

Striped Bass Returns 2012 Gaspereau Season May June



2012 Season & Bass



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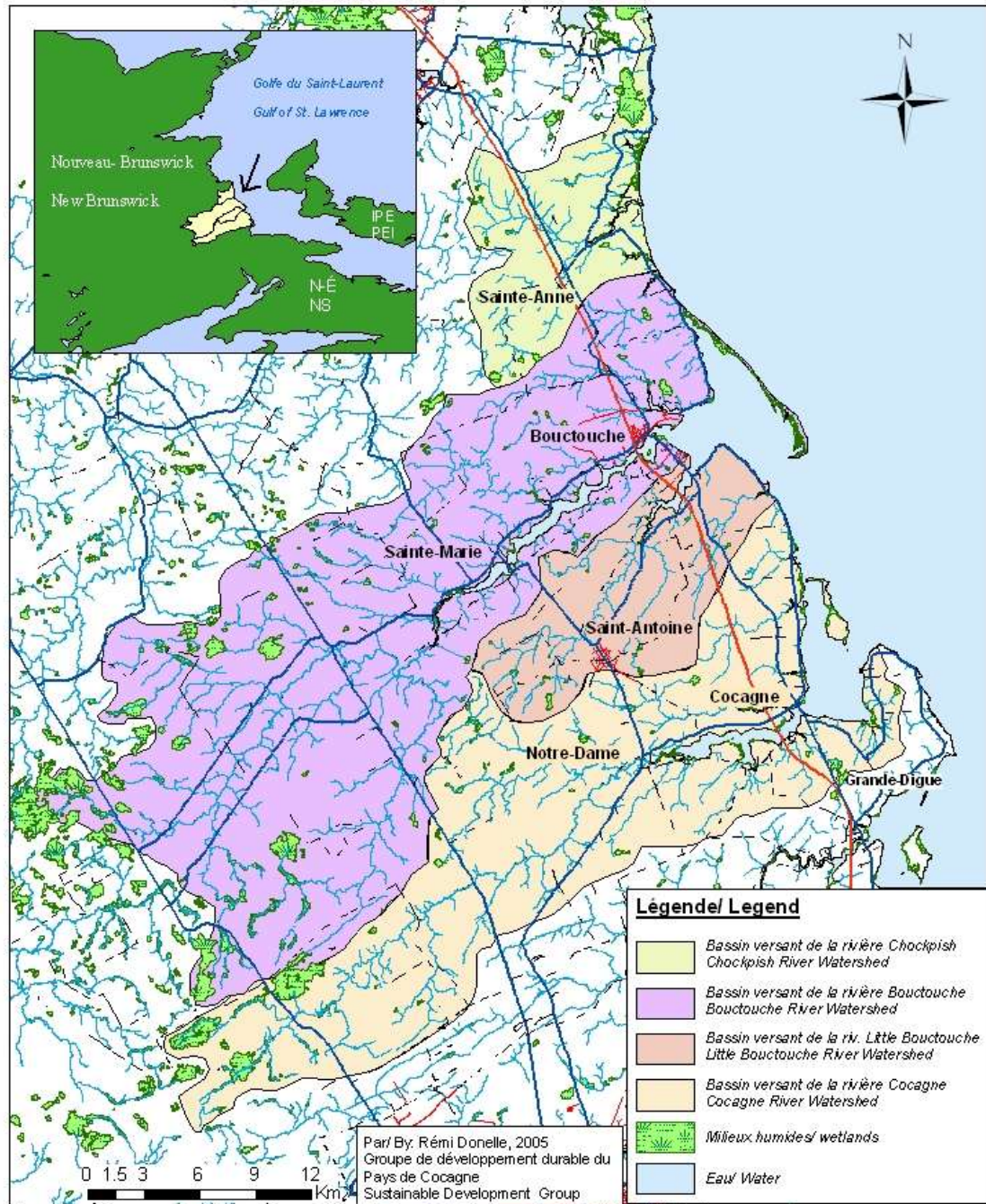
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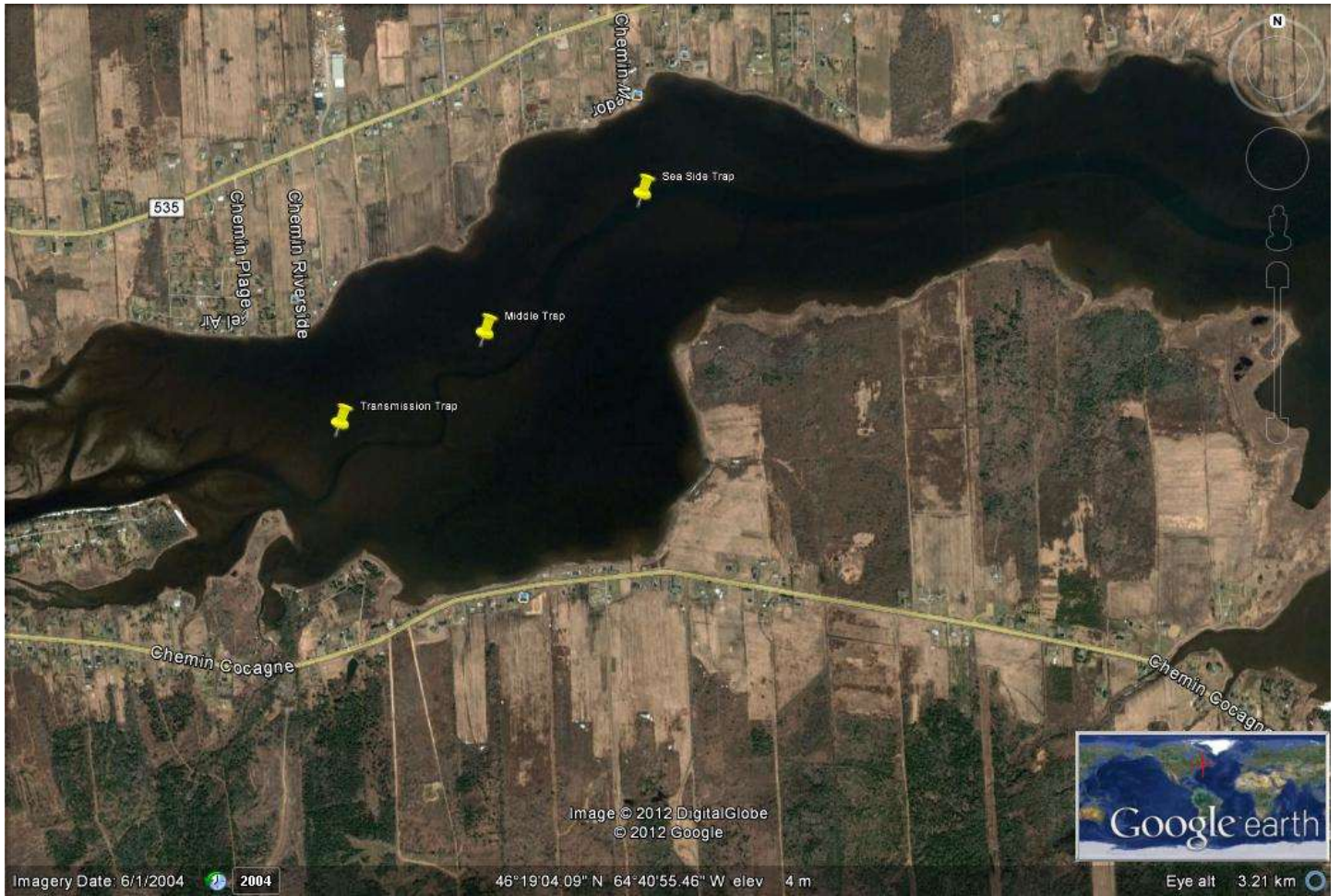
Fishing Methods :



