



Alexander B. Grannis
Commissioner

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Christopher Amato, Assistant Commissioner

FROM: Patricia Riexinger, Director, DFWMR

SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT - April 2008

DATE: May 29, 2008

Information and Extension

Pesticides, Invasive Species Control and Informed Decision-Making - Tim Sinnott of the Ecotoxicology and Standards Unit gave a presentation to the Carmans River Work Group of the Town of Brookhaven (Long Island) whose task is to determine the best way to address the invasive aquatic vegetation problem in the Upper and Lower Lakes on the Carmans River. The Carmans River Work Group is made up of several member organizations, including the Coalition to Save The Yaphank Lakes, the Yaphank Civic Organization, Yaphank Historical Society, TNC, Trout Unlimited, Suffolk County Dept of Health, State Legislator Marc Alessi, County Legislator Kate Browning, Town Board Member Connie Kepert, Peconic Baykeeper Kevin McAlister and others. DEC is a non-voting member. The purpose of the talk was to provide an overview of how pesticides are registered in New York and how ecological risk assessments are conducted to evaluate the risks that a pesticide might have to non-target organisms. Three specific aquatic herbicides were discussed in detail: 2,4-D, Fluridone, and triclopyr. The intent of the presentation was neither to promote the use of aquatic herbicides nor argue against such use. Rather, it was to provide information to the group to enable them to make an informed decision.

Bureau of Habitat

Tim Sinnott

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Conesus Inlet Walleye Viewing Area Improved-Improvements were made to the Conesus Inlet Fish and Wildlife Management Area "Fish Walk" walleye viewing area by replacing the old display case and making the walk area along the stream ADA-compliant with a concrete surface and edge rails. Environmental Protection Funds were used to improve this 1998 Watchable Wildlife Project. Thousands of people visit the area each spring to view the spawning fish.



Bureau of Wildlife

Mike Wasilco

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Planning and Evaluation

Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Partner Meeting: The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) is a partnership among 18 states, seven federal agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations. The vision for the EBTJV is to conserve “healthy, fishable brook trout populations throughout their historic eastern geographic range.” The EBTJV is in the process of developing and implementing a broad-scale, geographic-based conservation strategy to stop brook trout declines, improve technology transfer, and prioritize funds and projects to restore this recreationally and culturally important species.

The EBTJV was formed in 2004. The first milestone was the completion of a comprehensive brook trout population status and threats assessment at the subwatershed scale (HUC 11 for NYS). The second was the development of state-level, regional, and region-wide strategy documents, and the compilation of these into a range-wide conservation plan. The focus of the most recent meeting, held April 21 – 23 at the National Conservation Training Center, was to begin the development of regional action plans that will implement these strategies. Regional Workgroups were formed to complete this task. Jim Daley (Coldwater Unit Leader) is chairing the Northern workgroup which includes the states of New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. The meeting was well-attended and enthusiasm for the EBTJV among partners remains very strong.

During 2008, Region 9 Bureau of Fisheries will be conducting an EBTJV-funded habitat improvement project on a brook trout stream in Allegany State Park. The bureau will also be continuing an intensive survey effort in Region 4 to fill in data gaps in the original EBTJV status and threats assessment, and will be beginning a more limited survey program in Region 7 as well as a cooperative survey project with Trout Unlimited in Region 5.

Bureau of Fisheries

Jim Daley

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Protection

Didymo Signs Posted - The lower 27 miles of the East Branch, five miles of the West Branch, and all of the Delaware River is infested or exposed to didymo. This is only the second and third waterbodies in NY where didymo has been verified. These three rivers support a very popular wild brown and rainbow trout fishery for wade and boat anglers from throughout NY and the northeast. Due to the mobility of anglers fishing between rivers and within a given river, there was a need to educate these anglers to minimize the spread of didymo to the uninfested reaches on the East and West Branch and to other waters. Didymo signs informing anglers of the range of didymo on these three rivers were posted May 2. A pamphlet showing the range of didymo infestation and methods for disinfecting their fishing equipment was developed and currently in the process of being printed.

