



Newsletter – APR 2012 Prepared by: Al Frenette

Saugeen to Benefit From Research

April 1st, 2012 – Ontario Steelheaders President's Address

Well it's that time of the year again to let you know what's new, and up-and-coming with the Ontario Steelheaders.

It's been a relatively quiet winter for most of us as Mother Nature didn't allow us to get out on our usual hard water hot spots unless you ventured up to Nipissing or beyond.

The Saugeen was good all winter for those brave souls who did get up here to give the winter Steelies a go. As most of you know we did our planting of the advanced fall fingerlings in November and they are all doing well in the Beatty Saugeen. Thanks to the group that helped out at the Port Elgin LHFC Hatchery over two weekends starting Oct 28-29 and finishing them the following weekend, 60,000 plus advanced fall fingerlings were clipped.

The weekend of Jan 28-29 a group of volunteers made up of Josh Choronzey, Tom Hamilton, Will Stewardson, Scott Redin, Travis Forester, myself and Anthony Zadwordi clipped 20,000 plus fish that by this spring, will be some very good sized yearlings. The LHFC took to the task of clipping the remainder and they got all of them done but 5,000 which Josh Choronzey, Dan Gravel, Scott Redin, Erica King and I finished off March 11/12. So a big thank you to the people who helped and also to LHFC for their assistance not only for the clipping but the fine job of raising these little guys destined for Saugeen later this spring. If you have never seen the LHFC Hatchery, go see it! It is a thing of beauty, and you can tell the guys from LHFC take great pride in their Hatchery and also in the great work they do there. We have to give them a big thank you for their assistance in getting the Saugeen's steelhead runs where they today without it, it would have been an even tougher task than it has been; so thanks to Al Wilkins and his great group of guys at the LHFC. Just think, if the groups in the Georgian Bay area could work together like LHFC and the OS how much could be accomplished.

There are some very interesting things to tell you about that came out of a meeting called by the MNR and inviting the LHFC, Ontario Steelheaders, Sydenham Sportsman Assoc. and a few other clubs from the Georgian Bay area. Rod Jones, Josh Choronzey and I attended the meeting the weekend of Mar 3 /12 on our behalf. Rod and I got snow bound till 1:00am due to an actual snow storm. Good thing Rod and I have gotten older, cause if it was back in the day; Owen Sound may not have survived! The big take from the meeting is that MNR is going to put a lot of focus on the Saugeen River system for the next few years.

They will be doing upgrades and repairs to Denny's Dam starting in July of this year. They will be installing monitoring cameras not only Denny's, but also at Walkerton, and two cameras at Maple Hill's fishways for research purposes. Very soon there will be a live site available for you all to look at and see what's going on as far as water temp and condition as well if any fish are moving at Denny's. They are also going to do studies of smolt movement and spawning sites.

They have a study on the go for the Dundalk Plateau which is the headwaters for a lot of rivers like our beloved Saugeen, the Bighead, the Grand and a number of others.

The study is targeted at Wetlands degradation from the time of pre-settlement, and to see what damaging effects are being placed on the wetlands and what can be done to preserve them, as they are a very integral part of the watershed.

They also informed the group that they will be doing a lampricide treatment of the Bighead and Nottawasaga river systems this year.

We also had an opportunity to speak to Rich Henry and Hart Hill; the two CO's for the Bruce Peninsula. We addressed our concerns about the issues that we are having on the Saugeen River and they have assured us that it will be addressed and they reviewed with us, the information they need when we call the MNR Hotline. They need vehicle license plate number, type and make of vehicle and a description of the individual or individuals. They have also indicated that they will be doing periodic enforcement campaigns on the river. You will see some new signage this year at various locations on the river regarding poaching, fish limits etc.

Spring came very early this year and with that in mind our Fishery guy Darryl Choronzey made sure that we had permits from the MNR for March 1/12 so when the fish ran early, the Steelheaders were ready to move on transferring 1,000 adults to the Beatty Saugeen and Otter Creek.

As you'll see in this spring's newsletter lots of cool stuff happening with the OS so go out and dig up some new members... the more the merrier and the stronger we become the more we can do!

Keep in mind there will be Elections this fall for anyone who feels like getting involved at a higher level.

Good luck to all of you this season!

Yours in Fishing!

Karl Redin

President

Ontario Steelheaders

president@ontariosteelheaders.ca



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Please allow 3 weeks from time of receipt of this application, for mailing of Membership Cards, crests and decals.

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Fishway News

Saugeen River MNR Update: *issued April 4 2012*

An unusually early melt has resulted in possibly the earliest run of steelhead on the Saugeen in recent memory.

After much effort by Ontario Steelheaders, MNR and other partner groups it is safe to say Walkerton Fishway at Truax dam is running optimally! On one March afternoon, MNR staff observed 73 rainbows passing through this fishway in just 20 minutes.

The next barrier upstream from Walkerton remains Maple Hill dam. Again, the same dedicated parties completed the first construction stage of the 'new' Maple Hill fishway last fall. Although this newly constructed fishway requires a bit more 'fine tuning', fish were seen successfully navigating this fishway. Maple Hill Fishway construction will be completed this summer.



Top view of the new fishway at Maple Hill Dam



Rainbow trout (Center and inset) negotiating the dam.

MNR had scheduled fish monitoring cameras to be operational at Walkerton and Maple Hill dams this spring to capture steelhead numbers passing through these fishways. Unfortunately, the extremely early run did not enable crews to install these cameras on time. Cameras will be operational in time for next year's spring run and will also record downstream smolt migration.

So, the good news is the Saugeen is seeing a record number of steelhead at a time when all barriers between the lake and the cold productive headwaters have been eliminated. This is truly a success story and example of what can be achieved when partners with a common interest work together!

Jody Scheifley

**Fish & Wildlife Technical Specialist
Ministry of Natural Resources
Owen Sound, ON**

News and Media Update

I miss winter☺! Seriously though, things were relatively quiet over the winter months until it became obvious that we were looking at an early spring warm-up and the spring runs were bound to arrive way ahead of schedule. After a frantic race to get the final repairs and upgrades done on the #1 tanker completed early; the guys raced to Denny's Dam to intercept one of the biggest runs of steelhead to ever run the Saugeen, and we've all been very busy since. Aww... who's kidding who; building a fishery like this no matter how frantic and pressured, is the best job in the world!

My coolest of cool jobs with the Ontario Steelheaders pulls me in a variety of directions, and I seem to get involved in one way or another with many different cool people and projects. Here are a few.

One of the big highlights for me last month, was no sooner were the reports coming in about the huge success of the early Adult Transfer when I got a call from the folks at **WFN (World Fishing Network)**. Mark Melnyk, host of **Reel Fishy Jobs** wanted to film an episode, and document the work that's done by all the volunteers at Denny's Dam during Adult Transfer, Egg Collection, the hatchery work and the partnership between the two clubs. This took a LOT of coordinating with all those involved, but the team pulled it together in time, and Mark and his crew spent an entire day and a half with us at Denny's Dam, we captured fish in the trap, went on a transfer run, collected the days eggs and milt, and took them to the Kincardine Hatchery where we spent a few hours with Al Wilkins.



