

Erie County Fisheries Advisory Board – 2013 Annual Report

2013 Annual Report
of the
Erie County Fisheries Advisory Board

Introduction

The Erie County Fisheries Advisory Board advises... the County Executive and the Commissioner of the Department of Environment and Planning on... “...matters concerning protection, development and access to fisheries, upon related issues, and upon such additional matters as may be requested by the Commissioner or by the County Executive.”

The 2013 Membership was composed of:

FAB Member

Joseph Fischer, Chairman
Jerry May, Sr. Vice-Chairman
David Barus
Rich Davenport
Scott Gauld
Joseph Jemiolo
Thomas Marks
Spencer Schofield
Ronald Smith
Paul Stoos
Larry Jones

Associated With

NYS Conservation Council
Great Lakes Fish Commission
East Aurora Fish and Game
NYS Outdoor Writers Association
WNY Bassmasters
Boston Valley Conservation Society
Great Lakes Sportsfishing Council
Citizen
Citizen
Erie County Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs, Inc.
New York State Musky Association; Muskies 69

FAB Ex-Officio Member

Will Elliott
Michael Wilkinson
John J. Mills
Richard Smith
Don Kill
Tony Scime
Herb Schultz
Chuck Godfrey

Associated With

Buffalo News
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Buffalo
Erie County Legislator, Minority Leader
Former New York State Assemblyman
Erie County Conservation Society
Niagara Muskie Association
Southtown’s Walleye Association
WNY Trout Unlimited

Mark Lee

Liaison, & Secretary, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning

Collectively, the FAB sent, via the Chairman, advisory letters to Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz in 2013, on several issues, seeking support for:

- US Army Corp of Engineers *Alternative #2, for stabilizing the Springville (i.e. Scoby Hill) Dam;*

- an expanded boat launch season at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) operated Small Boat Harbor (SBH);
- Fish Cleaning Station – preference for replacement/upgrade and relocation near the NFTA boat launch;
- board operational budget funds

Development (Promotion) Issues

Efforts continued in 2013 to quantify specific new data for input to the *online version of the Hot Spot fishing map* (www.erie.gov/hotspot). If funding becomes available, FAB is *prepared to cooperate with (one or both) Niagara and Chautauqua Counties on a regional great lakes (Erie, and Ontario) oriented paper* and digital Hot Spot Fishing Map for local anglers and fishing tourism visitors. Distribution of any new mapping product in the upcoming (2014) year would be enthusiastically supported by FAB member volunteers at club and trade show events, both within, and beyond, the local region. Such distribution would continue to enhance competitive sport fishing, casual recreational fishing and boating and add tourism tax revenue for Erie County.

With the online map, dissemination of information about the well-regarded Erie County fishery is accessible worldwide, greatly exceeding any audience reached by the printed version. The printed version still is very user friendly for in-the-field reference, and as a quick and low cost reference point for first-time and return visitors to the Buffalo-Niagara region, including for ice fishing.

FAB members continue to pursue map updates and distribution to address

- update for the map;
- feasibility of an “app” for cell phones.

During 2013 *FAB members continued to distribute the paper version of the “Hot Spot” fishing map* throughout the appropriate public parks; city, town and village clerk’s offices, and select retail businesses.

Kids Day “Teach-Me-To-Fish” Clinics – fishing rods and reels were provided by the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs, Inc. (ECFSC) for their clinics at:

East Aurora’s Majors Park;
Tiff Nature Preserve (two events: June and July);
Chestnut Ridge Park;
Bison City Rod and Gun;
East Aurora Fish and Game;
Valley Community Center

Volunteer support from FAB members keeps costs to a minimum. Generous support is provided by:

Sahlen’s (hot dogs); *Weekley’s* (worms); *Bass Pro Shops* (fishing tackle); *Dick’s Sporting Goods* (fishing tackle); *Pure Fishing Tackle (Berkley)*; Northern King Lures; *Joe Netti* (fishing tackle); *Mustad Hooks*; *Sheldons* (Mepps); and *New York State Department of Environmental*

Conservation at various events held by regional fishing organizations that the Erie County Fisheries Advisory Board membership, in whole or in part, regularly support with volunteer hours. Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's summary report is available at <http://erictyfsc.org/>.