Bassins versants de Kent-Sud, N.-B. - Kent-South, NB Watersheds



Trap Net Locations:



Cocagne River



Bouctouche River

Acknowledgements:

The Southeastern Anglers Association Inc would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the financial sponsors, organizations and individuals who through their dedication made the 2012 season projects a success.

We want to attribute a special thank you to our financial sponsors: the, NB Wildlife Trust Fund for their financial support towards the realization of this project. They are essential to the progress of our activities and goals.

We also want to send special thanks to the following commercial fisherman's: Donny Dutcher, Fernand Robichaud, Raoul Gaudet and to Scott Douglas, anadrounomous species biologist, Fisheries and Oceans Canada for helping us with our projects undertaken this summer. We are grateful that our partnership led to great results this past year.

It is essential to thank members and directors of the Southeastern Anglers Association for their support and input in the decision-making process.

Donald Alexander and Nathalie LeBlanc Poirier
For the Southeastern Anglers Association Inc

Introduction:

The South Eastern Anglers Association was formed in 1993, it's principle mandate being to conserve and enhance fish habitat and population in south-eastern New Brunswick.

Project:

Strip Bass Abundance in The Bouctouche & Cocagne Rivers

Funded:

The NB Wildlife Trust Fund, supported with the knowledge of Mr. Scott Douglas, Biologist Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Purpose:

The project to further document and better understand the current population of Striped Bass found in the, Bouctouche and Cocagne watersheds. Recent evidence from the 2011 Project, Camp Beach Seining, and local sightings indicted possible evidence the bass were attempting to spawn.

The season normally coincides with the Gaspereau (June 28 days) season but this year the bass began to be seen, caught & released in early April as per local fishermen of the areas!

Sightings indicated prior to our work with the Gaspereau fishermen that conditions were right for spawning, the season was past as we started our on the water work. We had planned to collect plankton samples to look for evidence. This proved to be to late as any events had already happened or did not.

The objectives for the 2012 project:

- Increase baseline knowledge, for a better understanding of the striped bass populations in the, Bouctouche and Cocagne rivers.
- Evaluate the presence (in numbers) of striped bass in these rivers through commercial fisherman with the help of log books and activity on the water.