Grant McAlpine Reads Mark the Riot Act on Safety before entering "The Hole"



HD cameras roll as the Steelheaders prepare to lift "The trap"

By all accounts it was a huge success and I have to thank all the guys and gals at the fishway; you were great! Thanks go to Al Wilkins for hosting us at the kincardine hatchery, and a big thank you to the good folks at OMNR who got us the permission and papers we needed to film on their property in the nick of time. Way to go team! Mark was really impressed with what we do, and excited about getting back to the editing suite with his footage. **Watch for us on Reel Fishy Jobs on WFN this spring!**

We've also been invited to appear on **Grey County Life** with hosts Dianne Foulds and Dave Carr on **Cable 53** on Friday April 20th to discuss the Ontario Steelheaders activities in the community. I immediately extended an invitation to MNR Owen Sound district office and they will be sending a representative to stand with us during the interview. **Watch for us on Friday the 20th of April, at 11:00 am on Grey County Cable 53!**



www.redwingtackle.com



A new banner was also created to symbolize the partnership between the Ontario Steelheaders and LHFC. We displayed it while we were filming with WFN, and you'll likely see it at future Ontario Steelheaders events.



One of these banners is displayed on the wall at LHFC's Kincardine Trout hatchery.



After gathering suggestions and input from our directors and MNR since last fall, new signs were developed for the RiverWatch Program on Denny's Dam Conservation Area properties, Watch for the signs, and watch for more information on this program.

Please don't take matters in your own hands. Avoid confrontation. **Use your cell phone to report resource violations.**

Over the winter months I assembled a team to work on developing a new website and while we made a lot of headway, it is still not complete. We have a great framework and a lot of work has been done, but we've had to shelve the project for now till we get through the spring season. Like I said, we've been pretty darn busy. Our plans are to resume this work over the summer in hopes of having it complete by fall 2012. Thanks to Scott Kidwell and the rest of the team for all your efforts thus far. I'm looking forward to getting back to work with you soon!

The **Decal Supporter Program** is going strong in 2012. New decals were developed in the fall and we've been canvassing all winter. A few last minute applications came in just before we went to print... way to go guys! We have met our goals for the program this year, and there's still room to do more in the fall. You will see the various participants' advertisements throughout this newsletter. Thanks to all our 2012 supporters!



Help support the Ontario Steelheaders Saugeen River Rainbow Trout Enhancement project. Get your Supporter Package today and Start Advertising here!

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For more information

Al Frenette



News and Media Director
Ontario Steelheaders
webmaster@ontariosteelheaders.ca
www.ontariosteelheaders.ca

Putting this newsletter together is not for the faint at heart either. Believe me, I'd much rather be transferring adults and helping with egg collection. It takes a lot of coordinating and begging writers and advertisers to submit their material, forms photos etc. in a timely manner. After all, the writers don't get paid so meeting a deadline is truly a demonstration of their commitment. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the newsletter contributors on behalf of the Ontario Steelheaders. Directors, project managers, sportsmen and researchers alike, thank you so very much for your hard work. It means a lot to us, and I invite all of you to participate here.

As Editor, I am committed to keeping this newsletter a fair, open forum for discussion and giving everyone a fair opportunity to express their own ideas, questions, concerns and opinions on any relevant or entertaining subject matter; without criticism, censor, or influence. My only rule is **"don't be nasty!"**

Spring 2012 Adult Transfer

Al Frenette

The 1000 fish “Hail Mary”

As everyone watched the rising temperature trend that began around the middle of February we began to wonder how it would affect the spring runs, and how it would affect the Ontario Steelheaders annual Spring Adult Transfer effort. Around Feb 22nd, it became evident that if we didn't jump in to action, we might miss the runs altogether. Little did we know, but Mother Nature was holding the ball, and she was about to throw it our way.

The Steelheaders sprang into action. E-mails and phone calls were exchanged between directors, project managers and volunteers and we all got to work immediately. The guys down south got the necessary repairs done, and delivered the #1 tanker just in time. Darryl wasted no time working with MNR to adjust the start date on the permit to March 1 from March 15th; effectively giving us a 2 week advantage on the weather. Arrangements were hastily made with the crew at Denny's Dam to adjust their schedule, and everyone was on board! It took a lot of collaboration, and nothing short of an impressive display of teamwork and personal sacrifice, but everything came together. Just then, a forecast was issued for two days of temperatures in the mid 20's. We were ready to receive a “Hail Mary”.



In just 4 days; like a well-oiled machine, the Ontario Steelheaders transported 1000 adult steelhead to the pristine waters of the Beatty Saugeen to carry out their “business”. As temperatures soared, so did the numbers in the trap. We caught everything she could throw at us! Running up to three 140 KM round trips a day; the crews worked hard, long, and fast. Many of the experienced and novice volunteers remarked that they had never seen a more concentrated run than this in as many years as steelhead have run the Saugeen.

A spring-run steelhead glides gently from an Ontario Steelheaders Adult Transfer Program net.

It was a real eye opener to some new volunteers. Comments like: “You guys really earn it” and “absolutely remarkable teamwork and dedication” were typical of the comments streaming in. All of this was accomplished without a single hitch other than a flat tire which was quickly repaired. Big kudos to Grant and the fishway crew, Darryl and Rod for getting things started up, MNR for getting us the paperwork we needed and of course to the crew of volunteers and drivers that took over on the weekend to finish the job. Nice Work Guys!

These spectacular fish are now sitting in some of the best rainbow trout spawning and nursery habitat the watershed has to offer. The Ontario Steelheaders lent them a “Helping Hand”, and brought them safely to their ultimate destination, past major obstacles, in record time. **Like a great team; all of us had our eye on the ball!**

Remember please, we need your assistance to keep this great program rolling.

2012 Egg Collection

Al Wilkins- Al Frenette

As of Sunday April 8th, we finally got the last of our 100,000 eggs! It has been a long, cold haul filled with uncertainty and a lot of finger crossing. They deserve a huge thank you for their persistence!



Rainbow trout eggs being fertilized.



Three Cheers to Grant McAlpine and the egg collection crew for battling frigid temperatures, frozen gloves and uncooperative fish to get our eggs. Thanks to them, all 100,000 eggs are incubating safely in the egg trays at the Kincardine hatchery.



Stripping eggs and milt may sound like fun to some, but it involves a lot of tedious work over a long period of time. Teamwork makes it all possible.

Check back in the fall 2012 issue of this newsletter for updates on the Chatsworth Rainbow trout hatchery program!