In 2013 the sole funding for clinics has been the balance of one-time prior grant funds secured by the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc., some of which were received prior to 2013, from:

- the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo (balance of 2012 grant);
- the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc. (\$300 for VIP Boat Tour);
- and the Safari Club (balance of 2012 grant).

Suppliers of lures and other tackle provided for outreach Kids' Fishing Days. Prior set-aside rod & reel sets from 2012 grants were added for the 2013 events.

Many youth, often from low-income households, quickly outstrips supply. The fishing tackle, and fishing skills taught at our fishing clinics provides many youth and parents with a lasting positive impression and affection for the sport, and respect for those who volunteered their time.

The ***fish cleaning station*** at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's (NFTA) small boat harbor was recognized by the board, led by Ron Smith's efforts, to be an issue ***worthy of concern for complete replacement and relocation, whether by the NFTA, or the harbor's successor owner, the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation. Ron Smith, assisted by Paul Stoos, illuminated such issues in writing on behalf of the board, and requested that the FAB be invited to advise on solutions to both the cleaning station and added enhancements to the developing Buffalo recreational waterfront.***

The annual ***Greater Niagara BassEye Celebrity Challenge***, fishing on Lake Erie and the upper Niagara River, is scored by FAB volunteer members. FAB members also scored the ***Lower Niagara Sportfishing Challenge***, fishing on the Lower Niagara River. Both events raise funding to 'catch the cure' to Cystic Fibrosis. Over the past 11 years the BassEye event has gained over \$1,000,000.

Individually, FAB members, in their official capacities as members of other fishing/sports clubs have provided additional volunteer hours to promote the active fishery use for tournaments. The result is added awareness and substantial economic benefit to the region. Residents and visitors experience the continued high quality of life the water-based special events afford.

Access Issues

FAB members continue to monitor a Town of West Seneca Creekside Handicapped Accessible Kayak Launch site off of Clinton Street, near the City of Buffalo.

The FAB in 2013 discussed and supported enhancing and optimizing the Chestnut Ridge Park Kids' Fishing Day, at the park reservoir, to also include use of the Commissioner's Cabin in 2014, if practical, and permitted. ***2014 volunteer staging support from the non-profit***

incorporated Chestnut Ridge Park Conservancy, whose trustee membership includes a FAB member, was gained.

Protection and Enhancement Issues

The *Buffalo River Walleye Management Project: A Plan for Restoration* (aka Walleye Rearing Pond). A draft Cooperative Agreement between the United States Department of the Interior (USDI) and Erie County for \$115,000 in federal funds was received by the Department of Environment and Planning in 2005. Project final design specifications, accurate current costs, and substantial needed other funding have not been quantified or secured, rendering the project unfeasible. Financial realities have not warranted actively re-visiting the project in 2013. At this time the Fisheries Advisory Board (FAB) stands ready to advise on alternative proposals to utilize the funds locally in a similar, but financially sound and viable way.

South Park Lake Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project is a project overseen by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Fiscal years 2012 and 2013 have no funding for completion of the feasibility project, which currently is approximately fifty percent completed, according to October 2012 Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Fact Sheet. USACE estimated that 100,000 cubic yards of organic material needs to be dredged from the lake. The agency estimates that \$150,000 more is needed to complete the fully federally funded feasibility phase, estimated to cost \$550,000 total. Design and installation will require a 35% non-federal share.

During 2011 the FAB continued to monitor presentations from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and others regarding development of a *fish passage ladder as part of a feasibility study at Scoby Hill Dam, on Cattaraugus Creek, within an Erie County park*. The US Army Corps of Engineers suspects the structure may be unstable, and continues to explore the three potential actions: demolition, modification to allow greater water flow rates, or repair. Concurrent with these options is the possibility of a fish ladder. *FAB input was provided as part of a May 7th Scoping Session.*

The FAB continues to monitor the advance of the *Asian Carp* on the Great Lakes, and the potential for commercial wind turbines (*windmills*) *within Lake Erie, advising against them* due to constraints on fishing access, large fall zones, limited feasible winter access for maintenance and emergency response, and the potential to leak internal machinery oil into the lake.