- Gathering baseline information of striped bass in these rivers and how this corresponds to the rest of the Gulf of St-Lawrence population.

Baseline knowledge on the status of Striped Bass:

The striped bass is anadromous, meaning that they spawn, incubate and have their early larval development in freshwater, they require three days of the eggs in suspension as they proceed down stream. Then the juveniles migrate downstream to brackish waters and eventually salt water to feed and grow until they have reached maturity (3-4 years). The striped bass is a coastal schooling species; inhabiting mainly inshore waters. There is available evidence that some bass, weighing 1.4 – 4.5 kg, move northward into Canadian waters in the spring, spend the summer in brackish or fresh water, and move southward waters in the fall.

Spawning always occurs in spring in fresh water, in most cases relatively far upriver but occasionally just beyond the head of tide. Potential spawning fish usually move upriver in the fall. In the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of St Lawrence watersheds spawning occurs in May and June. Water temperature at the time of spawning varied from 12.0 to 14.5°C. Little information is available on juvenile striped bass in Canadian waters and striped bass grow rather quickly.

“Little information is known on the movements or general biology of young striped bass. Mainly because studies of Canadian populations have been concerned mainly with adults.” (Scott and Scott, 1988)

The striped bass was assessed by COSEWIC (the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) whom recommended the species to be listed as Threatened, which came into effect in November 2004. The population had such a decline that it even met the criteria for being listed as Endangered but was designated as Threatened because of the high degree of resilience evident in spawned fish abundance prior to the designation.

Although there are only 2 remaining known spawning grounds in Eastern Canada, historically there were 5 spawning grounds. The 3 that no longer have striped bass are believed to have been extirpated in the last 50 years. The striped bass we find in our rivers today are part of the Southern Gulf of St-Lawrence population, which spawns in the Northwest Miramichi River. It is believed to spawn in other rivers because of events

such as in 2002 where young of the year were captured in Bouctouche with a beach seine, the furthest south yet recorded; the Northwest Miramichi is still the only confirmed spawning site for this population. Our project in 2011 showed an abundance of striped Bass of all sizes during the Gaspereau season June 2011 in both water sheds (Bouctouche & Cocagne) and a priority was put on collecting plankton to attempt to retrieve spawn. This effort was thwarted due to the fact we feel the Bass arrived very early due to the water temperatures after the very early freshet well before the Gaspereau season.

The Gaspereau fisherman reported and we witnessed in our outings with them either no bass, a few 8 to 10, or a few 6 to 8 “ or the same 24 to 29 inches and good runs of Gaspereau in all Box nets on both watersheds. The max counted in any trap was 17 and very spotty. This continued throughout the season on both rivers. I have copied the results from 2011

Cocagne River:

The results were that 3 Gaspereau trap nets caught a total of **2296 striped bass** during the June commercial fishing season.

Bouctouche River:

The results were that 4 Gaspereau trap nets caught a total of **1534 striped bass** during the June commercial fishing season.

Methodology:

The SAA Inc collaborated with the same local commercial fisherman who fished both the Bouctouche and Cocagne rivers for Alewife (Herring species). We developed a simple/compact logbook in 2011 for them to bring out to record the by-catch of striped bass that they found in their nets daily from May31 to 27 June 2012. As the season moved out the counts were so low that the log book was not used.

A meeting took place on September 12th to discuss our observation in the Bouctouche and Cocagne rivers and compare them to the trends happening in the Southern Gulf of St-Lawrence.

Review:

In attendance at the meeting were Scott Douglas DFO Science, Nathalie LeBlanc Poirier Remi Donnel and Michele Maillet. With regrets the commercial fishermen had to decline as other commitments arose.

The events of the season were discussed as they affected the Gaspereau Season in our region (rivers) in comparison to 2011.

During the first week the Gaspereau catch equalled the total 2011 season.

Counts of 10 to 13 fish per week by catch of Strip Bass in both rivers in the 7 Trap Nets.

The by catch was either 6 to 8 inches, 12 to 18 inches or at the end in the Cocagne several in excess of 25 inches up to 29 inches.

A permit was applied for and received to collect plankton, it was abandoned as the bass had already moved out and or were finished spawning.

Conclusions:

Our purpose in the next season will be to be on the water ice out monitoring the river conditions. This will not necessarily correspond to the Gaspereau season. From our knowledge gained in the last two years and the help of Scott Douglas we would like to select several likely sites to collect plankton samples.

The by catch during the Gaspereau season we feel is also important as there are trends that seem to be developing up and down the Northumberland Strait since we have restarted monitoring with the fishermen.

The Gaspereau season on the Northwest was abysmal and not much better in Richibuctou, the fishermen packed up their season as the catch would not pay the fuel.

Fishermen in the late fall although not legal were fishing strip bass and releasing them in great numbers, to the extent in the Bouctouche you would have thought there was a bass derby on.

The difference in conditions were so dramatic that this activity needs to be monitored and one of the best ways is to continue the activities around the by catch surveys for Strip Bass and Gaspereau and other species in the watersheds.