

SWAN VALLEY SPORT FISHING ENHANCEMENT INC.



2017 DUCK MOUNTAIN NEWSLETTER

Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement, with the support of partners and Fisheries & Wildlife Enhancement Fund (FWEF), have conducted/initiated various studies and programs including: fish habitat enhancement, walleye telemetry work, trap netting programs, creel surveys, stocked trout index netting, stocking initiatives, promotion of local lakes, improvement of fishing access and has also become a strong venue for fisheries education. These programs and projects have been very beneficial for the local area and have attracted attention from all interested public. The results from recent research projects have already contributed to current management and stocking decisions. Many projects require continual or rotational surveys to validate results and to obtain a better understanding of the state of the fishery.

What happened in the Duck Mountains 2017?

SVSFE Zebra Mussel Early Detection Program: Aquatic invasive species (AIS), particularly zebra mussels are becoming a huge concern in the Province of Manitoba. For this reason, SVSFE in partnership with Sustainable Development have initiated an early detection program through deploying *zebra mussel substrate samplers* in local angling waterbodies. This program is intended to be proactive, monitor potential spread, and limit further contamination. 2017 marked the second year of this program. No suspect mussels were noted in 2017, and all samplers have been sent away for lab analysis.

Glad Lake Pike Removal/Char Stocking: In 2015, SVSFE initiated a pike removal program on Glad Lake as a effort the re-establish this world class Arctic Char fishery. Each spring, SVSFE technical staff use different fish capture methods, including trap-netting to capture, remove, and live transfer the northern pike to other recipient pike lakes within the Duck Mountains. Since 2015 we have removed over 1000 northern pike from the Glad Lake as a effort to assist arctic char growth and survival. 22,250 Arctic char were stocked on June 7th, 2017. We intend to continue on with this program in the years to come.



Wellman Lake Reef Enhancement: Natural recruitment of walleye in Wellman Lake has been an ongoing topic of conversation since the early 1990's. Throughout this time, SVSFE has been actively enhancing habitat (1993), and monitoring walleye recruitment success on Wellman Lake. In 2016, SVSFE pursued funding through the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program (RFCPP) to enhance the Walleye Spawning Reef on Wellman Lake for the second time. In March, our group along with a handful of volunteers successfully transported 200 cubic yards of small diameter clean cobble/gravel to the reef site. Through monitoring efforts over the 2017 open water season, we have already seen evidence of success as a result of the project.



THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AS YOUR INFORMATION IS ESSENTIAL TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR FISHERIES RESOURCES.

Bringing Muskellunge Back to the Duck Mountains: In the winter of 2014, SVSFE technical staff came across an old government file on a lake in the western Duck Mountains called West Watjask Lake. Following conversations with Kitch, amongst other provincial staff, SVSFE decided to conduct a comprehensive lake study and muskellunge habitat suitability index on the waterbody. After determining that the lake would be a candidate for musky introductions, the lake was initially stocked with Muskellunge in late June 2017. The stocking was much lighter than we hoped for as our supplier experienced some unforeseen issues with his stock. We intend to continue to stock the lake in the years to come, and it will be a few years before these fish reach a targetable size so hold off for the time being.

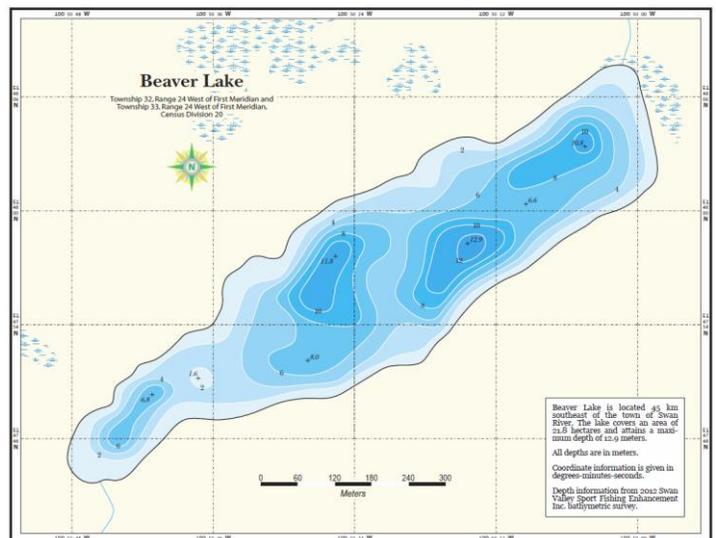
Two Mile and Gull Lake Assessments: In many trout lakes throughout the province, the increase of non-trout species



populations have become a growing concern. These species, including yellow perch, northern pike, white-sucker, and walleye etc. are strong competitors with trout and have resulted in decreased trout growth/survival and ultimately fishing quality. For this reason, SVSFE conducted trap netting and electrofishing assessments on both lakes in the spring and fall of 2017. During assessments non-trout species were removed and repurposed. The premise of these surveys are to gain a greater understanding of non-trout encroachment, and also to correlate findings with stocking records in order to determine a more effective trout stocking strategy.

