

News Release

FISH HABITAT MAPPING

RIDEAU VALLEY, August 25, 2010 — Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, are cooperating on a \$62,000 project to begin the long process of aquatic species recovery in our watershed. The Fish Habitat Mapping project, is being sponsored by the Ministry's Species at Risk Stewardship Fund and RVCA's Watershed Sciences group.

It involves organizing and verifying potential habitat for three fish species at risk using RVCA's extensive database of Macro Stream Assessment information collected on many local creeks and streams over the past ten years. This information has been collected by surveying 100-metre sections of each stream from headwaters to the mouth. We measure and observe habitat information such as shoreline and instream vegetation, migration barriers, water temperatures, bottom type, bank stability, adjacent land uses and more.

Each of the three targeted fish species at risk (Bridle Shiner, Pugnose Shiner and River Redhorse) has preferred habitat types and spawning locations. By looking for matches in preferred habitat and observed habitat, RVCA will be able to identify general areas of local streams where instream and shoreline conditions appear to be suitable as preferred habitat for the species at risk. These habitat suitability maps will then be refined and field-checked. Finally, the best restoration opportunities within these suitable habitat areas will be identified and available for funding and implementation with partner landowners and other agencies willing to participate in the recovery of fish species at risk.

The project is being steered by a collaborative of fish specialists from Carleton University, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ministry of Natural Resources and RVCA. A team of two technicians are out on area watercourses daily checking the habitat suitability mapping and following up with sampling of the current fish community.

This local fish habitat mapping project complements existing stewardship activities (shoreline naturalization, tree planting, clean water projects) by drawing attention to fish species at risk sites for improvement and protection. The project will enhance the recovery of several eastern Ontario fish species at risk and improve the overall health of the aquatic environment and all the species dependent on it.

Fish are an important part of the province's economy. Ontario's fisheries sustain the sport fishing and tourist industries, as well as the commercial fishery. About 1.2 million anglers fish in the province each year. These anglers spend more than \$2.5 billion dollars on fisheries-related products and services.

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