

Combined
Annual DEC State of the Lake
ELOSTA Monthly Membership Meeting Minutes
Thursday March 9, 2009
(Also available at www.elosta.org)

Gerry Bresadola called Elostas first monthly meeting of the 2009 summer season to order at 7:00 PM on March 9th at the BOCES Education Center on County Rte. 64 in Mexico, NY. Gerry briefly explained Elostas objectives and he noted that tickets for the Lowrance sonar/GPS drawing and various articles of ELOSTA clothing were available for sale. President Ames and VP Doug Fuegel who are in Florida and Texas respectively should return in time for the April 15th meeting. Between 50 and 60 guests attended to hear and contribute to DEC staff summaries concerning the current status of Lake Ontario and St Lawrence River fishery resources. Mac MacKenzie acted in his capacity as Secretary.

Gerry noted that the reading of the October 08 minutes and Tom Lott's Treasurer's Report would be tabled until the April meeting at Gander Mountain. At 7:12PM he turned the meeting over to Dan Bishop who introduced the various speakers and their specific areas of interest. Handouts depicting the statistical data and graphic presentations contained in the annual report entitled Executive Summary (ES) and, a new report entitled Lake Ontario Fish Community Objectives (LOFCO) were available. Simply put, the FCO is similar to a corporate plan that addresses current programs, alternatives, and long range goals. The major topics addressed in the reports included:

Sport Fishery Assessment – Is based primarily upon a long term average of angler catch rates and charter trip surveys. Angler effort remained strong for the period and the 2008 catch rates for Chinook salmon, rainbow trout, and brown trout continued to be comparable to the long term means. In general the number of boat trips indicates no change in the targeting of trout and salmon in recent years. The 07-08 pre-season effort on bass was below average. Bass seasonal catch rates also remained below average. Suspected, among other localized influences, is the presence of round gobies.

Prey Fish Assessment - The overall abundance and condition of adult alewife which has increased from 2007 and was higher than anticipated and consistent with a ten year mean. Statistics suggest that alewife populations tend to maintain levels that are consistent with the production of food resources from the lake's lower food web. Rainbow smelt continue to be scarce and improved netting equipment has returned increased numbers of deepwater sculpin, once thought to be extirpated. Gobies, first identified in 2002 are now prevalent along the entire south shore of Lake Ontario. The highest populations are just east of the Niagara River with some relatively large specimens lurking around out there.

Cold Water Fishery Management – Low flows of relatively warm water in the Salmon River during the fall of 07 resulted in a significantly reduced number of fish (all species) available for stocking in the spring of 08. However, angler surveys revealed that the mean

weight and length of Chinook salmon had increased over previous years. Rainbow trout continue to run smaller than the long term average.

The establishment of base flows from hydro electric facilities on the Salmon River several seasons ago has resulted in a significant increase in the natural reproduction of Chinook salmon. The 2008 hauls of YOY Chinook indicated levels that were well below average. This drop is also attributed to low flow and warm water conditions in the Salmon River during the fall of 2007. The use of DEC's new mobile fish counting and marking facility to tag every Chinook stocked will provide the data long needed to ascertain the actual numbers of naturally reproduced fish in the system.

The eleventh year for net-pen projects along the southern shore of Lake Ontario has once again proven to be highly successful. Low mortality rates for Chinook salmon and steelhead reared at these sites have resulted in a relatively large number of fish reaching target weights.

Lake Trout Restoration – The catch rates for lake trout continue to be low. The relatively poor return is contributed, in part, to a major decline in the population of adult fish and much improved Chinook opportunities. No significant changes in the current status of lake trout are anticipated.

Warm Water Fisheries – Over 55 thousand walleye fingerlings were stocked in various Lake Ontario embayments and the Niagara River. Walleye abundance in 08 was well above the previous five and ten year averages. The strong 03 year class represented over 18% of the 08 catch. Overall, the Catch-Per-Unit-Effort (CPUE) in the 2008 Eastern Basin gill netting surveys was higher than the previous five and ten year averages. These increases are attributed to a much higher prevalence of white and yellow perch. Smallmouth bass populations remain well above 2000-04 levels but are slightly below the 06-07 averages. The occurrence of gobies in predator diets has increased throughout the 05-08 period

DEC staff fielded numerous questions from the floor and distributed a document entitled **Lake Ontario Fish Community Objectives Survey**. The purpose of the survey is to obtain public input and concerns regarding preferred fishing techniques, fish species, management programs, related recreational interests, environmental concerns, and demographic segmentation etc. The results of the survey, which could prove to be interesting, will be sent to those who provided their names and addresses.

Dan Bishop thanked all those who attended and the meeting was adjourned at 9PM. Next meeting is at 7PM, Apr 15 at Gander Mountain in Cicero. Walk-ins are welcome.

NOTE:

This will be the last Newsletter you will receive if you have not submitted your renewal applications by April 15, 2009. Second renewal notices have been mailed and application forms are available at www.elosta.org.