

Intruder alert

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CARP and MTRI address invasive fish species

By Carolyn Sloan
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Since the 1940s, the illegal transference and introduction of two invasive fish species in the province has posed a risk to native fish and aquatic animals, intruding on their habitat, altering habitat use, reducing their abundance and, in some cases, extirpating the wild populations.

In terms of the local region, the concern is that these two invasive species would impact brook trout and species at risk, including the

Blanding's turtle and the Eastern ribbonsnake. As such, the Mersey Tobiatic Research Institute (MTRI) and the Clean Annapolis River Project (CARP) are partnering on a new project to monitor and detect these invasive fish, such as the smallmouth bass and the chain pickerel, in the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve.

The project also involves educating people in southwestern Nova Scotia about the importance of preventing the introduction of invasive species in so that they do not destroy wild populations and habitat, such as has occurred in the LaHave River, where an explosion of smallmouth bass has threatened the salmon and trout population.

Aquatic ecosystem biolo-

gist at MRTI and project lead, Pierre Martel, says that CARP and MTRI will be looking for assistance from volunteer anglers to help monitor areas where the smallmouth bass and chain pickerel are already present.

"Anglers are the ones that are out there through fishing season and will be best able to report changes in distribution of these species," he explains.

Funding for the project was obtained through a new program created by the federal government to address the problem of exotic invasive species in Canada. The funding program follows the "Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada," which was approved in 2004 having been developed by federal,

provincial and territorial agencies.

Other supporters for the project include Trout Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture, Parks Canada, and the Blanding's turtle and Eastern ribbonsnake Recovery Teams. In addition to acquiring funding from Environment Canada's Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program, the project is also financially supported through Shell Environmental Fund and Trout Nova Scotia.

To get involved or for more information, contact Pierre Martel at MTRI by phone at 682-2371 or by e-mail at Pierre.martel@merseyto-beatic.ca.

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