

# Nipigon Bay Area of Concern

## Newsletter April 2015

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of governments, industry and community partners over more than two decades, the environmental goals set for the Nipigon Bay Area of Concern (AOC) have been met. The overall health of the ecosystem has improved as a result of projects that restored fish habitat, reduced pollution and managed water levels on the Nipigon River. The governments of Ontario and Canada, with support from the Nipigon Bay Public Advisory Committee, are recommending the removal of Nipigon Bay from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

### Next steps

Canada and Ontario are taking steps to ensure continued environmental quality in Nipigon Bay. The Township of Red Rock will build a new wastewater treatment plant and the Township of Nipigon will complete a stormwater management plan in the following years. Canada and Ontario will continue to monitor fish population levels and health, water quality, and sediment quality.



Canada and Ontario will consult the local community on the recommendation to delist the Area of Concern throughout May 2015. Following public consultation, Canada, with Ontario's support, is expected to announce its decision later this year.


### Background: The Nipigon Bay Area of Concern

Nipigon Bay is one of 43 AOCs (now 36 with seven fully remediated) in the Great Lakes identified in accordance with the 1987 Canada-United States Great

Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Canada and the United States work with partners to develop and implement Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for each AOC.

This AOC, located on the northernmost part of Lake Superior, includes Nipigon Bay, Lake Helen, and most of the Nipigon River, the largest tributary to Lake Superior. The majority of the AOC is within the proposed Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, which will be the world's largest freshwater marine protected area once established.

Photo credit: Jim Bailey



In Nipigon Bay, industrial and municipal wastewater, log driving, and hydro-electric development along the Nipigon River led to:

- poor water quality
- damaged fish habitats
- declining populations of fish and sediment-dwelling organisms.

Many actions have helped clean up this AOC. The local pulp mill upgraded its wastewater treatment plant in response to provincial and federal wastewater regulations in the 1990s. This resulted in better water quality and improved fish habitat. The mill closed in 2006. The Township of Nipigon built a new wastewater treatment plant in 2011, which reduced the amount of bacteria and nutrients entering the water.

Several fish habitat improvement projects have been completed, including a bioengineered marina at Red Rock. Armour stone breakwalls in the marina provide fish and wildlife habitat as well as public access. Cleaning up logs, debris and wood pilings in the lower Nipigon River restored the spawning grounds.

In 2012, Kama Creek, a historically important spawning ground for Coaster Brook trout, was restored with funding from Canada, Ontario,

and community partners. The project returned the creek to its natural channel and created additional spawning, nursery and feeding habitat.

The rehabilitation of lower Clearwater Creek, completed in 2006, restored severely degraded fish habitat and provides educational and recreational opportunities. In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry removed barriers to allow Coaster Brook trout to migrate. Eroding banks were stabilized to prevent sediment from entering Nipigon Bay.

In 2011, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry constructed a walleye spawning shoal at the mouth of Bass (Purdum) Creek where it enters the Nipigon River. Monitoring shows that walleye are spawning successfully, which means the new shoal is helping the recovery of walleye in the Nipigon River system.

### **Cleaning up Areas of Concern**

Canada and Ontario work together to restore the Canadian and binational AOCs in collaboration with conservation authorities, municipalities, Aboriginal communities, environmental groups, industry and the public. Work-

ing together, communities and governments develop and implement RAPs.

Of the 36 remaining AOCs in the Great Lakes, there are nine in Canada, 22 in the United States and five that are shared by both countries. Three Canadian and four United States locations have been fully remediated and removed from the list of AOCs. Two Canadian locations have been recognized as Areas of Concern in Recovery.

### **For more information**

For more information on the Nipigon Bay Area of Concern: [www.infosuperior.com](http://www.infosuperior.com)

For more information on Areas of Concern visit: [www.ec.gc.ca/raps-pas](http://www.ec.gc.ca/raps-pas)

Cat. No.: En164-37/1-2015E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-0-660-02051-8  
PIBS 9705e01

Published by Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

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