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December 22, 2023

Ontario Wildlife Foundation
PO Box 1598 Stn. Main
Peterborough, ON
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Re: "Restoring critical fish habitats in Eastern Ontario" project interim report

Directed to Ms. Diane McGrath, Program Administrator,

Watersheds Canada is a national non-profit and charitable organization 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 individuals and 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 the 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 restore and enhance critical fish habitat on their lakes. Thanks to generous funding from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation, we have been able to already complete many of the desired outcomes of this project! These are the key highlights to date:

1. One volunteer and Watersheds Canada staff were together on Big Clear Lake in fall 2023 to sweep and wash silt off the historic walleye spawning bed. The second part of this project will take place in February 2024 (depending on seasonal conditions) when washed river stone is added on top of the ice which will fall into place with spring melt.
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. Rock will be added on the ice in February 2024 (depending on when the lake freezes).

Your Lakes. Your Rivers. Your Future.



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 February 2024 (depending on when the lake freezes).
5. Media coverage for the project so far includes 2 media releases, 6 social media posts, and 2 newsletter features, reaching over 7,000 people.
Links: [Facebook post #1](#), [Facebook post #2](#), [Twitter post #1](#), [Instagram post #1](#), [Instagram post #2](#), [LinkedIn post #1](#), [Media release #1](#), [Media release #2](#)

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. Funding from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation allowed the local community to purchase 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 deployed brush bundles will improve fisheries on the lakes as they provide fish with areas to rest, feed, spawn, and escape predators.

Support from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation will benefit fish and wildlife populations in Big Clear Lake, Farren Lake, Paugh Lake, and Robertson Lake, and the local fishing communities. Passionate, local volunteers and all lake residents and visitors can continue to enjoy fishing on their lakes as they know they directly helped conserve and protect their local natural resources. This was possible because of generous 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.

Our desired project outcomes have so far been achieved. There were not any major changes to the scope of the projects based on what we stated in our original application. We look forward to the rest of our project, which includes further enhancement and restoration of fish habitat.

Sincerely,

Melissa Dakers
Habitat and Stewardship Program Manager
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Enclosed: Project Photos



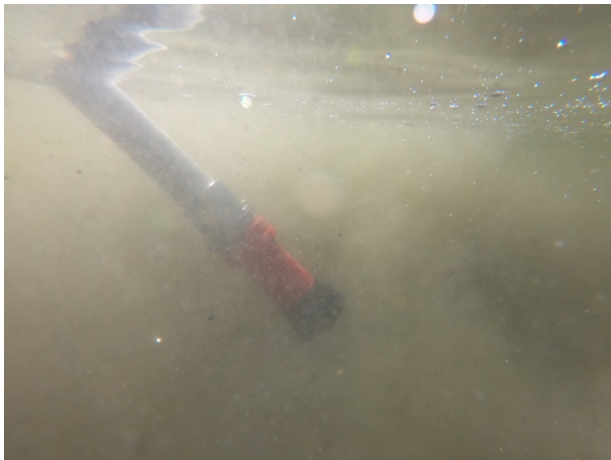
Big Clear Lake



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 takes place.



Watersheds Canada staff and a lake volunteer conduct the site visit.



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.