

News Release

Fish Habitat Improvements on Otty Lake Show Great Results — Improvements Continue this Fall

Tay River Watershed, July 29, 2014 — The Otty Lake Association and Rideau Valley Conservation Authority's (RVCA) quest to enhance spawning, nursery and feeding areas for smallmouth bass in Otty Lake is seeing positive results.

In October 2013, 92 gravel spawning beds were installed 40 feet apart across almost a kilometer of the lake bottom. An additional 150 recycled Christmas trees were submerged and anchored on the bed of the lake (over 15 feet deep) in designated areas to provide areas where fish can rest, find shelter and feed.

Recent monitoring of the project shows impressive early results. Of the 43 visible nests, 38 were in use with a male bass guarding the nest.

"The new beds are doing exactly what we hoped they would do," said Jennifer Lamoureux, RVCA Aquatic and Fish Habitat Biologist. "The beds are being accepted by the bass community and will provide exceptional spawning and nursery habitat. And in time, they will become homes to many food sources such as crayfish and aquatic insects — all part of a healthy, natural lake ecosystem."

With an impressive 88 percent success rate on the new spawning nests, the groups are looking to continue with further habitat improvements.

This September, volunteers from the Otty Lake Association and RVCA staff will install more spawning beds and submerge more trees. Boulders will also be dropped at various nests. "The boulders will provide cover for the guarding male and fry. The males are very aggressive in the spring," says Lamoureux. "Boulders are inexpensive, natural features that we can add to the site and mimic naturally found conditions."

What's particularly interesting is the budget. Phase 1 was completed at a cost of \$2,400. Phase 2 also has a budget of \$2,400 — small numbers for big results.

"It just goes to show how resourceful we can be when we work together," says Robert Cosh, President of the Otty Lake Association. "With the right partners, we can come together to get innovative, effective work done. We are delighted with the results and continue to work towards building a sustainable smallmouth bass population for years to come."

Funding for this special project has been provided by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation, Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program, the Fisheries and Oceans Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program and the Otty Lake Association.

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