



Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council

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2011 Moon River Index Spawners and Walleye Culture Project Summary Report

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Executive Summary:

In 2011 the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council (EGBSC) led an index-spawners survey and walleye egg collection project at the Moon River of eastern Georgian Bay.

Notwithstanding the capture of 305 walleye from 20 net-nights of fishing effort by an 8' trap-net, we were unable to collect any walleye eggs. As a consequence, planned rehabilitative walleye plantings at the Moon River and Go Home Bay did not occur in 2011.

Catch sampling data was highly variable throughout the study period (April 14 – May 18) making interpretation of walleye spawning population abundance difficult. Walleye CPUE values have remained low but consistent in recent years. This suggests the spawning population is small but stable.

1.1 Introduction

In 2011, the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council (EGBSC) in partnership with the Moon River Walleye Association, Upper Great Lakes Management Unit (UGLMU) and Parry Sound District of the Ministry of Natural Resources, attempted to conduct a and index netting survey and walleye egg collection on the Moon River of eastern Georgian Bay.

This represented the sixth year of this partnership project. The project was conducted under the auspices of the Ministry's "Community Fisheries / Wildlife Involvement Program" (CF/WIP).

The Objectives of the project were:

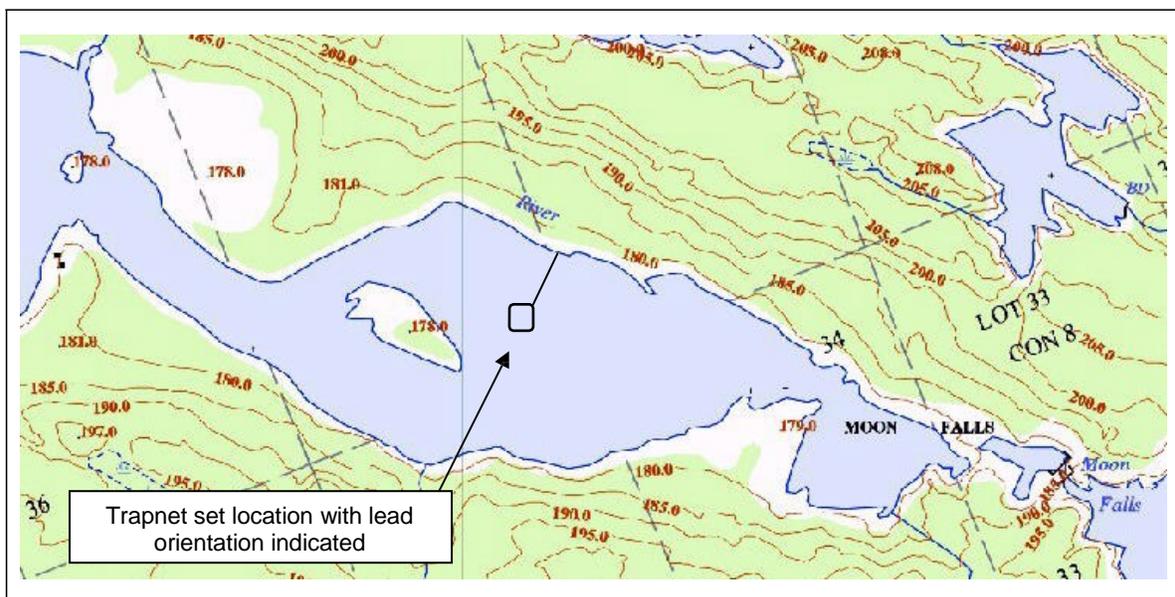
1. Collect walleye eggs to culture for rehabilitative planting purposes,
2. Continue regular index assessment of walleye spawning population abundance, and
3. Aid with assessment of walleye spawning bed enhancement work conducted in 2008.

The project was severely hampered by: cold and inclement weather; a highly fluctuating flow regime that at one point caused the temporary cessation of netting activities; difficulties associated with finding sufficient voluntary manpower, and just plain bad luck at being unsuccessful at collecting female walleye in a ripe condition.