Bureau of Fisheries

Norm McBride

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Protection

The Bureau of Marine Resources (BMR) shellfish sanitation program has initiated its fifth year of monitoring for the presence of marine biotoxins in shellfish.

Saxitoxin, a naturally occurring, potentially harmful neurotoxin produced by the marine dinoflagellates *Alexandrium fundyense* and *Alexandrium tamarense*, is the biotoxin that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in shellfish consumers. In 2004 and 2005, the program used a rapid test kit method to examine shellfish samples that were collected by our program's Shellfish Inspectors, primarily from wholesale shellfish shippers. All samples tested negative for the presence of PSP toxin.

In 2006, out of concern that *A. fundyense* cysts may have been settled into ocean sediments near eastern Long Island shellfish harvesting areas, the shellfish sanitation program expanded its marine biotoxin monitoring program. Mesh bags containing blue mussels were deployed at three locations in Suffolk County. Samples were collected on a weekly basis from early May through early July, and tested at BRM's microbiology lab in East Setauket. The detection of saxitoxin at one site in May 2006 resulted in New York's first shellfish harvesting closure due to marine biotoxins. Approximately 5100 acres of shellfish lands in the Northport-Huntington area were closed from May 27 through July 6, a period of approximately six weeks.

In 2007 season, mussels were again deployed in Northport Harbor, the site affected in 2006, and four (4) other north shore locations. No elevated levels of biotoxins were detected in the mussels and no closures were implemented in 2007.

On April 25, 2008, mussels were deployed at two (2) north shore locations, Northport Harbor and Mt. Sinai Harbor. The program plans to deploy mussels at five additional monitoring sites pending approval of the Towns and private entities that own the marinas where the mussel bags will be hung. With the cooperation of NYS Parks, the first south shore monitoring site will be established in early May at Robert Moses State Park, near Fire Island Inlet.

Bureau of Marine Resources

William Hastback

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Sub-Seabed Sequestration of Carbon Dioxide Workshop - Staff attended a workshop hosted by Columbia University, NYSERDA and NYSDEC on the sub-seabed carbon dioxide sequestration potential off the coast of the Northeastern United States. This carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) mitigation technique, which has the potential to sequester large amounts of carbon dioxide in sediment and basalt rock below the ocean floor, has received limited attention in the United States. In many European countries, it is being considered as a key enabling technology to meet carbon dioxide reduction goals. Norway has been using this technique since 1998.

At the workshop, researchers presented evaluations of offshore capacity and technologies for the NY Bight and further offshore. The gas would be injected 600 feet below the sediment surface. Case studies and policy were also discussed. There was much discussion on controlling the lateral and vertical extent of the created gas pocket to ensure there would be no leakage from sub-seabed site (hence, potential impacts to fish and wildlife). The intent of the workshop was to facilitate the start of an open, productive dialogue on this technology. This requires a full evaluation by our agency.

Bureau of Marine Resources

Karen Chytalo

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Protection

Oneida/Herkimer County Land Acquisition - Region 6 staff have initiated the purchase of several parcels in the Mohawk Valley area of both Oneida and Herkimer counties. Several willing landowners have approached Bureau of Wildlife staff indicating interest in selling lands to DEC located along the 1913 Barge Canal and Mohawk River. One parcel would increase the size of the Rome Wildlife Management Area (WMA) from ~1000 acres to almost 1200 acres. This acquisition would allow for the protection of one of the largest contiguous forested wetlands in the county. The second parcel is a 140+ acre piece situated in the T/O Schuyler, Herkimer County. The land borders both the Mohawk River and the Barge Canal and would protect some of the last remaining original stretches of the Mohawk River corridor. The Schuyler parcel also has a large Blue heron rookery on it. The birds are utilizing very large, live silver maple trees for nesting sites. Both parcels exist close to large urban centers.