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Building a Fishery... One Fish at a Time

By JOSH CHORONZEY

It hasn't been a secret if you are an avid trout angler. The Saugeen River in Southampton has been the hottest steelhead destination in the province the past several months. Anglers from across Ontario have been lining the banks from Denny's Dam to the lowest section of the river since September. With unseasonably warm temperatures this winter, the steelhead fishing has continued to be incredible with ample angler access and ice free water to fish. The main reason behind this excellent fishing can be notched on the belt of two local volunteer organizations; the Lake Huron Fishing Club and the Ontario Steelheaders. Two weeks ago, I had the chance to volunteer some of my time during a "fin-clipping" project at the LHFC Kincardine Trout Hatchery. I spent two days working alongside other members from both clubs and walked away with a greater appreciation of the dedicated work that goes into creating this awesome fishery on the Saugeen and Lake Huron.

The Lake Huron fishing Club raises 60,000 steelhead (rainbow trout) at their Kincardine Hatchery annually. These fish are hatched from eggs collected by members of the Ontario Steelheaders at Denny's Dam on the Saugeen River during the spring. After being nurtured by LHFC volunteers for 1 year, these juvenile fish are released far upstream in the Saugeen and from there; they begin their lives in the wild, both in the river and Lake Huron proper. To identify these hatchery-raised fish from wild trout, Ministry of Natural Resources' protocol calls for the clipping of the adipose fin on these steelhead. This task is carried out by Ontario Steelheaders and LHFC volunteers. Over the course of two weekends, the entire 60,000 juvenile trout were clipped. This is not easy work either. Crews of 4-8 volunteers surround the tanks and carefully lop off the tiny fin located along the back near the base of the tail. This was like a factory production line, but the goods we were producing were fish! Mortalities from this procedure are surprisingly low, with only 2 fish succumbing to stress in the weekend I was present.

Hatchery Data at a glance

Kincardine Trout Hatchery Stocking Totals

Year	Species	Number of Fish Released	Number of Eggs to	Finclip
			Produce Fish in Column on left	
2006	Rainbow Trout	40,969	64,848 fry	LV
2006	Brown Trout	62,472	75,139	
2007	Rainbow Trout	69,479	112,678	RV
2007	Brown Trout	71,449	81,844	
2008	Rainbow Trout	56,032	89,560	RV
2008	Brown Trout	51,359	55,800	
2009	Rainbow Trout	57,359	100,739	AD
2009	Brown Trout (F)	51,923 (F)	61,765 (F+G)	
2010	Spring Rainbow Trout	56,685	110,526	AD
2010	Fall Rainbow Trout (D)	20,683 (D)		
2010	Spring Brown Trout (G)	4,995 (G)		
2010	Fall Brown Trout (H)	49,149 (H)	67,616 (H+K)	
2011	Spring Rainbow Trout (E)	52,676 (E)	131,701 (D+E)	AD
2011	Spring Brown Trout (K)	7,861 (K)		
2011	Fall Brown Trout	58,449	68,828	
2011	Fall Rainbow Trout (A)	62,408 (A)	233,411 (A+B+C)	
2011	Rainbows to SSA (B)	27,845 (B)		
2012	Spring Rainbow Trout (C)	~ 63,000 (C)		AD
2012	Fall Brown Trout		71,372	

Total 1,911,078



Overseeing the clipping duties was Kincardine hatchery manager Al Wilkins. Wilkins took the time to explain to me the ins and outs of the hatchery and exactly what the LHFC provides the angling public with in terms of fish stocked. 60,000 of both rainbow and brown trout are raised annually in the Kincardine hatchery. The rainbows are part of a joint program with the Ontario Steelheaders and destined for the Saugeen at stocking time in April. This past fall saw the LHFC and Ontario Steelheaders raise an extra 50,000 steelhead which were released as fall fingerlings to compliment the 60,000 yearlings that were just clipped. That is a lot of trout! The browns are raised to yearling size as well and seeded into the waters along the Huron shoreline from Point Clarke to Pike Bay and beyond. The LHFC also runs a second hatchery in the town of Port Elgin. This facility is also manned by volunteers, and raises Chinook Salmon for the anglers of Lake Huron. This year the club collected 120,000 salmon eggs in the fall and they have hatched out and are now under the close supervision of Port Elgin hatchery manager Gary Biederman until they are stocked as fingerlings in the spring.

This process of raising fish is not cheap. It costs the LHFC about \$10,000 to raise each species. Under the MNR CFWIP program, clubs are allotted funding to offset some of the costs of operating a hatchery, but overall, the contribution from the government is minimal. The LHFC relies on fund raising, contributions from the Ontario Steelheaders, and monies generated from the club's summer fishing event; the Chantry Chinook Classic. This derby will once again take place in late July and early August on the shores of Lake Huron.

**Hats off to everyone involved in transforming this fishery. Our achievements
are made possible by *"Teamwork in Action"***

Tired and Retired

The time has come to reflect on past failures and more importantly, the accomplishments of this adventure to improve the fishery in the Saugeen.

The commitment of many on this project has spanned over thirty years.

It all started in many a meeting with the Ministry at a time when we were very lucky to have the best yet, Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Allan Pope. He was in favour of our ideas, so we just had to convince the Owen Sound MNR and the fly fishing clubs in the area which we did. We were very fortunate in the early 80's to have a land owner let us use his dam at Orchard Park to install upwelling egg boxes. We later worked with Dofasco and they built one box. New systems taught us how to plant eggs, keep the flow right and build filter boxes.

Things started to show promise and success, and so the next goal was to get a fishway installed at Walkerton. Again, Dofasco came to the rescue and supplied all the rebar and culvert material. Success was coming again and we saw real improvements, but then it all stopped. The Hydro Electric Plant put a poor fishway and return pipe for smolts in at Maple Hill.

All this time, more helpers were at Denny's Dam working on egg collection. Then we decided to transport adults up stream past the barrier, so we built two transfer trailers. Things started to pick up a little as a result, but we needed more fish coming to the fishway. And so, we cut a notch in the dam and a trench was put in to lead the fish to the fishway. Yet another project was the installation of a hatchery in Mildmay. We provided 200,000 eggs each year to this hatchery for many years. And today, we are making new modifications and fine tuning at Walkerton and Maple Hill fishways.



Through all this, I worked with a great bunch of men and women. Many are still around today, and new faces appear every year. Well done! Thanks to all of you!

In Appreciation

Thank you my friends, for sending donations to various charities in memory of Shirley. For those that sent a cash donation, please know that all of this was sent to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I'm sure your generosity will help someone. Thank you all for your support and friendship during a difficult time, and always.

Rod Jones

Kincardine Trout Hatchery Report

Al Wilkins

The Lake Huron Fishing Club's Kincardine Trout Hatchery is full of fish ready to be released. As you can see from the picture, our yearling rainbows are in good shape and just waiting for the river to warm up. There are approximately 62,000 fish ready to be trucked to the 3 release sites chosen on the Saugeen River for this year.



Approximately 1/2 the fish will be released at Lobies Park in Walkerton. 1/4 of the fish will be released at the mouth of the Otter Creek, east of Walkerton and 1/4 of the fish will be released at a new site (Saugeen River Campground) which is above the old hydro dam but below Maple Hill. 200 yearlings are destined for the public fishing pond at the Port Elgin Chinook Hatchery. The yearling rainbows are in great shape and growing well but they are currently costing about \$100/day to keep so whenever the river temperature reaches 10 C we will be looking to start trucking. Ontario Steelheaders will be helping with the releases.

