

# NEWS RELEASE

## RVCA SEARCHES FOR AMERICAN EELS

RIDEAU VALLEY, FEBRUARY 23, 2011 — The RVCA and neighbouring Conservation Authorities are on the lookout for American Eels. Once an abundant fish species in the area, the American eel population has declined making them an endangered species.

The American Eel is often confused with snakes or lampreys, but eels are a type of fish with fins, gills and very small scales. These eels are particularly interesting and unique as they travel over 6,000 kilometres from the Sargasso Sea near the Bermuda Triangle to live in our local freshwater lakes, rivers and streams. Once mature, anywhere from 10 to 25 years old, they return to the Sargasso Sea to spawn and die and the migration cycle for the next generation begins again.

In the summer of 2010, RVCA summer staff conducted surveys for American Eels during their field research activities. The goal was to learn about their distribution and habitat in both the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers. No eels were found but this is not surprising given that the eel population in the Upper St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario has declined by 99 percent since the 1970s. In fact, Ontario cancelled all commercial and recreational fishing of the American Eel in 2004 to protect dwindling numbers.

The future of the American eel in Ontario waters is uncertain, but everyone recognizes that it is an important part of the diversity of life in our watercourses. Anglers and outdoor enthusiasts are asked to help. If you see or catch an American Eel while fishing contact the RVCA (613-692-3571 ext. 1176 or [michael.yee@rvca.ca](mailto:michael.yee@rvca.ca)) or the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources with details such as the location, bait or lure type, time of day, estimated length and general habitat. A picture would also be helpful. If you accidentally catch an American Eel, please release it immediately unharmed.

For more information on this unusual species in Ontario, visit [www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/SORR/2columnSubPage/EELPAGE.html](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/SORR/2columnSubPage/EELPAGE.html).

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**For more information on the RVCA American Eel Project, please contact:**

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