

Media Release



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To All Media

For Immediate Release

O.F.A.H. WARNS OF POTENTIAL DISASTER FOR FUTURE OF ONTARIO FISHERIES

On March 22, 2007, Ministry of Natural Resources district staff across the province received a directive outlining potential areas of action being contemplated by the Ministry in response to concerns over VHS, a disease that affects some fish.

As a result, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H.), the largest nonprofit conservation based organization in Ontario, has worked nonstop over the last week to make the Minister aware of the best course of action for the future of several fish species in Ontario, and to provide the Minister with the best available information demonstrating the disastrous results that would occur if the extreme and unwarranted actions were chosen instead.

The O.F.A.H. has recommended the following:

Egg & Spawn Collection (Rainbow & Steelhead)

1. Status quo for collection and stocking within infected waters.
2. If stocking outside infected waters, disinfections required.

Baitfish

1. Harvest and use within infected waters.
2. No transfer outside of infected waters.

Fishways (Rainbow/Steelhead)

1. Status quo with fish passage to spawning areas. This is the position of the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and New York, and is currently authorized by Great Lakes Fish Community Objectives and M.N.R. watershed-based Fisheries Management Plans.

Egg & Spawn Collections (Walleye)

1. Continue moratorium of egg/spawn collection from infected waters for stocking outside of infected waters in the absence of disinfections method.
2. Outside infected waters, status quo.

Fishways (Walleye) e.g. Dunnville dam/Grand River

1. Status quo fish passage must continue because dam/barrier does not prevent passage of salmonids.

“Any decision by the M.N.R. to arbitrarily halt the collection of eggs, ban baitfish or eliminate the movement of fish in traditional waterways would spell disaster for the future of rainbow trout in Lake Ontario and surrounding waters,” said Mike Reader, O.F.A.H. Executive Director. “The best available information, and the position taken by the neighbouring states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, clearly shows that prohibitions on fish passage are unwarranted and would have huge negative consequences. We trust that the Minister will listen to the O.F.A.H. and others who have strongly advised against taking extreme actions that will have no effect on the spread of VHS, but could damage conservation, fish reproduction and provincial hatchery systems for years to come.”

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