

June 16, 2009

## **Broad-scale Fisheries Monitoring**

### **Ecological Framework for Fisheries Management**

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) will begin implementing a broad-scale fisheries monitoring program across Ontario this spring. Broad-scale fisheries monitoring is a program which monitors the health of fish populations by collecting fish, fishing activity and water quality information across a broad geographic area.

Beginning in June, 2009, teams of biologists and technicians will be conducting netting surveys on various inland lakes across the province. In southern Ontario, MNR will survey lakes across Fisheries Management Zones 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18. This area includes the Ottawa River, and the land base stretching from Windsor to Ottawa, and north to Parry Sound and Algonquin Park.

A variety of information will be recorded from the fish caught during the netting surveys, including fish species, sex, age, length, weight, and general health. This will be used to determine sport fish abundance, life history characteristics of key species, and the diversity of the fish community. Some fish will also be sampled to assess contaminant levels.

Technicians will also collect water samples, measuring lake water temperature and oxygen levels, and checking for invasive species. In addition, there will be aerial surveys conducted throughout the summer and into the winter to help estimate the number anglers fishing the lakes.

Monitoring our fish and the health of our lakes provides fisheries managers with the information they need to make effective decisions. It also allows MNR to regularly report to the public on the state of the fisheries.

This is the second year of a five-year cycle to collect information under this program. During this period, MNR plans to monitor approximately 255 lakes across this geography. Half of the lakes selected will be fixed sites, and monitored once every five years. The other half will be selected randomly at the beginning of every 5-year monitoring cycle.

Information gathered from the fixed lake sites will provide better detection of trends, while the variable lakes will provide information on the overall status of the fisheries resource within the fisheries management zone.

Broad-scale monitoring of our fisheries is one of the key components of the Ecological Framework for Fisheries Management in Ontario. The framework was implemented by MNR in 2005, and focuses on:

- New ecological Fisheries Management Zones
- Managing and monitoring fisheries at the broader landscape level
- Enhanced stewardship, and
- Regular Reporting on the state of fisheries in Ontario