



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Miramichi Smallmouth bass awareness campaign launched

Posters and media instruct anglers to keep any smallmouth caught in the Miramichi and immediately notify DFO

SOUTH ESK, N.B. – People who fish the Miramichi River system are being asked to retain and report invasive smallmouth bass which were illegally introduced in a headwater lake more than 12 years ago.

Members of the Working Group on Smallmouth Bass Eradication in the Miramichi, working with New Brunswick’s Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, have begun placing posters at popular fishing locations, shops, and gathering places throughout the watershed.

The posters provide a visual description of smallmouth bass and instruct anyone who catches one to retain the fish, note the precise location of capture (using GPS coordinates if possible) and to contact DFO’s aquatic invasive species team at the Gulf Fisheries Centre in Moncton.

“Smallmouth bass are not native to New Brunswick and although they have been widely introduced in the south of the province, many people who fish in the Miramichi watershed are unfamiliar with this invasive species,” said Jim Ward, general manager of the North Shore Micmac District council and co-chair of the Working Group. “Finally, we’re giving people the knowledge and instruction they need to help stop this biological invasion.”

Smallmouth bass are prolific invaders that will eventually spread to most rivers, lakes, and streams in the Miramichi watershed. Analysis from DFO concludes that if smallmouth bass are allowed to proliferate, they could impact native fish species through predation and competition.

To eradicate smallmouth bass from the area of the Southwest Miramichi where they are known to be present, Working Group members are planning to deposit an approved fish killing agent in August and September this year.

The first known occurrence of smallmouth bass in the Miramichi watershed was recorded in Miramichi Lake in 2008. Provincial enforcement officers attempted to uncover the source of the introduction, but no charges were ever laid.

In 2019 several smallmouth bass were caught in McKiel Pond Pool, approximately 6 kilometres downstream from the mouth of Lake Brook, which connects the river to Miramichi Lake. In September 2020, a single smallmouth bass was caught in a DFO trap net at Millerton, approximately 150 milometres downstream from the nearest confirmed location.

“Aside from the Millerton fish, every single smallmouth bass removed from the Southwest Miramichi has come from McKiel Pond Pool. Despite thousands of people fishing the river each year, there have been sporadic reports and rumors of smallmouth caught elsewhere, but never any fish to show. We hope these posters alert people to how serious the situation is and gives them the tools to act appropriately,” said Robyn McCallum, President of the Miramichi Salmon Association.

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, extensive environmental DNA and physical survey efforts led by DFO, DNRED, and Working Group members were conducted throughout the Southwest Miramichi to determine the distribution of invasive smallmouth bass. All positive results have occurred within the vicinity of Lake Brook and McKiel Pond Pool, areas that will be targeted during the eradication campaign this fall.

Introducing aquatic animals and plants to waterbodies where they are not native is a contravention of the federal *Fisheries Act*. Persons found in violation can face a fine of up to \$100,000.

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To view a copy of the poster, click the link below:

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/nr-rn/pdf/en/Fish/smallmouth-bass.pdf?random=1625740729983>

For more information or to schedule interviews please contact:

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The Working Group on Smallmouth Bass Eradication in the Miramichi is made up of Indigenous organizations and NGOs dedicated to preserving the ecosystem of the Miramichi River, which has sustained communities for thousands of years and provides significant benefits to the region today. To learn more visit www.miramichismallmouth.com