Memorial wreath collection 2011

Ken and Ron once again placed a memorial wreath on Remembrance Day 2011 and made a donation of \$253.35 to the Royal Canadian Legion National Poppy Campaign. Thanks Guys!

Lest We Forget...



Denny's Park Project Report

Backgrounder: *In 1996 The Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority announced that Denny's Dam Conservation Area would be closed to the public due to financial constraints. The possibility existed that the property may even be sold.*

The Ontario Steelheaders, consistent with its mandate, approached the Authority with an offer to lease the Park and co-manage it in order to ensure continuing access for all resource users. This resulted in a significant financial commitment to the Ontario Steelheaders. Monies generated by our activities at Denny's Park, are from time to time earmarked for park improvements and fisheries enhancement projects. Our committee works diligently to collect funds, and to run the park efficiently, in order to make these ventures possible. The Ontario Steelheaders would like to thank everyone for their timely payments which make these and other improvements to our park and our fishery possible. Thank you! It's your park! Use it, respect it, and support it!

Chairman's address:

Once again campers welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed our "great" Canadian winter and may we have an equally nice summer.

Thought maybe you would like to know where some of your money went last year.

Transfer to Fisheries Projects	\$6,000
Waste Management (dumpster)	\$2,400
Insurance	\$2,390
Saugeen Consveration Authority (Park Lease)	\$2,300
Septic & Portable Rental	\$1,135
Banking Fees	\$250

This year we purchased a new mower for Doug to continue keeping our park in such great shape. The only thing he's missing is a racing stripe on his new black machine!



I must once again remind everyone to follow the park rules especially late night noise. It is part of our contract with the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority that we must control excessive noise at all times.

Thanks to everyone for their help last year and I am looking forward to seeing you all soon!

On behalf of camp committee; thank you!

Gary Sherman

Denny's Park Project Director
Ontario Steelheaders

Steelheading for Dummies?

Rob Heal

My first steelhead came on the second cast of my first outing. That's lucky, right? Sure it is, considering the reason it took two casts was because I had to land the coho that ate my little Cleo on the previous cast of that same outing. I don't believe much in luck but in retrospect, luck had everything to do with it because it took me two more full seasons to catch my second steelhead and two more after that before the light really turned on. Ironically, I remember saying to me, as that first steelhead glided into my hand just minutes after landing the coho, "Shoot, this great lakes fishing is easy!" That was in 1991 but by 94 I had them pretty much dialed in, but not before I had to relearn just about everything that I knew about fishing and when I started to pursue them with a fly rod, the learning curve got even steeper. So what did a transplanted Atlantic salmon fisherman do to consistently catch fish? The first thing I did was familiarize myself with the guys that caught a lot of fish and then I tried to do what they did. The centre pin thing didn't do it for me but I quickly caught on that a good quality bait caster should provide similar results, so I bought what was at the time a decent reel, a used 10 ½' casting rod and an assortment of floats. That augmented my current spinning outfit and I felt reasonably confident that I could begin steelhead fishing. The second thing that I did was familiarize myself with the species and try to get a feel for the "whys" as well as the "hows". I knew enough about anadromous fish to have an idea of what I needed to do but the fish in the Great Lakes are not truly anadromous in that the Great Lakes are not salt water. This required a bit of research but I wasn't surprised to find that despite the lack of salt, the Great Lakes steelhead are for all intents and purposes, steelhead just the same and what makes them steelhead is a brief but important life stage known as "smoltification".

Smoltification: Definition: noun, Internal metabolic processes when a fish adapts from freshwater to marine water to avert stress. Supplement: This is mostly observed in salmonid fish. The metabolic processes involve physiological, morphological, biochemical and behavioral changes. For example, a salmonid fish develops a silvery color and tolerance for seawater when about to migrate downstream and enter the sea. Without this stage and in all likelihood, the rainbow trout that are often stocked in the Great Lakes, be it in the U.S. or Canada, would not migrate to the lakes and instead would stick around the rivers to develop what we would consider a "resident" population. This all makes sense when you consider that the original eggs transported to the great lakes from the Pacific West coast, by most accounts were in fact steelhead eggs from the McLeod River in California.

Scientific mumbo jumbo aside, let's look at what we know (or think we know) about steelhead in the Great Lakes. They begin to move into the rivers in the fall usually around the end of September. The timing will vary greatly from system to system but a safe bet to get serious about going after them is Thanksgiving weekend (Canada). Usually at this time, water temperatures and levels are in line and fish will enter in numbers. For those who can tolerate the foul weather that is more often than not found in November and December, this period can offer the best angling opportunities with the least amount of competition. The run continues until the weather shuts them down. Typically, by early January the run has slowed to a crawl and the cold water temperatures and ice at the river mouths and into the estuaries will prohibit any mass movement. On that note I'll add this: it has been the belief for as long as I have been steelhead fishing that there are two distinctive strains in the Great Lakes that result in two different migration periods: fall and spring. Based on years of observation, I've argued that there is only one strain and that they begin their ascent in the autumn and that ascent is slowed or sometimes halted only by the weather. This is only important when one recognizes that not every winter is harsh and intolerable even in southern Ontario as evident throughout this past winter (2012). The run on the Saugeen never really slowed for any extended period and to my knowledge there was very little or no ice at the mouth in Southampton. What all of this translated to was large numbers of steelhead entering the river all winter and very consistent fishing through late December, January and February. Further to that, the majority of the fish were in the system by mid-march and the best angling opportunities were over before the trout season even opened. The point to all of this is that if one has a flexible schedule and can keep an eye of the weather, there is seldom a need to put away your fishing gear as odds are good that you can find some open water and fish somewhere within a couple of hours of where you live.

What do you need to get started?

