

Fisheries Agreement with Saugeen Ojibway Nation

March 11, 2013

The Ontario government and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) have reached a new substantive commercial fishing agreement in some of the waters of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay around the Bruce Peninsula. This agreement will be in effect from Feb. 25, 2013, to Feb. 25, 2018.

Former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci was retained by the government to facilitate discussions between the parties. On Aug. 23, 2011, SON and Ontario signed a framework agreement that established a process for the negotiation and subsequent signing of a new commercial fishing agreement.

The new agreement:

- Provides clarity and certainty about how SON's sustenance commercial fishing right will be exercised.
- Means all commercial fishing conducted by SON will take place in a sustainable manner, based on sound science and the collaborative setting of total allowable catch (TAC).
- Recognizes the importance of protecting and conserving the fishery.
- Identifies the specific waters where commercial fishing will occur, including a time frame for SON to resume commercial fishing in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay.
- Sets out processes for monitoring, assessment, information sharing, and determining sustainable harvest limits.
- Enhances economic development opportunities for SON.
- Establishes a cooperative approach to compliance.
- Commits both parties to effective public education and communications.

The new agreement does not:

- Address fishing for food, social or ceremonial purposes.
- Change recreational fishing regulations.
- Change where recreational fishing activity can occur.

Fishing in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay

These bays are important areas for both recreational users and the two First Nations. They provide sheltered waters for sailing and for small vessels to safely fish for both recreational and commercial purposes. Under the terms of this new agreement, commercial fishing will resume in Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay on April 26, 2013 and continue year round over the term of the agreement.

MNR and SON will monitor commercial fishing and recreational use in the bays and will meet in October 2013 to make sure that both commercial and recreational anglers can continue to safely coexist, while maintaining a sustainable fishery.

A number of measures will be in place to allow commercial and recreational activities to safely coexist in these waters:

- Nets will be marked in an effective and standard manner that will be communicated to all recreational boaters.
- Nets will be no longer than 300 metres to maximize marker visibility and facilitate safe passage for recreational boaters.

In addition, the following new measure will be implemented in order to mitigate the unintended harvest of trout and salmon:

- Nets set in the bays will have a mesh size of 4.5 inches or greater.
- Nets in the Bays shall be a maximum height of 50 meshes.
- During March, April, October and November, commercial fishers will make best efforts not to set nets for commercial catch within a one-kilometre radius of the mouths of Bothwells Creek, Colpoys Creek, Waterton Creek, Keefers Creek and Gleason Brook in order to protect spawning salmon and rainbow trout.

Area of the Agreement

The agreement covers waters surrounding the Bruce Peninsula from Point Clark in the main basin of Lake Huron to the international border and around the Bruce Peninsula into Georgian Bay to Craigeleith. This area is recognized by SON as its traditional waters.

