

ST. MARYS RIVER REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN

NEWSLETTER

FISH & WILDLIFE EDITION

St. Marys River AOC

In 1987, the St. Marys River was recognized as an Area of Concern (AOC) under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between Canada and the United States. Environmental concerns in the AOC include water quality, contaminated sediment and impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. Shoreline alteration, industrialization, urban development and shipping activities have led to environmental challenges in the St. Marys River, however, progress has been made with achievements such as the development of wetland protection strategies and habitat restoration projects.



Colonial Waterbirds in the St. Marys River

Did you know that four species of colonial waterbirds have been found nesting on the St. Marys River? Surveys conducted every 10 years by Environment Canada have found herring gull, ring-billed gull, common tern and great blue heron nesting along various natural habitat features within the AOC. There is no evidence of impairment in colonial waterbirds attributable to local contamination effects within the AOC.



Status of Bird & Wildlife Deformities

Colonial waterbirds are considered top predators and occupy a high level within the aquatic food web. As such, they can accumulate contaminants that may affect their reproductive health and development. After deformities in common tern chicks were identified in the late 1990s, it was recommended that reproductive assessments be completed within the AOC. Recent studies carried out by Environment Canada indicate a high reproductive success of herring gulls and common terns similar to that of the rest of the region. While the black tern population size is low within the AOC, it is reflective of the low population throughout Ontario. There was no evidence of wildlife deformities that could be attributed to local contamination effects within the AOC.

St. Marys River Fishery

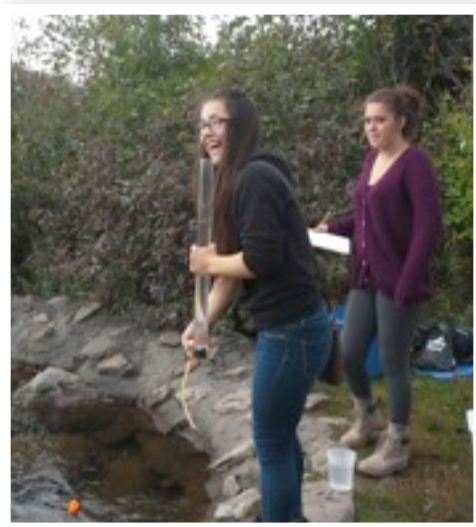
Fish population surveys completed in 2011 have shown that the St. Marys River supports a stable fishery. The fish community is diverse, abundant and comparatively un-impacted by historically invasive fish species. Although invasive sea lamprey are present within the river, efforts to control the population have been successful.

Fish consumption advisories are in effect for certain species within the St. Marys River including Chinook salmon, longnose sucker, rainbow trout and walleye. This is due to a combination of containments such as mercury, PCBs, and dioxins. Anyone who plans to catch and consume fish is encouraged to follow the advice of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change's *Guide to Eating Ontario Fish*. The guide is updated every two years to ensure everyone choosing to consume fish caught within Ontario will not be unnecessarily exposed to contaminants from the Great Lakes.



Coastal Wetland Habitat

In August, Environment Canada completed a coastal wetland habitat assessment. Coastal wetlands within the St Marys River AOC were surveyed to assess the condition of wetland habitats and their wildlife communities. Coastal wetlands provide a number of ecological functions including wildlife habitat. Understanding the current state and health of coastal wetlands is important to help protect these valuable habitats. For more information and to view the report please visit: <http://bpac.algomau.ca>



Local high school students learning about the St. Marys River AOC.

How can you get involved?

Cleaning up an AOC requires a dedicated team. Many of the projects undertaken in the St. Marys River owe their success to enduring partnerships at the binational, national, provincial and local scale. If you are interesting in helping to remediate the St. Marys River, please contact the Remedial Action Plan Coordinator at 705-949-2301 x 3156.

For more information:

For more information on the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan visit:

<http://bpac.algomau.ca>

For more information on Areas of Concern visit:

ec.gc.ca/raps-pas