

Dokis Fisheries UPDATE

Lake Sturgeon Spring Spawning Survey & FWIN Training

December 2012

INTRODUCTION

The status of the Lake Sturgeon in the French River is currently listed as unknown. Traditional knowledge and anecdotal information confirms Lake Sturgeon spawn in many rapids in Dokis First Nation's traditional waters. The French River Lake Sturgeon population has not been previously studied, with the exception of a juvenile river netting study on the Lower French in 2011 where only four Sturgeon were sampled. Some of the goals of Dokis First Nation (DFN) are to identify Lake Sturgeon spawning locations in the Upper French River and to build capacity within the community. DFN, along with the Anishinabek/Ontario Fisheries Resource Centre, filled these goals by conducting a Lake Sturgeon Spawning Study in the spring of 2012.



A Lake Sturgeon from the French River.

samples. PIT tags were applied under the first dorsal scute, while Floy tags were applied beside the dorsal fin (picture).

RESULTS

This project ran from May 7th to June 5th 2012, with water temperatures ranging from 8 – 20°C. A total of 96 nets were set, fishing for approximately for 4-6 hours, excluding 4 overnight sets. The nets were set in a variety of different locations.

A total of 15 Lake Sturgeon were sampled, tagged, and released. A variety of different sizes were sampled ranging from 15 – 70 lbs. Egg mats were set at the First Bridge (five per night) for two weeks (May 22 – June 5th) but they were not successful in capturing eggs.

DFN had also received federal funding, through the Species at Risk program, to continue their work on Lake Sturgeon



A Floy tag inserted into a Lake Sturgeon.



throughout the summer. Technicians were out collecting habitat data, conducting literature searches, exploring different policies, and documenting knowledge from the community in regards to Lake Sturgeon.

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of Lake Sturgeon were captured at the First Bridge, but they were also found at the Second Bridge and Five Fingers Rapids. Interestingly, there were recaptures throughout the study, indicating that Lake Sturgeon would reside in the First and Second bridge areas for some time. The results of this study will be reported back to the community in 2013 to raise awareness of Lake Sturgeon biology and its conservation status.

FALL WALLEYE INDEX NETTING

Dokis First Nation also conducted a Fall Walleye Index Netting (FWIN) study on Woodcock Lake in October of 2012. Technicians from Dokis First Nation were successfully trained to complete the project and caught 30 Walleye. The data from the FWIN is currently being analyzed.



A Lake Sturgeon being released back into the French River.

METHODS

Large mesh (8", 9", 10") multifilament nylon gill nets were set overnight to capture spawning Sturgeon in the Upper French River. Nets were set at or near potential spawning grounds including the Restoule River, Lower Chaudiere Rapids, Portage Dam, and Five Fingers.

All captured adult Lake Sturgeon were sampled and tagged including the collection of total and fork lengths, weight, girth, an ageing structure and genetic



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