



Ottawa cancels salmon stocking program

By PAT LEE Staff Reporter
 Thu. May 8 - 11:58 AM



Volunteers from the Sackville Rivers Association help set several thousand speckled trout free in Lower Sackville's First Lake for recreational anglers. The organization recently held its annual stocking event at several area lakes. (PAT LEE / Community Herald)

LOWER SACKVILLE — About 18,000 salmon smolts were introduced into the Sackville River last week and they will likely be the last as the federal government has pulled the plug on the stocking program because of the cost.

It's a move that Walter Regan says will effectively kill the salmon stocks in the river and nearby waterways.

"The river will be on its own and it's not looking very good," Regan, head of the Sackville Rivers Association, said last week.

"The only thing that keeps the Atlantic salmon in our river and overcoming the affects of acid rain is the stocking program. If the river cannot maintain a run, in five years there will be no salmon in Halifax Harbour and the Sackville River."

Regan, whose group helped introduce the smolts into the river in three separate locations last week, said that with each smolt costing \$1, his organization can't afford to keep the program going without outside funding.

He said the river has been stocked since the mid-1980s, a time when it was almost declared dead. His group has been instrumental in nursing it back to health with large-scale cleanups and programs to educate business and residents about the importance of the waterway.

Along with probably the last salmon stocking effort, volunteers from the rivers association also helped provincial fishery employees stock several area lakes with speckled trout for the enjoyment of recreational anglers.

Last week, as part of an annual event, 1,000 one-year-old trout were put in both First and Second lakes last week. The trout were noted by several ospreys seen overhead not long after they were released.

Several association volunteers were on hand to help fish technicians Wade Fehr and Jeff Smith from the McGown Lake Fish Hatchery on the South Shore get the squirming trout into the lakes.

In honour of the Sackville Rivers Association's 20th anniversary, Regan said they also have put 20, five-pound trout into the lakes, which have special tags that can be turned in for free membership to the group and a prize.

Anglers can catch five fish a day until Sept. 1.

For more information, see www.sackvillerivers.ns.ca.

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