We can break presentations down into three categories: spin fishing, float fishing and fly fishing. Let's assume that if you're reading this, you've done some fishing in the past and the steelhead thing is something you've wanted to try. If you've done some fishing, odds are you've cast a spinning rod so I'll begin there. Your basic steelhead spinning outfit would require a rod between 8 and 11 feet of med action. The longer lengths allow you to cast further and manage your line on the water better than with the standard 6 and 7 foot rods. In the reel department, most of the \$100.00 + products available from manufacturers like Shimano or Quantum will work fine for the average guy but you want to do your homework. Unlike bass or walleye, these fish will test a drag system to the limit and it's important to put your trust in the hands of the pros. Purchase what you can afford and if you have to compromise while making your rod and reel purchase, I'd say spend a bit less on a rod to acquire a higher quality reel. In terms of lures, I got by in my first couple of years of steelhead fishing with one box containing about two dozen or so spoons and spinners and of that assortment four or five caught 75% of the fish that I hooked. Little Cleo's between 1/4oz and 2/5oz and Blue Fox Vibrax spinners from size 1 to 3 in blues, reds and fire tiger would round out my metal baits. Add to that an assortment of body baits in the medium size ranges in the same colors as these baits are a nice alternative and give one the ability to slow down his presentation.(more on that in a bit.) Lures are subjective and it takes a while to gain confidence but in my opinion, lure selection is far less important than presentation and if you watch the guys that catch a lot of fish with spinning gear, they are focused as hell on every cast and 100% in tune with their lure. My favorite presentation was to set up on a run and quite simply cover the water with a 45 degree cast across and downstream. As soon as the lure hit the water, I would flip the bail and lift the rod tip to pick up the lure and then begin a very deliberate swing across the current to a point directly below my position. Depending on the current, a slow retrieve may be necessary but often just letting the lure hang in the current and slide laterally across the run is all it takes. I won't get into how to detect a strike; suffice to say, you won't miss it. Having an assortment of weights will allow you to react to different speeds or flows but slow and deliberate are the keys in most cases. To slow things down to a crawl, I went with body baits like Kwik Fish or Flat Fish with a sinker 18 to 24 inches above the lure. This gives you the ability to really finesse your way across a current and pick it apart better than with a heavier bait, like a spoon that sinks rapidly. It will take some time to get a feel for the right speed and lure action but stay with it as there are few things more exhilarating than a steelhead hammering a slowly swung lure.

Float or Drift fishing

If you've ever been a bit serious about taking up the steelhead game than you have no doubt held in your hand or maybe even had someone show you how to use a center pin reel. Center pin reels are the mainstay of steelhead anglers on the Canadian Great Lakes and for good reason: in the right hands, they are deadly. Many of these reels used are the pinnacle of engineering and machining in the fishing tackle world and that combination has made for the perfect fish catching machine. Without getting into the science too much, it's the spool and spindle of the reel that makes it. There are several different designs but in a nut shell, the spool spins like crazy and allows the angler to keep his float and bait at a consistent speed and depth almost indefinitely or for at least as long as you can see your float. This is important because the longer your bait is in the zone, the greater your odds are. Center pins have their limitations, though as there is a demographic out there, myself included, who lack motor skills or hand eye coordination. In fact, it's only by the grace of god that we can wipe our own nose and for those individuals, center pins may not be the answer, at least to begin with. So what can one do to achieve similar results without the learning curve of a center pin reel? The answer is the bait caster. All of the major manufacturers make a number of casting reels in the \$75.00 to \$200.00 range and the modern bait casters are far easier to master than the center pin. I'm not going to get into the mechanics. Suffice to say, when casting, the combination of the centrifugal break and the cast control knob being set correctly will allow one to cast as far as he needs to in most steelhead situations. After the float has cocked you can then re-deploy the casting button and start the spool spinning as the float against the current takes line off the reel. You want to maintain contact or at least keep your thumb close to the spool as you don't want it to over run and you need to be able to react when the float goes down. Upon this happening, it's a simple matter of pressing your thumb against the spool and setting the hook. With the fish on, a quick half turn of the handle engages the drag and the fight is on. It should also be mentioned that a similar presentation can be achieved with a spinning reel but control is compromised. However, when fishing pocket water or smaller systems where long, controlled drifts are not required, it's difficult to beat a spin set up with a float rig.



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Setting the weights under a float is a science unto itself and if you ask five different anglers, you can get five different set ups. On the west coast, the rule of thumb is concentrating the weight near the bait and allowing it to plummet quickly into the zone. As a rule of thumb, the shorter the drift the quicker you want the bait to sink. So if you're fishing a short and relatively shallow pocket, say 50 feet or so, placing more weight closer to your bait will achieve this result. In long, deep runs that may allow you to fish for several hundred feet, staggering the weights along your leader but placing them closer together as you get closer to the bait will allow the leader and terminal end to stay more true while drifting through varying currents. The standard line setup is fairly simple: start off the reel with something stout like 15lb braid or a stiff monofilament. To that add a barrel swivel and a leader of 10 to 15 lb fluorocarbon. This section is where you will place your shot and its length depends on the rivers depth and flow. Add another barrel swivel to the end of the leader and to that, you'll add a tippet of 4 to 12 lbs. fluorocarbon (clear water requires lighter line and the more stained the water is, the heavier you can go).

Fly fishing

Fly fishing for steelhead is often seen as either very difficult or thought to be an extremist's pursuit. Extremist in that the photo's in magazines often depict anglers holding a fish up that you can barely see through the squall and three inches of snow on the brim of their hat. To some degree around the Great Lakes that is the case but certainly not for the entire season. Trout fishers often put their gear away at the end of September with the winter blues already setting in and don't realize that they are missing out on some of the best angling opportunities of the year. Another myth is that they are difficult with a fly but in reality, even the most seasoned float angler that uses roe on a regular basis will tell you that often, artificial flies are all you need. In simplest terms, if you already fly fish for trout and have become a proficient nymph, all you have to do for steelhead is make everything a bit bigger. Sounds simple enough but with the exception of a couple of additions to the terminal set up, my nymph rig for steelhead is basically an upsized nymph rig for trout. This is a description of a basic steelhead high stick rig.

1/I typically run two flies until I establish a pattern. Nymph and egg.

2/Basic nymph rig: 3 to 4ft of 22 to 26 lb off the fly line and add a barrel swivel. To that add 4 to 7ft of 12 to 15lb (depends on what you can handle and the depth) and then add another barrel swivel. To that, add 12 to 15 inches of 6 to 10 lb fluorocarbon for tippet and leave about 3inches of the tag. To this,(the tag) you will add your split shot after tying in an over hand knot its end, then add your fly to the tippet. If you add a dropper fly, tie it to the first fly off the hook.

The heavy butt section gives you a piece to place your indicator and lots of room to move up or down. The second section, being lighter, cuts through the current far better than a tapered leader.

To establish your indicator depth and weight formula, start with what you think you need in terms of both and then make small adjustments to the indicator and add or subtract shot until you reach the point where you are setting your hook on every 5th or 6th cast. By setting the hook, I mean that the indicator is moving or stopping as a result of the bottom or a fish. And that should do it. Here is a link to two relevant articles on my website that may help in understanding some questions that may come up. <http://www.thehomepool.ca/learning.html>

Regardless of your angling method, Great Lakes Steelhead rank among the most compelling fresh water quarry on the planet and many seldom or never sample the fun. They are no more difficult to catch than anything else and you don't have to spend an arm and a leg to experience it. There is little substitute for good instruction followed by practice and for the very serious, there are a number of shops in the area that offer classes that will greatly flatten the learning curve be it in any of the aforementioned disciplines.

HELP WANTED:

The **Ontario Steelheaders** are interested in putting your talents to work! If you believe you have a special talent to contribute to the management of this organization, please don't delay!!

There are many ways you can contribute as our directors require assistants to complement their efforts. Please contact a director and we will do our best to put your skills to work to enhance and protect this fishery.

From Madeline's Membership Desk

190 + STRONG!

