

MINUTES

December 2, 2009

ST. MALO LAKE STEWARDSHIP WORKING GROUP MEETING

Present: Marc Hamonic, Luc Lahaie, Neil Loughran, Georges Beaudry, Kristy-Layne Carr, Pat Watson, Jules Gosselin, Gerry Maynard, Jodi Goerzen

Invited Guests: Doug Leroux, Ken Kansas

1. Welcome of Invited Guests – Doug Leroux, Regional Fisheries Manager; Ken Kansas, Regional Fisheries Biologist
2. Approval of the Agenda

10-2009: Gerry Maynard – Georges Beaudry

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the agenda be hereby adopted as presented.

CARRIED

3. Approval of October 26, 2009 Minutes

i) Members review the minutes and decide to remove bullet 2, in section #7

11-2009: Georges Beaudry – Neil Loughran

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the minutes be hereby adopted with the above mentioned amendment.

CARRIED

4. Question Period with our invited guests

Doug & Ken have prepared answers to the questions that were sent to them ahead of time. They discuss the information and accept new questions that arise.

#1&2. Status of the Fishery & Sport Fish Capacity of the Lake

- There is not a lot of data for the St Malo Lake. Some data was recorded in the Rat River/Joubert Creek Aquatic Habitat and Riparian Assessment Survey (SRRCD-2005) but the results on fish populations were not particularly useful.

#3. Fish Stocking & Monitoring

- The Lake was stocked in 1961-1967, primarily with Rainbow Trout. Bass were introduced in 1964, and in the early to mid 1980's, walleye were stocked as fry, and as fertilized eggs (inefficient method). Since the 1990's, 2 million walleye have been released into St Malo Lake, mostly from the Falcon Lake Hatchery. This number seems high but a female walleye can produce 3000 eggs at one time.
- The St Malo Wildlife Association has also done some fish stocking with walleye fingerlings. The fingerlings, which numbered 100,000 per bag, were emptied into shallow ponds. The Association used trap nets to move them to the Lake over summer. In one pond, they found around 100 fish, while others didn't produce at all. This was done for approximately 3 or 4 years. The Métis Federation is trying to start up their own fingerling program using gravel pits to grow the fish. The Wildlife Association then changed their method to directly releasing the fingerlings into the Lake. Ken adds that for best survival, the fingerlings should be released where the plankton is located. The St Malo Wildlife Association has not stocked in 3 years as it was not wildly successful.
- MB Fisheries branch has recently acquired an electro fishing boat that produces an electric current in the water allowing monitoring of the fish populations without killing them. It works best in shallow water at night. It has been used for the first time this past season for learning/training purposes. The plan is to come to St Malo Lake in spring to do some sampling. MB Conservation did stretch a gill net across the Lake 10 years ago to see what they would catch. They were surprised by the large number of fish that they caught.
- Doug and Ken agree that they will inform the committee on what the Fisheries Branch is doing and vice versa. Ken has a lot of experience with weed growth and re-contouring Lake bottoms, which could be useful to the committee.

Will Fisheries be able to tell the committee if Lake conditions are affecting fish?

- Spring will be a good time to monitor the populations.
- What does the committee expect from the Lake (& consequently the fishery)? There needs to be a goal in mind before recommendations will be helpful. Is the focus on big, desirable fish and lots of them, or is it for kids to catch any kind of fish regardless of size. Is it recreation? Sometimes these uses don't always complement each other in terms of management.
- Most fishing is done in the winter.
- The committee would like to be directed to solutions.
- MB Fisheries will look at Pickerel (Walleye), which is the main fish being stocked, but has not been stocked every year. The fish can be aged to determine if the

fish are naturally spawning or are the result of stocking (fish age relates back to stocking year). It appears that upstream habitat is decent for Walleye.

- MB Fisheries will let the group know when they are to go on the Lake so that Gerry can be present.
- It is easy and economical to stock fry.

Is the current fishery able to provide a return to angler's in the local opinion?

- There are lots of Jack, Perch, Rock Bass and some Large Mouth Bass.

Would trapping adult fish work to stock the Lake?

- It is illegal for the public, and would need to be approved before the Province could do it.
- If all of those other fish are in the Lake, Walleye fry are at a disadvantage. Fingerlings would probably do better.

Vegetation/weed/algal growth

- Weed growth is critical to fish for food. Weed harvesters & herbicides in Southwestern MB have only made things worse. In Roblin, the old lagoon discharged directly into the lake, later causing a problem with algae. Aerators cleared up the algae, BUT allowed more light penetration and the weeds went nuts. They brought in a combine harvester which fragmented the weeds, making them thicker.

