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NEW YORK'S ORWELL BROOK BARRIER NEWEST SEA LAMPREY CONTROL TOOL

*Barrier dedication celebrates continued effort to protect Lake Ontario fishery
from sea lamprey destruction*

ANN ARBOR, MI—A new weapon was added to the sea lamprey control program arsenal today: a sea lamprey barrier and trap on New York's Orwell Brook. Installation of the barrier will eliminate annual lampricide treatments that have been conducted on the brook since 2007, thereby saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in treatment costs. Orwell and Pekin brooks, tributaries to Lake Ontario's Salmon River, produce tens of thousands of sea lamprey larvae annually that contribute to the Lake Ontario sea lamprey population and to the destruction that sea lampreys bring to the fishery. A single adult lamprey can kill up to 40 pounds of fish in one year.

Sea lamprey control is essential to the Great Lakes fishery and contributes to a healthy environment, robust economy, and more than \$7 billion in economic return annually to the people of Canada and the United States. The first recorded observation of the invasive, noxious sea lamprey in Lake Ontario was in 1830. By the late 1930s sea lampreys were in all five of the Great Lakes and had decimated the once thriving fisheries, causing the region's economy and hundreds of thousands of people that relied on the fishery for jobs to suffer tremendously. Established by the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954, a treaty between Canada and the United States, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is charged with delivering the sea lamprey control program in partnership with other agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Fishery agencies, like the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, depend on the sea lamprey control program to support activities such as fish stocking, habitat recovery, and species restoration.

Lampricides, pesticides specific to lamprey, are the primary tool to control sea lampreys in the Great Lakes. However, other tools like sea lamprey barriers are critical as well. Sea lampreys need access to spawning habitat; barriers prevent access. Once a barrier is installed in a stream, lampricide treatments are needed only infrequently upstream of the barrier.

The new barrier at Orwell Brook is an adjustable crest, low-head barrier fitted with aluminum stop logs that can be removed outside the period of the sea lamprey migration to facilitate passage of other migratory fish species. During the sea lamprey migration in spring, the stop logs will be employed to prevent sea lamprey from reaching prime spawning habitat in Orwell and Pekin Brooks upstream of the barrier. The vertical drop of the barrier is sufficient to block adult sea lampreys, while permitting passage of jumping species, such as steelhead and Atlantic salmon. Migrating sea lampreys are captured in a built-in trap, which will be monitored and operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and will be used to provide data for estimating the sea lamprey population in Lake Ontario.

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At least one final lampricide treatment will be conducted upstream of the barrier this year (2013) to remove any remnant larvae. In subsequent years, the portion of Orwell Brook from the barrier downstream to the junction with the main Salmon River will be treated every three years. This will eliminate any larvae spawned in this short section of stream.

“Since sea lampreys first entered the Great Lakes in the late 1800s, they have caused tremendous destruction to the fishery,” said Michael Hansen, chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. “Fortunately, we have a number of tools to control sea lamprey. The commission and its partners have slashed sea lamprey populations by 90%. The Great Lakes fishery depends on effective sea lamprey control through projects such as the Orwell Brook Sea Lamprey Barrier.”

Paul Sullivan, Division Manager of the Sea Lamprey Control Centre for Fisheries and Oceans Canada added: “A single female lamprey can produce more than 100,000 eggs so they have extremely high reproductive potential. Removing lamprey from the system before they spawn is a key element of the successful control program. This barrier will block access to spawning lamprey which will, in turn, reduce sea lamprey production, save hundreds of thousands of dollars otherwise required for lampricide treatment, and protect fish from sea lamprey predation.”

“The State of New York is a proud partner in this effort,” said Joe Martens, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “We have some of the finest fishing in the country right here in our backyard and the Department of Environmental Conservation is committed to protecting it. Sea lamprey control is a critical part of the effort to keep the lakes great, improve the health of the ecosystem, and maintain a \$117 million dollar industry that is so important to the communities in this region.”

Kasia Mullett of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who serves as the Sea Lamprey Control Program Field Supervisor in Marquette, Michigan, concluded: “Sea lamprey barriers throughout the Great Lakes basin prevent sea lampreys from accessing tens of thousands of miles of Great Lakes streams for spawning. By denying sea lampreys access to their spawning grounds, we save millions of dollars in treatment costs and save millions of Great Lakes fish from an early death by sea lamprey predation.”



Construction of the Orwell Brook Sea Lamprey Barrier and trap was completed through a successful collaboration among the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. This is the first purpose-built sea lamprey barrier to be constructed in the State of New York. It was designed by Miller Engineers of Syracuse, New York, and was constructed by Procon Contracting of Vestal, New York.