

Panel on the Future of Trent-Severn Waterway,  
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## TO PANEL ON THE FUTURE OF TRENT-SEVERN WATERWAY

We are members of the Public Advisory Council of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources which acts as an advisor to the Ministry on the management of recreational fishing in Management Zone #17. This zone extends from Trenton in the east to beyond Canal Lake in the west. Thus we cover a large section of the TSW. Our members are representatives of twenty different organizations including tourist associations, stewardship councils, cottagers, academic institutions, fishing organizations and aboriginal communities from this region.

We have identified the walleye fishery as a major concern with progressively declining catches. The success of this fishery has had a significant influence on tourism and the economy in this region, particularly with American tourists. A major factor in the decline has been the failure of successful spawning of the walleye along the TSW. Thus we respectfully request that this issue become a serious consideration in your deliberations.

We can give two dramatic examples of the role of the TSW in the failure of these spawning events. We have two photographs of the walleye spawning bed below Lock 19 in Peterborough taken 48 hours apart in April 2007, during the height of the spawning season. The first shows good water coverage of the bed. The second, two days later, shows the bed to be high and dry, thus destroying the eggs. A similar scenario has been experienced in the spawning bed below the Bobcaygeon Lock. Hence the management of water flow by the TSW has a huge impact on the success or failure of the walleye spawning season.

We have some suggestions to help mitigate these significant problems.

- 1) Can we do a better job at reducing major fluctuations in water flow during April and early May?
- 2) Why don't the TSW assess long term trends in precipitation and evaporation in the Peterborough region secondary to climate change? E.g. This could alter the winter draw down, i.e. more proactive management than reactive.

- 3) Did the manpower cutbacks in the mid 1990s limit TSW's ability to fine tune water flows?
- 4) There is currently some cooperation between TSW and the MNR and the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (e.g. Lock 19) in trying to protect water levels over spawning grounds. This should be expanded to include other spawning sites in the system. One example would be greater use of the existing stoplogs at the Bobcaygeon Locks rather than the radial gates. Communications between the TSW and local groups must be improved to encourage site specific changes.
- 5) There is a perception that the TSW has not been receptive in the past to working with conservation groups (e.g. Kawartha Fisheries Association). Improved two way communications and better cooperation is strongly recommended. In requesting that, we are cognizant that TSW has important priorities other than the fisheries.
- 6) In the reservoir lakes we recommend minimizing water level reduction after the fall fish spawning season begins.