Bureau of Wildlife

Steve Heerkens

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Recreational Use

Spring Youth Hunt and Regular Turkey Season - The fifth annual Youth Turkey Hunt was held on April 26-27, 2008. This was an excellent opportunity for 12-15 year-old youths to spend time afield with experienced adult hunters gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to become safe and responsible members of the hunting community. We look forward to the great stories and pictures we receive from young hunters and their adult companions and wish everyone a safe and enjoyable hunt.



The regular spring season opens on Tuesday, May 1 and continues through Thursday, May 31, as it has for more than a decade. During spring 2007, due to excellent production during summer 2005 and a relatively mild winter, we observed a larger proportion of 2+ year old birds in the harvest than the previous year. This year, the above average nesting season during summer 2007 and another relatively mild winter throughout much of the state will likely result in good turkey numbers, but with a larger proportion of juvenile birds available to hunters than last year. Based on good productivity and winter survival, we anticipate that turkey harvest will be similar to last year.

Bureau of Wildlife

Mike Schiavone

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Fall Turkey Harvest up in 2007 - Estimated wild turkey harvest during fall 2007 was 12,654 birds. This represents an increase of 38% from 2006, and is the highest harvest since fall 2003, but is still below the 10-year average (about 16,000) for fall harvests. Harvest was up from 2006 in most counties, with the greatest increases observed in DEC Regions 4, 5, and 6 (east-central and northern NY). The exceptions to this were declines (7-40%) observed in Regions 8 and 9 (western NY). Although we observed an increase in harvest this fall, the number of turkey hunters continued to decline with an overall decrease of about 30% over the last five years. Despite this decline in participation, the hunter success rate has remained relatively stable at about three birds/100 days effort. Reasons for the decline in participation are uncertain, but may include changing demographics of New York's hunting population and the variety of other opportunities available to hunters in the fall.

Bureau of Wildlife

Mike Schiavone

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Research and Monitoring

New York City Fisheries Surveys: Region 2 staff completed fish surveys of three New York City waters. Survey crews consisted of staff from Marine Resources, Lands and Forests, Public Affairs and Education, Wildlife and our GIS Project Supervisor. On April 7, staff surveyed Meadow Lake in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens. Both Meadow and the adjoining Willow Lake are known to contain the invasive northern snakehead fish. Five northern snakeheads, ranging from 15.5 – 29 inches in length, were captured. The majority of other fish species consisted of white perch.

On April 14, staff surveyed Baisley Pond in Jamaica, Queens. Members of the Baisley fish population sampled that evening included largemouth bass up to 20 inches in length. Most of the bass captured were in larger size ranges. Additional work will need to be conducted to determine if these fish are successfully reproducing.

Staff surveyed the Harlem Meer in Central Park, NYC on April 21. Preliminary data analysis indicates a well-balanced warm water fish population with most of the largemouth bass population falling into the 9-11 inch size range. Unfortunately, a northern snakehead was captured during this survey, making the Harlem Meer the second water body in New York State known to contain this invasive fish species. This finding has prompted discussions with the New York City Parks Department; this is anticipated to lead to a lively public outreach campaign.

Fish from each of the above surveys were sent for viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) testing. Results from this testing are expected soon.

Bureau of Fisheries

Melissa Cohen

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Hudson River NRD's Search for Mallard Eggs Continues - Residents of the Upper Hudson River may have noticed a strange-looking addition to the shoreline this spring. Over the past month, Sean Madden of the Hudson River Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Unit and a handful of helpers have put up 60 mallard nesting structures in the embayments, backwaters, and wetlands of the Upper Hudson. The structures are frequently and successfully used in the prairie pothole region of the US and Canada, but have not been well-tested on the Hudson River. The Hudson River NRD Unit hopes that the structures will make it easier to find mallard eggs this spring for a study of PCB levels in waterfowl as a part of the Hudson River NRD Assessment (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25609.html>). Aside from the structures, the Hudson River NRD Unit is reaching out to people who live, work, or play along the river, hoping that anyone who finds a mallard nest will contact us. If you find a mallard nest near the Hudson River, please contact Sean Madden at ssmadden@gw.dec.state.ny.us.



