



115-40 Sunset Blvd., Perth, ON K7H 2Y4
613.264.1244 info@watersheds.ca watersheds.ca

April 24, 2024

Ontario Wildlife Foundation
PO Box 1598 Stn. Main
Peterborough, ON
K9J 7S4

Re: "Restoring critical fish habitats in Eastern Ontario" final project report

Directed to Ms. Diane McGrath, Program Administrator,

Watersheds Canada is a national charity focused on providing individuals and communities with the resources and training they need to protect their lakes, rivers, and shorelines. We envision people caring for their local waters, resulting in clean, healthy lakes and rivers that will support humans and wildlife for years to come. This is possible because of our collaboratively delivered programs that see passionate community groups restoring habitat and delivering education and stewardship programs. We believe in sharing our resources, expertise, and programs with everyone, allowing us to make the greatest improvement to freshwater health possible. When we teach people how they can help, we give them the power to pass that knowledge to others.

Funding from Ontario Wildlife Foundation has directly supported our mission by allowing us to work alongside community groups, shoreline property owners, and students across Central-Eastern Ontario as they restored and enhanced critical fish habitat on their lakes. Thanks to generous funding from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation, the following projects have taken place:

1. Two volunteers, including a grade 11 student interested in a fisheries biology career, and Watersheds Canada staff were on Big Clear Lake in fall 2023 to sweep and wash silt off the historic walleye spawning bed. Rock will be added on the ice in winter 2025.
2. Twenty volunteers and Watersheds Canada staff were together on Farren Lake to build 23 bundles made of brush and branches. These bundles were deployed on the lake and will provide excellent habitat for smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, sunfish, and yellow perch.
3. A site visit was completed in summer 2023 for the lake trout spawning bed restoration taking place on Paugh Lake. Ten volunteers and Watersheds Canada staff added 17 tonnes of smaller gravel-sized stone on top of the ice in February 2024. With the spring ice melt, the rocks fell into place overtop the historic spawning bed and will ensure the lake trout have areas to lay their eggs that will receive enough oxygenation.
4. A site visit was completed in summer 2023 for the walleye spawning bed restoration taking place on Robertson Lake. Rock will be added on the ice in winter 2025.

Your Lakes. Your Rivers. Your Future.



5. Media coverage for the projects was substantial and included 4 media pieces, 10 social media posts, and 2 newsletter features, reaching over 14,100 people.

- <https://www.facebook.com/watershedscanada/posts/pfbid02VcNdYUN9KD373N5AUuis9yXnYqXiVPy7kHgJCHKGWD2GUhESNyKyXcFUafNhaCSl>
- <https://www.facebook.com/watershedscanada/posts/pfbid033QQZ5omZ8bV7yJUmGPoZsbmArFzptWG3xKsc4q9UX3Pqx8cFko4BeXhT2m8esHhml>
- https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid023QzVByNYvesxKhsWyszLeFqFcre1icpC3ifku8hHR2gEa1a3U5H7z1gjTK8mvLXI&id=100064441372168
- <https://twitter.com/WatershedsCAN/status/1737532865297158437>
- <https://twitter.com/WatershedsCAN/status/1760349080201338935>
- https://www.instagram.com/p/CzjNzKhJkHD/?img_index=1
- https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Ht5EYNXRw/?img_index=1
- https://www.instagram.com/p/C4BCCE9qxvj/?img_index=1
- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7143585900550135808>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/spawning-beds-ice-watershedscanada-4duye>
- <https://watersheds.ca/farren-lake-fish-2023-news-release/>
- <https://watersheds.ca/spawning-beds-on-ice/>
- <https://watersheds.ca/an-ice-road-to-rome-trout-spawning-bed-restored-in-madawaska-valley-ontario>
- <https://thevalleygazette.ca/lake-trout-spawning-bed-restored-on-paugh-lake/>

The Big Clear Lake project focused on a historic walleye spawning bed that has been silted over and damaged by ice push. The bed was washed in fall 2023 and additional stone will be placed to restore this walleye population in winter 2025. The second part of this restoration project was delayed due to unsafe ice conditions in winter 2024.

The Farren Lake project focused on enhancement to the in-water habitat as recent human activity and development had significantly reduced the amount of natural woody debris in the lake. The local community utilized materials to build the debris piles, giving them the opportunity to promote the health of wildlife populations and improve water quality as they created additional aquatic habitat. The brush bundles were deployed in August 2024 and will improve fisheries on the lakes as they provide fish with areas to rest, feed, spawn, and hide. We were also pleased to have the Reeve of Tay Valley Township participate in this project.

The Paugh Lake project focused on restoring the cold-water fishery and historic lake trout spawning bed. Wave action and ice movement and push had altered the rock formations on the spawning bed, making it less productive for the fish to spawn on. In February 2024, volunteers transported 17 tonnes of smaller gravel-sized stone across a plowed ice road to the spawning bed. With the spring ice melt, the rocks fell into place overtop the spawning bed and will ensure the lake trout have areas to lay their eggs that will receive enough oxygenation.

The Robertson Lake project focused on locating the degraded walleye habitat on the lake which will be restored in winter 2025. The second part of this restoration project was delayed due to unsafe ice conditions in winter 2024.



Support from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation is benefiting fish and wildlife populations and local fishing communities. Passionate volunteers and all lake residents and visitors can continue to fish because they directly conserved and protected their local natural resources. This was possible because of financial support from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation. You are bringing these communities together as they gain a new-found appreciation and understanding of threats to their local fisheries and the importance of protecting them with good stewardship on their waterfront properties and lake as a whole. We are grateful to the Ontario Wildlife Foundation for ensuring this critical fish habitat restoration work could take place in 2023-2024.

Sincerely,

Melissa Dakers
Habitat and Stewardship Program Manager
Watersheds Canada

613-200-9405
dakers@watersheds.ca

Enclosed: Project Photos



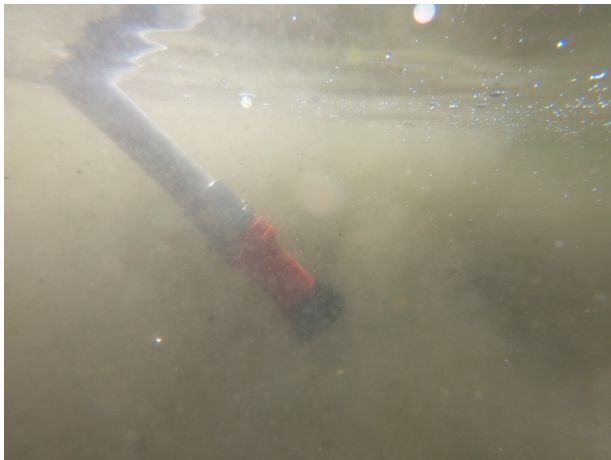
Big Clear Lake



State of spawning bed before washing.



Watersheds Canada staff washing the bed.



Underwater view as silt is washed off the bed.



The cleaned spawning bed after washing.



Watersheds Canada staff after the successful washing of the spawning bed.



Farren Lake



Community members and Watersheds Canada staff work together to build and deploy 23 brush bundles.



Paugh Lake



Lake trout spawning bed before restoration.



Staff and a lake volunteer conduct the site visit.



Community members and Watersheds Canada staff work together to spread seventeen tonnes of smaller gravel-sized stone above the historic spawning bed. The stone fell into place with the spring melt.



Robertson Lake



Above water views of the historic walleye spawning bed as seen during the summer 2023 site visit with a lake volunteer and Watersheds Canada staff.