

**Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board
January 4, 2012**

TO: Chair and Members of Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board

SUBMITTED BY:



Phil Townsend, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: December 8, 2011

SUBJECT: High Fish Mortality at Lakes Banook & Micmac

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Chairman's Report, Meeting of October 5, 2011.

BACKGROUND

During mid-June 2011, several community members, including DLAB Chair Peter Connors, observed dead fish floating on the surface of Lake Banook and Lake Micmac. Many individuals reported these sightings to their local Councillor, who forwarded on their concerns to HRM staff. HRM staff brought these concerns forward to provincial and federal Environment agencies for their investigation.

The Chairman's Report revealed to HRM staff that the sightings of dead fish immediately followed a day-long catch-and-release bass fishing tournament on the lakes. It also revealed that the fish were handled in a manner that appeared to be aggressive and suggested a possible explanation for the subsequent observation of many dead fish.

DISCUSSION

In response to the observations and concerns raised at DLAB's October meeting, HRM staff contacted provincial staff with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (NSFA).

NSFA staff confirmed that two sanctioned bass fishing tournaments did occur on Lakes Banook & Micmac during the past summer; the first on Sunday June 12 and the second on Saturday August 13, and identified the clubs organizing the events. HRM staff were advised that average post-tournament mortality rates of 3-10% are commonly observed for small-mouth bass, but recognized that unconfirmed reports of dead fish counts (approximately 30) appeared to be abnormal at the water temperatures expected in June. Post tournament mortality rates can be affected by many factors such as increased water temperatures or poor fish handling practices.

NSFA staff further advised that, in accordance with its competitive sportsfishing policy, any competitive sportsfishing events, including tournaments, requires a permit from NSFA and must submit a post tournament report to NSFA. A total of 88 bass were brought to the weigh in location on June 12. Given high (10%) mortality rates, one would expect approximately 9 may have been affected; however, the total number of fish angled during the day may have been substantially higher. This permit recommends safe fish handling practices to participants. NSFA staff indicated that the organization that held this event are considered to be leaders in proper fish handling techniques and suggested that any associated mortality outside the expected could be an isolated incident or the result of other sources (e.g., environmental). The terms of this permit or its administration, may be reviewed and amended subsequent to an investigation by NSFA staff.

NSFA submits that every effort is made by both the Department and angling organizations sponsoring competitive fish events to ensure tournament angling has limited impact on fish populations but added that the current smallmouth bass population in Micmac and Banook lakes would be unaffected by a reduction of 30 fish.

In the event of future incidents of high fish mortalities, assumed to result from angling or competitive fishing events, members of DLAB and the public are referred to:

1. The published schedule of sportfishing events on the provincial website:
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/fevents.shtml>;
2. The Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (RFAC) for Area 3 (Halifax and Lunenburg)
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/rfac/>; and
3. Contacts with the Inland Fisheries Division of Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture:
Inland Fisheries Division
Attention: Jason LeBlanc – Fisheries Biologist
PO Box 700 Pictou, NS B0K 1H0
Phone: (902) 485-5056
Fax: (902) 485-4014

In the event of future incidents of high fish mortalities, assumed to result from other causes, members of DLAB and the public are referred to their local office of the Nova Scotia Department of Environment or Fisheries and Oceans (Canada).

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT


Two members of the Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board were consulted for their observations during and after the tournament for the purposes of this report and consultation with NSFA staff.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Cameron Deacoff, Environmental Performance Officer, 490-1926

Report Approved by: 
Richard MacLellan, Manager, Energy & Environment. 490-6056