Well, here it is officially spring, and considering the weather we have received lately it is feeling like an early summer. Our membership roster continues to grow and presently we are well over 190 members strong and growing every day! Things have been relatively quiet over the winter but we are gearing up for the Spring/Opening season and expect to be quite busy over the ensuing months. We will be offering Membership renewals at the upcoming Spring Derby so please see me for your renewals. The Ontario Steelheaders success is directly related to the strength of its membership, so I urge you all to continue to support our efforts by renewing your membership. Let's see if we can top 200 members this year!

I have received many comments from the membership applauding all the efforts from the volunteers. Some have even taken the time to write a letter and I would like to share with you all the comments received from one such member. He writes: *"I'm a fly fisher and this past year has been the first that I've gone out and really worked at trying to consistently catch steelhead. By all accounts, the Bighead and Saugeen have been great this year and I've been able to catch and release more steelhead than all my other years put together. This is undoubtedly due in large part to the efforts the Ontario Steelheaders have put forth...Congratulations, on what has obviously been a job well done".*

As always, you are more than welcome to contact any one of us on the Board of Directors with your questions, comments, suggestions, concerns and of course praise is always welcomed ☺

Madeline Walker

Membership Director

Ontario Steelheaders

membership@ontariosteelheaders.ca



TREASURER'S REPORT

Greetings fellow Steelheaders! Here we are once again with spring upon us. According to all reports I've heard, the spring run has been nothing but spectacular, with not only great numbers of fish, but good sized fish.

I personally would like to thank all of you for your generosity and commitment to our programs. Whether through personal or business donations or your participation in our fund raisers, you have really helped to further our mutual interests. Once again thanks to all for your assorted and varied contributions.

We as a club are in good shape financially. Our collective funds await upcoming and future endeavours.

Here is a list of Friends who have made donations of, fishing tackle, materials for projects to improve our park, or a monetary gift.

- Ernie Jantzen
- Hammond Power Solutions
- In memory of Fred Heath
- Derek Czarnota
- Stanley Sopranovich
- In name of Bertha Mills
- Tom Ware Owner/Operator of Hy-Grad Roofing

If I have missed anyone it is truly unintentional.

Well, I'm sure you will find plenty of interesting reading throughout the newsletter so I will let you get back to it.

Hope you're fishing

Regards,

Harold Curtis

Secretary/Treasurer
Ontario Steelheaders



FEED THE FISH!!!

Chances are you've been approached by one of our members with draw tickets for prizes, 50/50's, merchandise and so on. The proceeds from these draws go directly to fund the hatchery operations and are used to purchase fish feed, pay for electricity and other expenses. Many thanks, to the folks who have been working hard to sell the tickets and raise funds. This work, and your generosity, is critical to the enhancement of this fishery, and a vital lifeline to the fish!

Please support these and other very important fundraising activities now and in the future!

Steelhead run one for record books

By JOSH CHORONZEY

It has been an incredible late winter-early spring season in southern Ontario.

Temperature records were broken across the province. Highs in the mid-20s and bright sunshine have the turkeys gobbling and the trees in local forests starting to sprout foliage.

This warm weather has also sent the steelhead populations into spring migration overdrive. While the forecasters are discussing record temperatures, another benchmark has been shattered -- the returning number of spawning steelhead to the Saugeen River in Southampton has been the greatest on record, as well as one of the earliest in recent memory.

In one of my recent articles I discussed the efforts of two regional clubs and organizations to create a great steelhead fishery on the Saugeen River through intensive stocking programs. What I may have failed to mention was that many of these people stay involved with the fish they stock as smolts right through into their adulthood when they return to the river to spawn. Helping healthy adults to move farther upriver is an ongoing support for the fishery that ensures that the populations stay strong.

Let me explain.

Members of the Ontario Steelheaders, with help from the MNR and Lake Huron Fishing Club, have committed their volunteer effort to a very large and very time consuming endeavour for nearly the last 25 years. Each spring, involved club members trap adult steelhead at Denny's Dam on the Saugeen River in order to transport them up river to productive spawning tributaries. These transport projects ensure that a good number of spawning steelhead will make it to the pristine gravel beds that a select number of productive tributary streams provide. The journey moves fish almost a hundred kilometres upriver and helps the fish bypass a number of dams on the main Saugeen, which are otherwise difficult for the fish to navigate. With a little help from the club members, these transported steelhead will spawn and add to the wild population of fish that enter the river each year.

This project has been a focal point of Ontario Steelheader projects for a very long time. For the past decade or so, averages of 200 to 300 adult trout have been transported annually. During the past few seasons, this number has increased to 1,000 spring steelhead getting an extra lift.

The past two years have seen an additional number of fish transported during the early fall when a percentage of the annual steelhead run begins to migrate. This extra number of fish has added to the composition of wild steelhead returning to the river. In addition to the fish lifts and transports, the Ontario Steelheaders and LHFC have undertaken a stocking program that has seen 60,000 yearling steelhead raised and released into the Saugeen each year for the last five years. These fish carry adipose fin clips and make up an incredible 40% plus of the annual run.

Just over a week ago, I took part in the volunteer effort to move some of these incredible adult fish up the river. The fish ladder at Denny's Dam has been constructed to accommodate a removable trap in the top step. The trap, which effectively works like a holding pen, is lowered down with the aid of a mechanical lift into the fishway. Usually the trap is lowered overnight and lifted in the morning to collect a good number of fish. Each steelhead in the trap is removed and "sampled" -- a process that includes taking measurements and sex identification, as well as performing a visual check for fin clips and lamprey scarring. Two tankers, made of steel and equipped with oxygen tanks and aerators, are filled with water and hitched to volunteers' trucks. Each of these tankers is then carefully loaded with about 45 adult fish for the 80-kilometre journey up river. Each round trip to load and release the fish takes about three hours.

I wasn't just amazed by the volunteer dedication.



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As far as the fish themselves were concerned, the lift that took place just over a week ago was one for the record books. The trap was set overnight on a Wednesday. The following morning, volunteers were greeted by an astonishing 300-plus steelhead in the trap. Between the two tankers, close to 100 fish were loaded for transport and the remaining fish in the trap were released above Denny's Damn to continue their journey.

The trap was promptly set back into the ladder and lifted again at 2 p.m. Despite an even shorter amount of time in the fishway, this second lift revealed more than 500 fish in the trap. Once again the tankers were loaded with the allowable number of adults and the remaining fish were released above the damn. The following day the trap was set for just over an hour. In that time the trap collected more than 550 adult steelhead. For those who have been volunteering their time at the ladder over two decades, this was an all-time high. This pattern continued for the next two days with an average of more than 400 fish per 1.5 hour trap-set. The Ontario Steelheaders reached their 1,000 adult steelhead transfer quota in no time.

I was scrambling to compute the figures in my head! If you were to do the math, over the four days that the lift took place, with an average of 350 fish moving through the ladder every 1.5 hours, the run was exceeding 30,000 adult steelhead in less than a week!