East Blue Lake Sucker Removal: With the dramatic increase in water levels in 2009 lake users began noticing a white sucker presence that was unprecedented. Following a trend of decreasing angling quality, along with assessments and further investigation by SVSFE, we found that white suckers may be negatively affecting trout stocking success in East Blue Lake. For this reason, we began the white-sucker removal program in the spring of 2016, which was again conducted in the spring of 2017. Over the past two years, we have removed and repurposed 6,043 suckers (approximately 6 tonnes).

Bathymetric Mapping: Depth sounding and having readily accessible bathymetric maps (or depth maps) for the angling community has become a priority of SVSFE. In recent years, we have sounded and made maps available online for almost all popular fisheries in the Duck Mountains. This year, Shilliday Lake and Mossberry Lake were added to the Duck Mountain list. In 2018, we intend on completing a handful of remote Duck Mountain Lakes and uploading to our website. You can find maps for most local lakes on our website. www.swanvalleysportfish.com



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Mossberry Lake Assessment: A lake status inventory was completed in late August of 2017. Results determined that the lake had reverted to its natural state, and no evidence of walleye (last stocked in spring of 2000) were found. A report was completed and sent to Fisheries Branch, which was then sent to Park's Branch, who then approved walleye re-introductions. On Sept 9th, following Park's approval the lake was stocked with 185 sub-adult walleye from Beautiful Lake. Mossberry will be a recipient for walleye fry stocking in the years to come. Mossberry was a very popular winter and summer walleye fishery from the 1990's to early 2000's.

Scatter Stocking: As we all know; stocking fish is essential to sustaining fisheries where natural recruitment is either low or non-existent. For this reason, SVSFE tends to involve ourselves, whenever possible, by assisting Fisheries Branch in supplemental stocking. Through assisting we can aid in "scatter stocking" of both trout and walleye throughout the open water season. Scatter stocking, as the word suggests, essentially scatters fish throughout a specific water body and therefore increases chances of survival.



2017 Beautiful Lake Walleye Transfer	
Lake Stocked	Fish Transferred
Wellman Lake	1,402
Childs Lake	1,103
Marge Lake	588
Cache Lake	451
Spray Lake	312
Mossberry Lake	185
Verral Lake	117

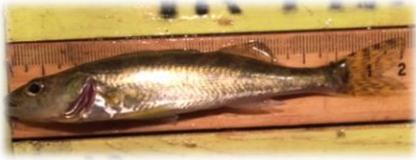
Beautiful Lake Walleye Transfer: This year will mark the 9th consecutive year of the Beautiful Lake Adult Walleye Transfer. Stocking adult walleye is very beneficial for; the survival of the fish, providing instant angling results, increasing mature populations and increasing recruitment success. This year SVSFE and partners captured and transferred 4,513 sub adult walleye to recipient Duck Mountain Lakes. Since 2009, we have transferred approximately 40,000 walleye through this program.

2017 Fish Camp: SVSFE's Fish Camp has become a popular entity for young anglers over the past few years. Our 7th Annual Fish Camp occurred from August 14th – 20th at the United Church Camp of Wellman Lake for campers ages 10-14. As a result of increasing demand, SVSFE hosted two camps within this timeframe to accommodate over 50 enthusiastic young anglers. The camp provides both theoretical and practical fishing experiences designed to inform & motivate kids to pursue the goals of protecting, restoring, and sustaining fisheries and their watersheds. If you know of any children that may be interested in the fun packed week of fishing and other outdoor activities be sure let us know, so we can let you know when registration opens for Fish Camp 2018!



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Walleye Recruitment Surveys



SVSFE has always been interested in walleye recruitment success as to facilitate proper walleye stocking rates and stocking densities. Ongoing walleye recruitment surveys were conducted in the Duck Mountains including; Wellman Lake, Beaver Lake, and Marge Lake. These were all conducted in the fall of 2017.

Angler Surveys: 2017 will mark the third consecutive year of the "SVSFE Angler Survey". This survey has been designed to incorporate anglers' knowledge and acquire important qualitative data along with incorporating angler opinions into fisheries management decisions. Visit our website and fill one out today; as we are always eager to hear from the lake users, whether you want to tell us about recent angling quality, questions/comments, or even ideas for potential research and enhancement initiatives. Find the surveys and forms here:

www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/angler-submissions-surveys



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Angler Survey



Infrastructure: Since initialization, our group has been actively involved in providing angling infrastructure and access improvements. Over the years we have improved roads, created parking lots, and installed/maintained multiple angling docks. A few of our most recent improvements include docks at Beaver Lake, Spray Lake, Marge Lake, Perch Lake, and West Blue Lake (North End). Next year, we intend to install two more angling docks in the Duck Mountains including one at Black Beaver Lake, and to install a new dock at Verrall Lake.

Promotion and Infrastructure Over the years, SVSFE has collected masses of data on dozens of local Duck Mountain waterbodies. This data is intended to be public domain, and for the use and enjoyment of the angling community. As each season comes to an end, and our project reports become complete, we upload them to our website. Our research can be viewed at: www.swanvalleysportfishing.com/research.

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