2.0 Methods

One 8-trapnet was set at the regular north shore netting site as per Figure 1.

Figure 1. Trapnet Set Location for the 2009 walleye spawners index netting survey at the Moon River of eastern Georgian Bay



Trapnet operations were segmented into two time periods: April 14 to 28, comprising 14 net-nights of fishing effort; and May 12 to 18 comprising 6 net-nights of effort (Appendix A). Netting efforts were interrupted by exceedingly high flow volumes that made netting activities difficult and dangerous.

The catch was completely enumerated (Table 1).

Due to limitations associated with the availability of voluntary manpower, and conflicting business priorities with the project leader (Mr. Bill McRobb), biosampling of the catch was not conducted.

3.0 Results

3.1 Catch Results

From 20 net-nights of fishing effort, we captured: 305 walleye, 77 northern pike, 22 smallmouth bass, 18 brown bullhead, 12 common white sucker, 11 rock bass, 6 redhorse sucker, 5 black crappie, 4 largemouth bass, 1 lake whitefish and 1 muskellunge (Table 1).

Table 1. Catch summary from and 8' trap-net fished at the Moon River during the walleye spawning run of 2011.

Date Set	Date Lifted	Effort (Net-Nights)	Water temp. (deg. C.)	Walleye	N.Pike	B.Bllhead	Catch (no.)		
							C.W. Skr.	Rock Bass	Other*
Apr.14	Apr.15	1	6	39	11	3	1		4
Apr.15	Apr.17	2	5	54	18	6	2		1
Apr.17	Apr.18	1	5	2	2				
Apr.18	Apr.19	1	5.5	27	8	2	3	1	
Apr.19	Apr.20	1	4	52	3	3	1		
Apr.20	Apr.21	1	nr	3	7				1
Apr.21	Apr.22	1	4	2	3	3			
Apr.22	Apr.24	2	6	15	4				1
Apr.24	Apr.25	1	6.5	34	6				
Apr.25	Apr.27	2	7	11	3			1	1
Apr.27	Apr.28	1	6	1	2			2	
May-12	May-13	1	12.5	18	4			3	14
May-13	May-14	1	12	9	1	1		1	5
May-14	May-16	2	14	17	2		2	2	9
May-16	May-17	1	13	14	2		1		3
May-17	May-18	1	12.5	7	1		2	1	1
Totals:		20		305	77	18	12	11	45
CPUE (No. / net night)				15.3	3.9				

* Other fish species included: 1 musky; 1 lake whitefish; 22 smallmouth bass; 6 redhorse sucker; 5 black crappie and 4 largemouth bass

Walleye catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) was 15.3 fish per net-night of fishing effort (Table 1). This index of walleye spawning population abundance is approximately similar to previous surveys (2010 – 27.8; 2009 – 11.3; 2007 – 29.3 and 2006 – 15.4). Due to a host of variables, this index of spawning population abundance is of questionable accuracy and statistically imprecise. It does however provide some vague measure that spawning population abundance is low in a historical context, but nevertheless seemingly stable.

3.2 Biosampling Results

No biosampling data was collected during the netting survey. This was an unfortunate oversight. Biosampling data is highly valuable at tracking the status of the spawning population and should be collected whenever possible.

3.3 Egg Collection Results

Due to a series of unfortunate circumstances (highly variable flows that complicated and temporarily halted netting operations; an inoperable hatchery when some eggs could have been collected at the beginning of the run) and bad luck (unable to capture gravid females), we were unsuccessful at collecting any eggs. As a consequence of this, no rehabilitative plantings occurred in the Moon River or Go Home Bay in 2011.

4.0 Acknowledgements:

The EGBSC would like to thank and acknowledge Bill McRobb Sr. and Bill McRobb Jr. who conducted almost all the field work under very trying conditions. Their dedication and commitment to the stewardship and rehabilitation of the Moon River walleye population is an inspiration to our Council. Other volunteer included: Ashton Woodyatt, Kevin Barnett, Brian Moore and Scott Norerberg,