

RAINBOWS CAN SPAWN IN GANARASKA AFTER 75-YEAR WAIT

When natural resources minister Leo Bernier unveils a plaque May 4 and declares the Ganaraska Fishway at Port Hope officially open, another step will be taken toward the rehabilitation of the fish populations of Lake Ontario, currently one of the ministry's biggest projects.

Hopefully, efforts of Ontario biologists will return the Lake's waters to the excellent quality of several decades ago when one could swim anywhere and fish habitat and spawning grounds were not fouled by silt and other pollutants.

Fisheries officers believe that opening the Ganaraska Fishway this spring is a giant step in the right direction, not only because it is the first one on the lake but also because it is the first time in 75 years trout have been able to swim up the river past Port Hope.

The Corbett Dam (built in 1899 as a goodwill gesture by Port Hope resident, Dr. Corbett, as part of a plan to bring electricity to the town) has prevented fish from reaching spawning beds in the upper Ganaraska River and its tributaries. Now more than 40 miles of previously inaccessible stream will be opened, especially for rainbow trout -- the species best suited to that habitat.

Corbett Dam and its adjoining mill will remain as an historical landmark but it is complemented by the new \$40,000 fishway that ministry engineers say is the best they have ever constructed, using all their expertise and best features from all the other fishways built over the years.

The Ganaraska River, no more than an hour's drive from Metro Toronto, has been known to anglers for a long time. About 150 years ago this river teemed with Atlantic salmon, long since wiped out by

settlers' mills that sprang up along its banks.

The Ganaraska has also been known over the years as providing good habitat for brown trout -- and still is. Now that a fishway has been built, rainbow trout have been added to the list of desirable species found here and the ministry is concentrating on them.

Due to the combined efforts of the former department of lands and forests, the Ganaraska Conservation Authority and local boy scouts about 15 years ago, the danger of flooding has been reduced and tree planting has lessened erosion along the banks.

Now the crystal-clear, silt-free headwaters are an ideal habitat for rainbows which, give or take a few years, should return from Lake Ontario each year to spawn and reproduce naturally without the aid of hatchery stocking.

Although the ministry's current effort has been primarily concerned with rainbow trout, other species such as brown trout, brook trout and Pacific salmon can now also swim through the fishway and, with a little luck, into anglers' creels.

The whole program, however, would be in vain without the sea lamprey control measures being effectively undertaken on a continuing basis by the federal government. The repetitive treatment of streams flowing into the Great Lakes is effectively controlling the lamprey which have been a major threat to fish populations. One feature of the new fishway is its lamprey weir; with this there is no possibility of these predators escaping into the upper reaches of the Ganaraska.

The public is invited to attend the May 4th ceremony. The official program begins at 2:30 p.m. at the Corbett Dam (Macdonald-Cartier Freeway east to Highway 28) and spectators will have the opportunity to see actual work in progress such as tagging, measuring, and fish entering the fishway for their trip upstream.