For those who are interested in steelhead runs, the biology of migrating fish or fisheries across the province, this information will be of special interest to you. The steelhead run on the Saugeen River is most likely the largest in Ontario. More than 30,000 fish migrating in less than a week during the spring does not constitute the entire run. Water temperatures dictate steelhead migration through fish ladders. The temperatures leading up to the transports on March 8 were likely too cold for fish to use the ladder in any great numbers; however, with the sharp rise in temperature, fish have definitely been passing the Denny's fishway every day since!

A large number of steelhead migrate during the late fall as well. Estimates based on fall fish lifts and observations at Denny's suggest that the fall run was close to 15,000 fish. Considering temperatures and water levels in October and November were some of the best on record for an autumn season, that 15,000 estimate errs on the low side. Add the estimates of the fall migrations to the numbers volunteers witnessed passing through the trap during those four days as well as the remaining spring run and the numbers become impressive. The Saugeen has a record setting run of steelhead from Lake Huron, pushing the numbers above 45,000 fish.

This incredible run of trout has produced the best steelhead fishing in the province over the past couple of seasons. This pattern of huge returns only suggests that the fishing will continue to be amazing in the near future.

Although the fish and their tenacity definitely deserve some credit, none of this would have been a possibility without the dedicated efforts of the Ontario Steelheaders, LHFC and MNR. Through stocking and fish-lift projects they have a very real hand in the prosperity of this fishery. Here is a huge pat on the back for those involved. Thank you specifically to those who have an added influence to this project: Karl Redin, Rod Jones and Darryl Choronzey from the Ontario Steelheaders; Al Wilkins and Grant McAlpine from the LHFC; and Shawn Carey and Jody Scheifley from the local MNR. Collectively these three groups have created the most outstanding steelhead fishery in Ontario. May this be a lesson learned, sometimes all that work actually does pay off!



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O.S. Merchandise

Welcome back everyone!... time to dust off the rods and check your tackle supply; this season will be packed with new projects and some great fishing opportunities. Don't forget to spread the word, and wear your jackets, shirts crests etc. when you go afield. Come and see me anytime for "Steelheader Swag" 😊 See us on Derby Day, Saturday May 5th and get great deals on new merchandise while it's hot. Why not get one for the Kids?... youth sizes also available.

Hope to see you often,

Carlo Baldassarra

Merchandise Director

OntarioSteelheaders



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Notice

All members of the Ontario Steelheaders, families and friends are invited to a "State of Lake Huron" report to be presented by the Upper Great Lakes Management Unit from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Information recently presented at the annual Great Lakes Fishery Commission meetings will be presented explaining the changing ecological conditons in Lake Huron. Learn about the present state of our fisheries and their possible future. This meeting will be held at the Underwood Community Center, Thursday May 10th beginning at 7:30 pm. Meeting to be hosted by the Lake Huron Fishing Club. No admission charge. Everyone welcome. For more information please call 519-396-9764 or check out the LHFC website at www.lakehuronfishingclub.com

FUNDRAISER REPORT

Supporter funding strong as ever!!

The storefront Supporter Decal Program is a real hit with tackle retailers, restaurants and other businesses. These supporting businesses donate 200 dollars towards our Fisheries Enhancement Fund. In return, the Ontario Steelheaders are supplying the stores and businesses with a storefront "Supporter" decal to display, as well as an advertisement spot in this newsletter. The funding generated from this project will go a long way to improve our fishery. Every member of the Ontario Steelheaders is encouraged to present the program to someone they know. **Please do your part and keep the program and our fishery moving forward.**



The license plate sized Supporter Decal can be seen on storefront windows across SW Ontario. "If you know of a business who would like to make a contribution, and advertise with us in this newsletter, please contact us at: webmaster@ontariosteelheaders.ca

Please thank our partners for their support !!

Hope you all had a great winter, and got a change to get out to fish steelies this winter. What a season!

Our usual program of 50/50 draws and random prize draws will take place as usual this year so we'll be in the park on weekends selling tickets to support the Steelheader's projects.

We have another **Rod and Reel Draw underway for 2012**. The Rod is a custom, 13 Ft, 2 pc **Baston** IST rod, rated 6-10lb., hand tied and donated by Ernie Jantzen of **Rodman Custom Rods**. The reel is a custom 4 7/8" **Riverkeeper**, hand assembled by Rob Marquette. Both pieces are donated towards the enhancement of the Saugeen River's Steelhead fishery, and uniquely made in Ontario by guys that fish local streams.

We are appealing to everyone to get their tickets for a chance to win this great set-up and to all members to help us sell them. We did great with last year's draw. **Let's do it again!**

We have lots of ideas for upcoming fundraisers, and we're always open to new ideas, if you have any suggestions or wish to donate prizes for our draws, please contact me.

Keep your stick on the ice!

Don Power

Director of Fundraisers
Ontario Steelheaders

RODMAN- RIVERKEEPER Rod and Reel Draw
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Get your tickets soon!

Ontario Steelheaders	Ontario Steelheaders
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	<small>Draw takes place Oct 13th 2012 at Denny's Park</small>



There's "Girl Power" and there's "Grey Power" but there's nothing like "Don Power" 😊

Ontario Steelheaders 2012 Annual Spring Steelhead Derby

Please join us **Saturday May 5th** at Denny's Conservation Area
(Denny's Park) for our annual Spring Steelhead Derby.

Cash Prizes+++Food+++Draw Prizes+++Trophies+++
General Assembly+++Memberships+++

Chairman's address:

Hello, fellow fisher-people! ... Well folks it's time again to get the rod dusted off and put it to use for the Derby. Hopefully you all can come out to play. The fall derby was absolutely amazing! With the turn out we had 101 people register to participate. The weather was crappy indeed and yet you still came out to support the cause. Thank you!

The derby placements were :

First.	Chris W.	9.5	Junior Award- Kyle	1.6 pounds.
Second	Laurien.	8.1	Catch and release Award -- Dio	22 inches
Third	Lorenzo	8.0.		

We all had a great time and hope to get a repeat in May. So come out and join us for a good time, don't forget to BRING THE FAMILY!

Dave Munro

Social Events Director
Ontario Steelheaders

Anyone wishing to donate prizes to the DERBY please see Dave or Dar Munro at Denny's Park, or call at home 519-651-8109. All Prizes Welcome!

Bring the kids!! Join us for a fun day on the river. Take in the sights and sounds of the Saugeen River and join us for **dinner** and a get together afterwards. Registration is available at Denny's Park. Look for the signs...!! Dinner will be served at the Rod Jones Pavilion, where we will have **draw prizes, merchandise, club updates**, and the derby **prizes and trophies** will be awarded. Please join us for a great day of socializing with members, important information updates and a cozy campfire afterwards. Overnight camping and day use at Denny's Park is available for derby participants and their families. **Membership** applications are also taken at the ceremonies.