FAB member Thomas Marks has continued to participate in multi-state Great Lakes Region advisory discussions on the projected negative impacts of Asian Carp on plankton and low-level food sources which otherwise are needed to sustain diverse higher level fishery aquatic life. He has advised on the potential adverse impact to natural, economic, and financial realms to the lower Great Lakes, as the representative from New York State.

The federal Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework continues to supply a scope of potential work to address Asian Carp threats. Implementation efforts have not reached the local fishery. Federally funded efforts are directed towards assessment of multiple options to arrest or mitigate invasives' migration.

FAB Member Dave Barus, in his role as Corresponding Secretary of the Erie County Association of Sportsmen's Clubs, accepted a national award (from the National Association of Sportsmen Writers, of which he is a member) in October. The award commends him for his work, largely in Western New York, for increased outreach education events to encourage youth to adopt the sport of fishing, and enjoy the educational and ecological awareness enhances.

The FAB intends to continue to advise against ***windmills on Great Lakes waters.*** No permit applications for Lake Erie based windmills ***in this region*** have been submitted to USACE. US Department of Homeland Security advises federal interests regarding impacts, if any, on long-range radar when proposal are made. Multiple federal, state, and local other agencies would be involved in any proposal.

Future Activities

The FAB will continue its advisory role to protect, promote and seek additional access for Erie County residents and visitors that are seeking to fish locally. Many of the current and proposed projects in which FAB is involved have cooperative state, federal and municipal agency involvement. Activities may include:

- Clear Creek Steelhead Fishing Access – Taylor Hollow Rd. to Ketchum Rd., North Collins
- Scoby Dam fish access – US Army Corps fish passage feasibility study – Phase II study funding not yet secured, study is completed, and ***FAB recommends Alternative #2, which would be implemented with substantial federal funds***
- Pond Fishing at Erie County forest land – off Genesee Rd., east of Rt. 240, Sardinia
- Upper Cazenovia Creek – public fishing rights access and parking – Holland
- Cazenovia Creek Dam – steelhead stocking area – East Aurora
- Big Sister Creek Access – near Bennett Beach Park & Erie County Sewer District #2
- Expanded Sturgeon Point Marina access, with funding for improved annual dredging
- Buffalo Crushed Stone – marina & ramp on Lake Erie
- South Park Lake – monitoring feasibility of study completion, and habitat enhancement for fishing
- Erie Basin Marina and Buffalo River – access to steelhead fishing opportunities enhancement
- Federal funds reallocation, within Erie County sites, of Buffalo River Walleye Rearing Pond funds

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- Cazenovia Creek – monitor steelhead fishing
- Buffalo Creek Blossom Dam – access at Blossom Road
- Cayuga Creek – shoreline access
- Amherst State Park – trout stocking – Glen Falls Park
- HABITAT RESTORATIONS of:
 - Strawberry Island;
 - Frog (Sisters’) Island;
 - Beaver Island March;
 - Fish Habitat Structures – near the South Grand Island Bridge;
 - Tonawanda Creek – New Road to Rapids Road for canoe access and shoreline fishing.

Charter Captain Larry Jones formally joined the board for a three-year term, and quickly took active leadership in organizing Local VIP’s Lake Erie Fishery Tour on August 7, 2013.

Both Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz and the Commissioner of Environment and Planning, Maria R. Whyte, along with Legislative Minority Chair John J. Mills, other Erie County legislators, participated along with Chautauqua County officials, including County Executive Greg Edwards. The event gave first-hand assessment of the appeal, vitality, and marketing challenges for this region’s share of Lake Erie. Potential regional joint opportunities were highlighted by FAB fishing experts and boat captains.