Bureau of Habitat

Sean Madden

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Study Shows Mercury Concentrations in Fish are Related to Lake Factors - An article titled, "Lake Variability: Key Factors Controlling Mercury Concentrations in New York State Fish" is in press in the journal Environmental Pollution, and will be published online in the next few weeks. The research discussed in the article is the result of a four-year study of 131 lakes conducted by Howard Simonin, Jeff Loukmas and Larry Skinner of the Bureau of Habitat and Karen Roy of the Division of Air Resources. Funding for much of the work was provided by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Fish species targeted in the study included walleye, bass and yellow perch, since these fish sometimes accumulate high mercury concentrations. Findings from this extensive monitoring study showed that mercury concentrations were highest in lakes that are more acidic, have a dam on the outlet, have abundant shoreline wetlands, and have low levels of plankton. Previous monitoring had demonstrated that it is the larger,

Research and Monitoring

older piscivorous fish that are highest in mercury, and that trout, salmon, sunfish and bullhead are generally low in mercury. A final project report with individual lake data will be printed by NYSERDA in early summer and made available for use by resource managers. Anyone interested in additional information is welcome to call Howard Simonin at the number below or via email hasimoni@gw.dec.state.ny.us. The article is available online from Science Direct.

Bureau of Habitat

Howard Simonin

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Annual Report Documents Increase in Fish Kills - More than 119 fish mortality incidents affecting an estimated 260,000 (\pm 20,000) fish were reported by DEC regions in 2007. This is 11 more incidents than reported during any of the previous nine years. The increase was due to more incidents reported in the Marine District and to an increase in viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) cases. The good news is that only seven pollution-caused fish kills were reported statewide and affected relatively few (less than 3,000) fish. The average number of pollution-caused kills for the past ten years is 9.4. In 2007, pollution kills were due to algicides, chlorine, manure, agricultural runoff and leachate from a wood composting operation. The largest pollution-caused kill in 2007 was due to a release of chlorinated swimming pool water and only affected an estimated 1,500 minnows, darters and suckers. For further information or a copy of the report, contact Tim Preddice at tpreddi@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

Bureau of Habitat

Tim Preddice

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New York State Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey Completes its Third Year – The New York Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey (NYDDS) began in 2005 due to an increase in public interest about these insects and the need to develop a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy that outlines conservation needs for “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.” As of April 2008, nearly 1,325 survey sites were visited by 327 registered NYDDS volunteers and approximately 4,425 vouchers (specimens, photos, or exuviae) have been collected and added to the database. A total of 421 new county records, representing 121 different species, have been entered into the database as of March 31, 2008. Two new species to New York State, the double-ringed pennant, found on Long Island, and the horned clubtail, found in St. Lawrence County, have been confirmed from survey efforts so far. Additionally, the mantled baskettail, found in 2006, had not been confirmed in the state since the 1950s! New location records were documented from the 2007 field season for 15 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. These species include: the mottled darner, comet darner, blue-tipped dancer, arrowhead spiketail, scarlet bluet, New England bluet, cobra clubtail, skillet clubtail, American rubyspot, extra-striped snaketail, brook snaketail, spatterdock darner, forcipate emerald, and arrow clubtail. Probable broad-tailed shadowdragon exuviae were tentatively verified; these are the first leads on this species occurring in NY. Additional State Wildlife Grants funding has been allocated to the NYDDS in order to carry the project through a fourth field season in 2008.