#5. Fish Ladder & Vegetation

- Goldeye, Silver Bass & Sturgeon were once present in the Lake (came upstream from the Red River in the 1950's) but now can't get to it because of the dam.
- St Malo Wildlife Association (SMWA) does not want carp as they stir up the bottom and release nutrients. In a small lake, this can cause problems.
- Goldeye and Silver Bass may not even like the lake if there was a ladder. They are expensive to build, and it is impossible to exclude a single species.
- Pickerel and Jack can't get into the Lake either. They would come from the Red River and enhance the Lake. The possibility is, that if there was a ladder, Pickerel could keep going upstream past the Lake, stopping when they hit an obstruction or habitat that they like.
- SMWA want kids to be able to catch something; it doesn't really matter what it is.

- There is a balance depending on what you want to achieve. Weeds are important to fish, especially Jack. The Wild Rice population is increasing at the south end. Coon tail & Milfoil are thick as well.

Gas powered boats

- Having gas powered boats on the Lake is a social issue not a biological one. In Knee Lake, boats chewed up the “cabbage” which Jack love. Big boats can have negative impacts on shorelines (wakeboard boats). This will be a problem. Smaller boats could be a problem. Propellers are not an issue for depth.

Water Levels & DFO

- Water levels were lowered in 1970 or 1975 and in 1996, with the intent to remove vegetation and sediment. The sediment removal didn’t go through in 1996.
- DFO would have to approve something like that. MB Fisheries deals with DFO a lot. The Fishery is Provincial while the habitat is Federal. Ken & Doug can help the committee deal with DFO.

Miscellaneous

- Stephenfield Lake is similar to St Malo Lake.
- The Rat River can go dry in summer, more so downstream than upstream.
- Fluctuation of the Lake level is around 4 feet. There are no aerators. Water level fluctuation was intended at the beginning.
- Top fish caught in the Lake: 1. Jack 2. Rock Bass (summer) 3. Perch
- Some SMWA members want more Pickerel.
- The south end is almost all weeds, except for the original channel.
- A large scale weed reduction would probably not be beneficial.
- A good idea would be to map the vegetation.
- Suggestion: improve fishery access points
- Eutrophication is happening rapidly.
- There is not much fluctuation in the water level which can be negative to Lake health.

#6. Next Steps/Contacts

- MB Fisheries will do the survey in spring (May).

- Ken has contacts for the weed issues, and would like to come out in summer to have a look at the Lake.
- A fisheries person could come out to look at fish migration downstream of the dam and upstream of the Lake in spring.
- SRRCD could apply to the Fisheries Enhancement Fund to hire a consultant to look at this.

5. Old Business

- a. Info from Arvid
 - i. He thought he sent some info to the SRRCD or the RM of De Salaberry but no one has seen anything yet.
 - ii. Marc will follow up with him.
- b. Orthomap showing drains
 - i. Members would like to also see summer vegetation on the Lake and related projects – Jodi will work on this.
- c. Map of Rat River Watershed – From study
 - i. Copies have been made
 - ii. SRRCD will highlight water flow and mark site locations
- d. Brochure – Riverbank/Lakeshore health
 - i. Will convert to pdf and e-mail to group
- e. Inform public
 - i. Chair sent update to local publication
- f. Provincial Infrastructure Evaluation – Marc will check with Arvid
- g. Report on why Lake was lowered in the 1990's – Marc will check with Arvid

6. Next Steps

- a. RM of De Salaberry Crown Land Retention Project
 - i. Will be surveyed this winter.
- b. Ernie Goertzen Water Retention Project
 - i. Selling price for land needs to be determined
- c. Cam-Mart Drain Erosion
 - i. Arvid will help look into this issue
 - ii. Contributes sediment to the Lake
- d. Other
 - i. IWMP – Tour of Rat River Watershed retention areas with Provincial hydrologists.
 - ii. Website – Info on St Malo Lake Steering Committee is up on the SRRCD website. Do members want the minutes posted as well?

12-2009: Marc Hamonic – Georges Beaudry

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the approved Minutes and the Terms of Reference for the St Malo Lake Steering Committee be posted on the SRRCD webpage.

CARRIED

7. Other Specialists

- a. Specialists – Donna Smiley, Onsite Wastewater Management Coordinator; Jen Shaykewich, Livestock Program Manager – MB Conservation
- b. Also invite:
Dave Stevens – Park Superintendant

8. Next Meeting

- a. In January – Kristy-Layne will send out an e-mail to confirm date after talking to MB Conservation

9. Adjournment

13-2009: Gerry Maynard – Georges Beaudry

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the meeting is hereby adjourned.

CARRIED