



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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

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BROOKFIELD RENEWABLE POWER AND CLOVERLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE JOIN FORCES WITH COMMISSION TO BATTLE DESTRUCTIVE SEA LAMPREY

Altered water flow to improve trapping and remove large numbers of sea lampreys from the Great Lakes

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission will launch a major initiative this week to significantly enhance sea lamprey trapping on the St. Marys River. The effort, conceived collaboratively by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the International Joint Commission's International Upper Great Lakes Study, is designed to remove large numbers of the noxious, invasive pest before they have a chance to spawn and contribute to the next generation. The enhanced trapping—conducted in partnership with Brookfield Renewable Power in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and Cloverland Electric Cooperative in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan—will involve a change in the timing and volume of water provided to the two companies for their electricity generation. Anglers and other users may notice different-than-usual conditions in the St. Marys River rapids 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.

The sea lamprey is a non-native fish predator that has caused major ecologic and economic harm to the Great Lakes since it spread throughout the system during the early 20th Century. Since the 1950s, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission has implemented a sea lamprey control program that has successfully reduced sea lamprey populations by 90%, though the species is still above target levels in parts of the basin. The goal is to reduce sea lamprey populations to levels consistent with the objectives of provincial, state, tribal, and federal fishery agencies.

The St. Marys River is a significant source of sea lampreys and can produce more sea lampreys than all other Great Lakes tributaries combined. In addition to spot treatments with lampricides and the release of sterilized male sea lampreys, trapping of spawning sea lampreys is a major component of the control program on the St.

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Marys River. The commission has been working with Brookfield Renewable Power and Cloverland Electric Cooperative for many years to seek ways to improve trapping—some of the most effective trapping sites are located at power facilities, as the higher flows produced at the power facilities are more attractive to sea lampreys.

Evidence shows that trapping can likely be enhanced with increased water flows at night, when sea lampreys are most active and trapping most successful. Power companies, however, normally decrease flows during the night (off-peak hours) to curtail power generation during times of reduced power demands. To help in the sea lamprey control effort, Brookfield Renewable Power and Cloverland Electric Cooperative have 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—over 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 an incredibly productive source of sea lampreys,” said Commission Chair Robert Lambe. “Like an invading army, sea lampreys from the river ravage the Lakes Huron and Michigan fisheries and cause severe economic and ecological harm. If this project proves successful, we believe the increased trapping will reduce sea lamprey populations in the St. Marys River, 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 and Cloverland Electric Cooperative. These companies have worked closely with us for decades to battle the sea lamprey and clearly play a key role in 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.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. In partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey, the commission has the responsibility to control the invasive sea lamprey. Visit www.glfsc.org for more information.