Bureau of Habitat

Melissa Cohen

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Research and Monitoring

Major Fish Kill in Peconic River; Minor Kills Elsewhere as Menhaden Pour into Local Waters. Millions of menhaden (bunker), an oily fish commonly used for bait, surged into Long Island bays and harbors at the end of April. The numbers of fish that appeared was unusual, probably the result of a very large year class of the filter feeders. These enormous schools were accompanied by large numbers of bluefish, providing angling opportunity for many. Unfortunately, bluefish predatory behavior usually causes menhaden to school very tightly, where they become vulnerable to suffocation due to oxygen depletion. This can be more problematic with large schools and tight spaces. The Peconic River experienced a “worst case scenario” at the end of April, when a major school entered the river shortly after a heavy rainfall. These fish were herded by the bluefish further upriver where they were blocked by freshwater, for which they have only limited tolerance. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of menhaden asphyxiated over a several mile stretch of river in downtown Riverhead. The estimates of dead fish went as high as one million, but there will never be an accurate count. Several other minor kills occurred in the area as bluefish chased menhaden up smaller creeks and pushed them into coves and against beaches. The surviving menhaden have moved out of that area, along with the bluefish. Striped bass have moved into area waters in large numbers and have also begun feeding on the menhaden. The dead fish are now distributed over a broad section of the estuary and are generating phone calls to DEC on a daily basis.



Bureau of Marine Resources

Stephen W. Heins

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Bats Monitored for White-nosed Syndrome - Wildlife staff from region 7, with help from the Fish and Wildlife Service and Cornell Vet School, spent three nights catching, inspecting and measuring bats as they left winter hibernacula. Over 200 bats were caught and weighed, with three species being identified; Indiana, little brown and northern long-eared. While many bats had some white flaking on ears, wings or tails, prevailing thought (and hope) was that this was dry skin or limestone dust and not evidence of white nose syndrome fungus. General condition and weights of bats appeared normal. In addition, Region 6 staff trapped bats exiting the Glen Park hibernacula on April 19 with US Fish and Wildlife Service and Ft. Drum staff. Five Indiana bats were captured and each was within the normal weight range indicating that these individuals were not adversely affected by the white-nosed syndrome.



Bureau of Wildlife

Various

(518) 402-8919

Restoration

Permanent Fish Ladder installation completed on Carmans River: On March 31, 2008, the first permanent fish ladder at the Hards Lake Dam on the Carmans River was installed. Installation of this fish ladder was the culmination of a five year collaboration between DEC, NYSDOT, the Art Flick Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Suffolk County Parks, and the Fish America Foundation. The primary purpose of the fish ladder is to allow alewife to ascend to historic spawning grounds on the Carmans River, but the fish ladder should also be used by the native brook trout in the river to return from forays into the tidal waters. Since its installation, alewife have been documented ascending the ladder and continuing upriver for more than a mile.

Bureau of Fisheries

Chart Guthrie

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Staff Development

Awesome Leadership Training - In the next 10 years, nearly one-third of today's natural resource leaders will retire. According to research conducted in 2004, about 77 percent of state fish and wildlife agency senior leadership will retire by 2015, and more than half of federal conservation leaders will retire by the end of 2008. The National Conservation Leadership Institute was created to better equip tomorrow's conservation leaders in the latest leadership thinking and practice, and each Fellow learns from the nation's most influential conservation leaders and leadership experts including Harvard's Kennedy School of Leadership professor Marty Linsky.

Gordon Batchellar was a member of cohort one, the first guinea pigs in this program. I was fortunate to be in cohort two. Through the Institute, 21 state fish and wildlife employees, six federal conservation agency employees, one industry employees and eight non-governmental agency employees worked together over the past seven months on priority leadership challenges and solutions. In Fall 2007, the 36 Fellows in cohort two conquered the Institute's intense 10-day residency at the National Conservation Training center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. In late April, the Fellows re-convened at Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgedale, Missouri to present the results of their five-month leadership challenge projects where they had individually experimented with their learning from the Fall and carried out real, in-the-trenches applications for their respective organizations.

Offered each year to a select group of approximately 36 individuals identified by their nominating organizations as "high potentials," the Institute is by no measure only a training program. Each Fellow was chosen for potential to build effective coalitions, lead organizational change, and deliver results; as well as for their work experience and goals. Training alone is insufficient to develop the extraordinary leadership called for in our uncertain times. The Institute is a unique, comprehensive learning experience designed to challenge assumptions, teach skills, facilitate networking, and strengthen confidence. It is not a redundant program; it is a remarkable experience for preparing an extraordinary leadership capacity for the future. I highly recommend that supervisors in our Division take this unique training

Bureau of Marine Resources

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