

## **Information Sheet for Bass Spawning Sanctuary Project**

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**Issue:** Pre-season angling of nesting black bass has caused:

- (1) substantial reductions in successful spawning and sizes of adults
- (2) evolutionary changes in black bass behavior and lower catch rates by anglers.

The current regulation of a spring closed season for bass couple with an open spring angling season for other species actually provides no protection for nesting bass. In fact, during typical years in Opinicon Lake, on average, each male is angled 2-3 times during the spawning season.

**Status:** Bass Spawning Sanctuaries (BaSSs), which are areas of a lake in which no fishing for any species is allowed until the Saturday after the first Friday of July (in 2024 = July 6), were established in two lakes in FMZ18, Opinicon and Charleston. During the first year in both lakes, angler acceptance and compliance were excellent, and as a result, the reproductive success of bass inside the BaSSs was 5-8 times higher than in the rest of the lake.

**Proposed Next Step:** Add other lakes to the BaSS program to better test the new management strategy across a larger suite of lakes that encompass a range of habitats, fish communities, and fishing levels for an extended period of time (5-10 years) for evaluation.

**What a lake needs to do:** Form a Lake Team of 3-5 knowledgeable individuals from the lake for coordination with the Science Team to do the following:

- (1) Work with the Science Team to develop draft plans for BaSS sites in each lake at 10% and 20% shoreline coverage options;
- (2) Assist the Science Team in promoting the proposed project among the various stakeholders, the OMNR, as well as to the entire lake community during the public comment period;
- (3) Help the Science Team to collect baseline data on:
  - a. growth rate and age at maturation;
  - b. aggression levels and catchability via standardized angling;
  - c. compliance and acceptance of the BaSSs;
  - d. annual recruitment of 1 yr olds;
- (4) Contribute some financial support to the Project Account at Carleton University, with the donation being matched 2:1 by NSERC. Project funds will be used to accomplish #1-3 above, as well as to fund “No Fishing Bass Spawning Sanctuary” signs production and deployment.

### **Projected Schedule:**

Coalition formation complete -- 2/15/25

Proposal to NSERC to set up the Research Account at Carleton – 3/1/25

Promotion of project to OMNR, stakeholders, lake community -- Spring/summer 2025

Collect baseline aggression and age/growth data -- Spring/summer 2025

Collect baseline annual recruitment data – summer/fall 2025

OMNR Committee Reviews/Public Comment Period -- summer/fall/winter 2025

Launch of BaSSs across the lake – spring 2026