, along with some adult walleye. To date, 1500 adults have been transferred. ESRD is hoping to have a harvestable walleye population in Wabamun within the next three to five years.

Population Update

Because of catch-and-release only fishing, many pike have grown to 90 cm in length—trophy class fish normally seen only in northern fly-in lakes. However, whitefish numbers have not changed because of reproductive problems. Perch are increasing in number, up to 24 cm in length. Catch-and-release only fishing will continue at least until the walleye introduction is done.

The Invasion Continues - Weeds and more Weeds!!!

We hope you were able to take in one of the Invasive Weed Workshops hosted by the WWMC on June 16th to learn more about this serious threat that is now starting to appear around Alberta's lakes. In order to not be over-run by these aggressive plants, and face millions of dollars in control measures as is currently being experienced in the United States, we all need to work together to deal with this issue proactively.



At the workshops, Barry Gibbs, the Director of the Alberta Invasive Plant Council, presented general information about the identification and control of invasive plants. James Leskiw, the Supervisor of Agricultural Agronomics from Parkland County, followed with an outline of what's being done locally to control invasive weeds including some planned Purple Loosestrife removal near Rich's Point in early August.

So just to refresh your memories, these are some of the bad guys we are trying to control:

1. **Purple Loosestrife**—a tall water loving plant with a spikes of reddish-purple flowers. Blooms throughout the growing season and one plant can produce over 1 million seeds. Can choke out wetlands and reed beds.
2. **Flowering Rush**—a cattail-like plant that produces a beautiful cluster of 20 to 40 pink through white flowers. It can quickly choke out water bodies affecting habitat for fish and wildlife not to mention making things difficult for boaters and swimmers.
3. **Himalayan Balsam**—often called "Poor Man's Orchid", this tall striking plant (up to 3 metres high) forms dense stands that shade out other native vegetation. Each plant can produce 700-800 seeds that are dispersed up to 5 metres from the parent plant.
4. **Common Tansy**—more of an upland plant, this aggressive plant spreads by seeds and roots. It is toxic to humans and animals if ingested though it is generally disliked by cattle. It is another high seed producer.
5. **Scentsless Chamomile**—typically grows in disturbed areas and is tolerant of flooding and drought. White flowers with yellow centres appear on the plant all season—with one plant producing up to 1 million seeds.

The WWMC has posted invasive weed fact sheets on its web site - see www.wwmc.ca and another good source of information is the Alberta Invasive Plant Council web site at www.invasiveplants.ab.ca that will also soon include an on-line invasive plant reporting tool.

CARL Meeting

On June 23, a Central Alberta Recreation Lakes (CARL) forum was hosted at the Wabamun Seniors Centre. Two guest speakers attended: Mr. Ken Lemke (MLA for Stony Plain) and Andy Ridge (ESRD Director, Water Policy). Andy Ridge shared some insight into the role of lake stewardship groups in the future. Representatives from each of the nine CARL lakes presented their highlight projects and shared information. Presentations consisted of the Sylvan Ice Fishing Hut Initiative, "Dip-in-Day", Sylvan Lake CEM Project, Wabamun Shoreline Naturalization Project, Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS) and Invasive Plant Programs. The Mayor of Parkland County, Mr. Rod Shaigec, was also present to support the CARL initiatives. The forum was well received by everyone and they look forward to having another one. The discussions and networking provided opportunities to interact and move forward as a group to improve lake stewardship.



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If you own or represent a business or organization that is concerned about Wabamun Lake and would be willing to help maintain its health, become a corporate member of the WWMC for just \$100 a year. Corporate members will be acknowledged at WWMC functions, in each newsletter and elsewhere. For more information contact Kelly Aldridge by e-mail, ktammaa@hotmail.com or telephone, (780) 953-2695.

If you are already a corporate member and would like to see your logo here, please send a digital copy to Don Meredith at wwmc@donmeredith.ca

Watershed Report Sponsors

The WWMC thanks the following sponsors for providing funding for the creation of the state-of-the-watershed report:

