



Williams Lake Sportsmen's Association

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February 18, 2008 General Meeting

Meeting called to order at 7:35 pm. Approximately 25 people were in attendance.

BC Fisheries Presentation

Leta Gomez and Tom Wilkinson from BC Fisheries gave a presentation on the small mouth bass infestation in the Beaver Valley chain. **Key points:**

- ❖ The small mouth bass is a voracious predator. They reproduce faster than native species. One female can lay up to 14,000 eggs per year. They spawn during the month of June in shallow water along the shoreline in anywhere from 60 cm to 3 metre of water. Because of their close proximity to the shoreline, they are easy to see. The male digs a hole in which the female will lay her eggs. The male aggressively defends the nest and is therefore easy to catch using almost any lure. In an environment such as this, the survival of salmon fry is negligible.
- ❖ **Beaver Creek watershed:**
 - In 2006, two kids fished out a couple of small mouth bass at the confluence of Beaver Creek and the Quesnel River. On investigation, more small mouth bass were found 6 kms upstream.
 - Of all the lakes in the Beaver Valley chain, 99% of the small mouth bass nests were found in Beaver Lake. The most interesting finding was the age of the bass. The oldest found was 10 years and it is thought that it was one of the first bass that was stocked.
 - The bass are now moving into Lake George where 50 nests were found and all of the nests were concentrated at the outlet of the lake.
 - Only one unoccupied nest was found at Joan Lake. Investigations are ongoing at Opheim and Chambers Lakes.
- ❖ **Sample and Control:**
 - In 2007, BC Fisheries used a sampling and control method to reduce the bass populations which involved:
 - patrolling the shoreline looking for small mouth bass nests, angling out as many bass as possible and destroying the eggs.
 - Electro fishing bass from 4 to 10 cm long.
 - Gill nets – problem is that other species are caught in the net.
 - Trap nets – 27 bass caught.
 - Quatre-foil traps – 0 larval bass captured - may have been because of the time of year.

- Funding for this project was derived from various sources at a cost of approximately \$80,000.00.
- ❖ **Provincial Policy:** From a provincial standpoint, the small mouth bass infestation in the Beaver Lake chain is a number one compliance and enforcement issue. What can be done:
 - Eradicate if feasible.
 - Control effects and potential spread.
 - Improve compliance through information, education and enforcement.
 - Provide rapid response capability when a new species is found.
 - Prevention:
 - Public support is extremely important.
 - Standard Conservation Officer methods are not effective – impossible to patrol all of the lakes.
 - Presentations to key audiences such as First Nations groups, schools, Naturalists, gun clubs, Beaver Valley residents, etc.
 - Putting up information signs at as many locations as possible.
- ❖ **How to get rid of them:**
 - It would not be practical to de-water any of the lakes in the Beaver Valley Chain.
 - Current control methods do not eradicate all the bass.
 - Low elevation dams may help to keep the bass from moving upstream as bass are not likely to jump over the structure as would rainbow trout.
 - Fishery restrictions which could include:
 - Angling closures.
 - Species closures.
 - Gear restrictions.
 - Seasonal closures.
 - **Chemical treatment:**
 - **Pros:** Results are immediate.
 - Products used are safe and are derived from the root of a bean plant found in South America. This chemical has been traditionally used by the South American native population who chew the plant then spit the residue into the water, stunning the fish and making them easy to catch.
 - Practical method for Beaver Lake which is 6 – 7 hectares in size with 23 kms of connecting stream in-between.
 - Quickly dissipates after treatment.
 - **Cons:** Public perception.
 - The product kills all fish and insects with gills. Does not affect turtles.
 - Residential and agricultural land adjacent.
 - Unable to use lakes for irrigation or for drinking for approximately 2 weeks after treatment.
 - Lakes cannot be used for swimming while the chemical is being put into the water but is safe for swimming as soon as crews are finished putting the chemical into the water.
 - Concern about how to get back stocks of rainbow, kokanee and white fish after treatment. Could use standard hatchery stock.

- The cost of chemical treatment is expensive and would likely be in excess of one million dollars.
- ❖ **What to do if eradication is not a possibility?**
 - Need to employ as many control methods as possible. Problem with this is there will still be bass and the possibility that bass will become stocked in other lakes and streams.
- ❖ **Has the small mouth bass infestation spread to the Quesnel River or beyond?**

The answer to this question is still unknown. The hope is that if they get into the Quesnel River, they will not be able to survive in the colder water, however, it was pointed out by a club member that in eastern Canada, small mouth bass have moved north and have been able to survive in water temperatures colder than in BC. If they enter the Quesnel River, the fear is that they may be able to move into the Fraser, then the Blackwater and beyond.
- ❖ **Plans for 2009 and beyond:**
 - Will continue to look at chemical eradication or long term control.
 - Will continue to look for funding sources.
 - Will continue public education programs.
 - Will continue to do risk analysis for all invasive fish species in BC.
- ❖ Comment by author John D. McPhail in his latest book, “The Fresh Water Fishes of BC, 2007” (referring to the small mouth bass infestations):
 - An inexcusable act of ecological vandalism. If the small mouth bass spreads into the Fraser, it could have a serious impact on Pacific salmon populations.
- ❖ Mike Ramsay commented that in the north, we have important salmon stocks to preserve. If something is not done to stop the spread of the small mouth bass, we are going to lose some of our best fly fishing lakes in the region.
- ❖ BC Fisheries could use the help of experienced anglers to help catch bass and to set up traps and equipment.

Business

- ❖ Debbie Powers-Barron read the minutes from the February 4th executive meeting.
- ❖ President, Barry Jenkins, opened the floor to questions and concerns.
 - Gordon Mayfield expressed concern over the increased cost of property insurance for the club house.
 - Barry advised that our building had previously been insured for \$300,000.00, however the Murray Hume assessment indicated the value to be \$650,000.00. If we had to rebuild today, it would cost around \$600,000.00. Barry also indicated that we would not get more than 80% of the insured value of the building.
- ❖ **Report from Glen Kuenzl:** 26 sheep were moved back to the Fraser River. The operation was a great success. Included in the 26 were two big rams. Three more transplants are planned. Glen mentioned that the biggest predator problem is from cougar and coyotes. Glen will keep club members informed.
 - The Wild Sheep Society of BC is auctioning off a 2 hour helicopter monitoring flight as a fund raiser. The flight will leave from the Williams Lake airport. If you are interested in bidding, contact Glen at home (398-8506) or by email at

- glen_kuenzl@telus.net before March 12th and he will take your bid to the Wild Sheep Society Convention in Kamloops which is happening March 14th and 15th, 2008.
- If you are interested in attending the Wild Sheep Society banquet, tickets are available at a cost of \$60.00 per person. Also, Glen has tickets for a quad raffle at a cost of \$20.00 each or \$50.00 for three. Again, if interested, contact Glen at home (398-8506) or by email.
 - For more information about the Wild Sheep Society of BC, check out their website at www.wildsheepsociety.org.
- ❖ **Report from Rob Gordon of the Regional Resource and Land Use Committee:**
- There are concerns over the preservation of the mountain caribou that live in the junction of the north and east arm of Quesnel Lake. Rob stated that as the Federal Government can impose restrictions on the Provincial Government, it is in our best interest that the province comes up with an in-house solution to this problem. Restrictions on access could include access to logging, back country skiing, and snowmobiling. Rob presented a draft proposal that has been recommended by biologists which sets aside a 25000 hectare area in the junction. This would have an impact on logging as some of this area is already roaded. Rob wanted the WLSA's opinion to take back to the committee. It was decided by the members at the meeting that the WLSA will support the biologist's draft proposal even if that means restrictions on logging, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and other activities. The main concern for the WLSA is the preservation of the mountain caribou herd.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.