



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

ESTABLISHED BY CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES TO IMPROVE AND PERPETUATE FISHERY RESOURCES

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INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION AND BROOKFIELD RENEWABLE POWER JOIN FORCES WITH GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION TO BATTLE DESTRUCTIVE SEA LAMPREY

Project to remove large numbers of sea lampreys from the Great Lakes by altering water flow to increase trapping in the St. Marys River

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission will once again commence a major initiative this week to study ways to considerably enhance sea lamprey trapping on the St. Marys River. The initiative was conceived collaboratively by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the International Joint Commission's International Upper Great Lakes Study and first implemented in 2011. Trapping sea lamprey – a non-native fish predator that has caused major ecologic and economic harm to the Great Lakes – before they spawn and contribute to the next generation is a major element of the sea lamprey control program. The enhanced trapping study—conducted in partnership with Brookfield Renewable Power in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario—will involve a change in the timing and volume of water provided to the company for electricity generation. Conditions on the St. Marys River rapids may appear atypical to anglers and other users due to re-distribution of water through the compensating gates. The International Joint Commission and its Lake Superior Board of Control, which has authority over water flow levels, facilitated the conditions for this initiative. This work is funded in part through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Since it spread throughout the system during the early 20th Century, the sea lamprey has wreaked havoc on the Great Lakes fishery. After the near-collapse of the lake trout population in the 1940s, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, formed in 1955, implemented a sea lamprey control program that has successfully reduced sea lamprey populations by 90%, resulting in a thriving fishery. The goal is to reduce sea lamprey populations to levels consistent with the objectives of provincial, state, tribal, and federal fishery agencies. Sea lamprey populations are still above target levels in parts of the basin.

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The St. Marys River is considered to be *the* major single source of sea lampreys into Lake Huron. Trapping spawning sea lampreys is a critical element of the control program in the St. Marys River and is complemented by the use of the lampricide, granular Bayluscide. Some of the most productive trapping sites are located at power facilities, as the higher flows produced at the power facilities are more attractive to sea lampreys. The commission has been working with Brookfield Renewable Power for many years to seek ways to improve trapping near its facility.

Power companies typically decrease flows during the night (off-peak hours) to curtail power generation during times of reduced power demands. Evidence shows, however, that sea lamprey trapping can likely be enhanced with increased water flows at night, when sea lampreys are most active. To help in the sea lamprey control effort, Brookfield Renewable Power agreed to increase flows during off-peak hours on alternate nights so the commission can determine the effect of increased flows on the efficiency of sea lamprey traps placed at the power facilities.

The International Joint Commission, through its Lake Superior Board of Control, approved the increased water allocation in support of the sea lamprey control program. The water flow—during the course of this operation—cannot exceed a total water limit, known as “Criterion C in Plan 1977A,” the regulations governing the outflow of Lake Superior. In the unlikely event that the “Criterion C” level is reached, this sea lamprey control operation will end and the power companies will forego additional power generation.

“The St. Marys River is a significant source of sea lampreys and can produce more sea lampreys than all other Great Lakes tributaries combined” said Commission Chair Robert Lambe. “The lampreys that come from St. Marys River system invade lakes Huron and Michigan and cause irreversible economic and ecological harm. If proven successful, this project will significantly improve the efficiency of trapping these noxious invaders before they are able to reproduce, thereby better protecting the multi-billion-dollar Great Lakes fishery.”

Lambe continued: “The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are fortunate to have partners like Brookfield Renewable Power. This company is clearly committed to protecting and restoring the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery.”

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is conducting this work in careful coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks Canada, the Batchewana First Nations, and other key stakeholders. For more information about the commission, visit www.glfc.org.

