



MEDIA ADVISORY

April 16, 2008 For all media
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Ground-breaking fish marking technology to make Ontario debut

Media photo, video and interview opportunities:

What: open house to observe Autofish system (new process to mass mark hatchery reared fish)

Who: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield, Great Lakes Fishery Commission Executive Secretary Dr. Chris Goddard, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Executive Director Mike Reader and Provincial Manager of Fish and Wildlife Services Dr. Terry Quinney, Canadian National Sportsmen's Shows Chairman/C.E.O. Walter Oster

When: April 21, 2008, 9 a.m. To 11 a.m.

Where: O.F.A.H./Toronto Sportsmen's Show Ringwood Fish Culture Station, 13232 Hwy 48, near Stouffville

STOUFFVILLE, ON AND ANN ARBOR, MI—State-of-the-art equipment to rapidly mark all hatchery reared trout and salmon stocked into Lake Ontario will make its provincial debut at the O.F.A.H./Toronto Sportsmen's Show Ringwood Fish Culture Station this week. The portable equipment—known as the AutoFish system—will operate in Ontario under a cooperative arrangement with the State of New York, which began using the equipment two weeks ago. “This is a great opportunity to test leading-edge technology that could help manage our fisheries more effectively,” said Donna Cansfield, Minister of Natural Resources. “We are pleased to support the hard work of the Ontario Federation of Hunters and Anglers, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Metro East Anglers and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation on this initiative.” Minister Cansfield is expected to be on hand on April 21 to observe this ground-breaking technology in operation.

Millions of fish are produced in federal, provincial, state, tribal and community hatcheries and are stocked into the Great Lakes to support species rehabilitation, and commercial and recreational fisheries. Historically, hatchery fish were marked by clipping one or more of the fins on a fish. More recently, near-microscopic tags with a numeric code (called a “coded-wire tag”) have been inserted into the noses of individual fish. Fin clips and tags help fishery managers and the public distinguish between stocked fish and wild fish. If managers know the proportion of wild to hatchery fish, they can avoid stocking more predatory fish than the prey population can support.

“One major problem is that not all hatchery fish are marked,” said Great Lakes Fishery Commission Vice-Chair Peter Wallace. “Until today, fish marking in the Great Lakes was done entirely by hand. Given the millions of fish raised in hatcheries, it is not surprising that agencies have neither the time nor the resources to mark every hatchery fish. Consequently, marking is not comprehensive nor is it consistent across agencies. Fishery managers thus lack some of the most basic information they need to make sound decisions. The AutoFish system will change all of that and give managers the information they need to improve their understanding of the resource and their actions.”

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“The AutoFish system truly is fishery management technology for the twenty-first century,” said Dr. Terry Quinney, Provincial Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. “AutoFish, which is portable and shared by hatcheries, allows every fish produced in a hatchery to be clipped and tagged, a feat once considered impossible. By using the AutoFish system, the adipose fin—a small fin composed of fatty tissue on backs of salmon and trout—is clipped, and a coded wire tag is inserted in the fish’s nose, both happening in less than half of a second. This compares to five seconds or more when fish are marked by hand. Moreover, with this equipment, the fish are not handled by humans, thus reducing stress and mortality at the hatcheries.”

“Lake Ontario supports one of Ontario's largest recreational fisheries,” noted Quinney. “There are more than a million angler-days on Lake Ontario annually. Anglers target primarily chinook salmon and rainbow trout, but there are also catches of Atlantic and coho salmon as well as brown and lake trout. The estimated value of the Lake Ontario Fishery is in excess of \$140 million. The fishery is a major tourism industry attracting more than 10,000 visitors to Ontario annually.” The O.F.A.H./Toronto Sportsmen’s Show Ringwood Fish Culture Station, located in Stouffville, Ontario (north of Toronto), is currently responsible for producing over half a million Chinook salmon annually for Lake Ontario. The hatchery also stocks rainbow trout, brown trout and coho salmon into Lake Ontario streams and contributes juvenile Atlantic salmon towards a major, multi-partner restoration initiative. Ringwood operates with two full time O.F.A.H. staff and the help of volunteers, and is funded through donations and industry sponsorship.

*With more than 83,000 members and 655 member clubs, the **Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters** is the leading fishing, hunting and conservation organization in Ontario and the voice of anglers and hunters. WWW.OFAH.ORG. The **Great Lakes Fishery Commission** is an international organization established by the United States and Canada to support fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitate cooperation among provincial, state, and tribal agencies. WWW.GLFC.ORG. The **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources** works collaboratively with a wide range of partners to manage, protect and ensure the wise use of Ontario’s natural resources. WWW.MNR.GOV.ON.CA*

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