- **Entry fee: \$10.00 adults -- \$7.00 junior**
 - **Weigh-in deadline: 5:00 PM**
 - **Everyone Welcome!**
- **Please observe all Ontario Fishing Regulations**

The Proposed Highlands Quarry – A Cause for Concern

...as it is to be situated near Many Headwaters Producing Steelhead in Ontario!

By Larry Mellors

What is expected to be the second largest aggregate quarry in North America is to be located in Melancthon Township. The Highlands Companies is seeking permission to open a 2,300 acre (937 hectare) quarry just north of Shelburne. The company wants to mine up to 1.102 billion tons (1 billion tonnes) of a high quality limestone called Amabel dolostone. This proposed quarry will sit on the Amabel-Lockport-Guelph aquifer. The proposed mega quarry is to be situated near the headwaters of many Ontario rivers – Pine, Noisy, Nottawasaga, Boyne, Mad, Saugeen and Grand Rivers. The proposed pit will be 200 feet (60 metres) in depth which is well below the water table in this area. The quarry operators will be required to pump an estimated 131.98 million gallons (600 million litres) of water from the pit each day. To put this figure into perspective, that is the equivalent of the amount of water used by 2.7 million Ontarians per day! This is the estimated amount of water that would seep into the pit since the pit will be below the water table. The company has said it will pump the water back into the aquifer. The concern is - in what condition!

Melancthon Township is located within Dufferin County. This county is the highest plateau immediately west of Georgian Bay. Because of the county's geographic location and topography, the county forms the watershed for Lakes Huron, Simcoe, Ontario and Erie. Also the Nottawasaga, Saugeen, Grand and Credit Rivers commence here and then each system drains throughout the county. This area is one of the largest catchment areas in southwestern Ontario. This is a very important landscape in Ontario.

The Highlands Companies is made up of several numbered companies, set up in Nova Scotia. This was done as the province of Nova Scotia offers tax breaks for American investors. The company has purchased approximately 6,500 acres (2,630 hectares) in total. Most of this land is in Melancthon Township – 5,600 acres (2,266 hectares). The balance, 900 acres (364 hectares) lies in Mulmur Township. Currently the Highlands Companies grow and harvests 100 million pounds (45.4 million kilograms) of potatoes annually.

Under The Environmental Bill of Rights, EBR Registry Number 011-2864, the proponent 3191574 Nova Scotia Company applied for a Class "A" Licence Quarry Below Water to excavate more than 20,000 tonnes of aggregate annually. The Highlands Companies have proposed it will mine over 50 to 100 years excavating in sections of 300 acres (121 hectares) at a time. The section would be returned to farmland by "re-laying" soil after the mining process is completed.



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The Highlands Company has filed twenty consultant reports totaling 3,100 pages. The consultants assert that the proposed project will have no negative impacts on fish habitat and will allow for improvement in the diversity, connectivity and function of the natural heritage systems in the area including linkages between natural heritage features, surface water features and groundwater features and long term increase in the quality and diversity of wildlife habitat associated with the agricultural landscape (see Page 10.2 – Net Impacts).

Many areas of the Stantec report leave one pondering their conclusions. There is certainly a lack of information in regards to the consultant's "Fish Habitat Assessment". In the spring, summer and fall of 2008, as well as the summer of 2009, "Aquatic Field Studies were carried out in the study area. The report fails to provide much detail in regards to the type of studies completed as well as when and where these studies were conducted. The studies carried out on the main stem of the Pine River, a tributary of the Nottawasaga River, are very troublesome.

One of the confusing items in the Stantec report is in regards to the assessment of the value of the Pine River Headwaters Wetland Complex. The Stantec report states that background fish community data from the Nottawasaga valley Conservation Authority's (NVCA) 2007 Pine River Sub Watershed Report Card shows the Headwater Wetland Complex supports warm water baitfish only. This is not the case. In fact the report card does not refer to "warm" or "baitfish". The NVCA report does state, "groundwater discharge from other wetlands – such as the Pine River headwaters - maintains cold stream flows that support trout". A further document, NVCA Groundwater Management Plan (DRAFT) Version 5, dated November 3, 2009, says, "These headwater areas generally support a significant groundwater recharge/discharge cycle and supports coldwater fisheries habitats supporting native brook trout".

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment also has some concerns with the reports prepared for the Highlands Companies. On September 1, 2011 the proponent, 3191574 Nova Scotia Company, is regulated to undergo an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the Environmental Assessment Act for the project. Mega-quarries do not require an EA in the province of Ontario. So this is a huge step. The first step will be to prepare the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the EA. Both the ToR and the EA will involve government review and a public consultation process. Once fisheries issues are raised, this could also involve the federal government's review as well, as fisheries falls under federal jurisdiction. The process could take several years to resolve.

Issues surrounding water management, environmental damage, the degradation of groundwater and transportation are also serious concerns of this proposed quarry development.

The truck traffic will greatly increase. The Highlands Company proposes to finance road improvements if its requirements exceed 150 40-tonne trucks per hour, 24 hours a day, every day except statutory holidays. That is 3,600 40 tonne trucks per day. That is staggering! As well, this quarry is proposed to operate for 50 to 100 years.

Another issue to be faced by the Highlands Company deals with some of the animals that could/are found in the area within the pit to be mined. There are indications of the presence of

the Henslow's Sparrow and the Bobolink. These species are included in either the provincial or federal Species at Risk Acts.

For further information regarding the Highland Companies visit
<http://www.highlandcompanies.ca/>

I did not discuss the impact on agriculture in this article. If you are interested in this, go to:
http://highlandcompanies.ca/images/uploads/pdf/application/12_Agricultural_Impact_Assessment.pdf . This study was also prepared by Stantec.

There have been numerous township meetings held to discuss the proposed quarry. On October 16, 2011 "Foodstock" was held. This was organized by the Canadian Chef's Congress. An estimated 28,000 people attended the one day event held on a farm near Shelbourne, Ontario. "Foodstock" featured home-style food prepared by several of Ontario's famous chefs along with entertainment provided by musical artists such as Ron Sexsmith, Susan Harmer and Jim Cuddy. The event was organized to raise public awareness in regards to the threat of southern Ontario's agricultural lands, in this case, specifically the farms in Melancthon Township.

Many organizations are involved in protecting these valuable farm lands and rivers. These include, not only the Canadian Chefs' Congress, but the Ontario Sierra Club, David Suzuki Foundation, Turtle Clan Mohawk Nation, Township of Melancthon, North Dufferin Agricultural Task Force, to name a few, as well as many, many residents.

As a wrap up, there are two processes in the works. The one is the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA). At this time, the Highland Companies must address the issues raised from this application process. The second is the Environmental Assessment Act. There are opportunities for you to voice your opinion.

There are many developments and proposals that are going to impact on the state of the steelhead in the province of Ontario. Right now there is a subdivision proposal within the City of Brantford which could have a great impact on the natural steelhead population within the Grand River system. This area is a highly environmental sensitive area.

Please get involved throughout this province. You may not stop development, but you could have a positive influence on the many proposals and ultimately the environment in which migrating rainbow trout live in Ontario!



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