

Fishing agreement puts sports species at risk

Editor:

“The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the sons.”

It’s been well over 150 years since colonization, and I believe the generations proceeding have been held accountable for the actions of their forefathers long enough.

On Tuesday, March 12, I read with disdain the news that our provincial MNR (the organization our tax dollars fund to ensure our provinces resources are protected) had signed a five-year agreement with SON allowing gill nets to be placed within the protected waters of Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay.

This agreement, signed without invitation or input from local stakeholders whom the agree-

ment will directly affect, is unacceptable.

Georgian Bay is approximately 15,000 square kilometres. There is plenty of lake for commercial fishermen to co-exist with recreational fishermen — that said, there is no place for commercial netting in the small waters of Owen Sound bay and Colpoys.

These are the waters [where] various fishing groups and individuals have for the most part volunteered their time and resources to ensure both native and non-native species thrive for anglers to enjoy.

These waters also house the spawning tributaries that migratory species require to reproduce and pass on their genetics naturally. A smoke and mirrors stipulation within the agreement

that would see nets set a minimum of a kilometre away from the mouths of these tributaries during peak spawning runs is ludicrous! Fish swim! Migratory means just that! Whether the mature spawning species get caught a kilometre or five feet from their destination is irrelevant; dead is dead.

The waters within both bays are fragile and gill nets are not selective — 4.5-square-inch mesh size does not allow ‘non target’ species such as chinook salmon, rainbow and brown trout through it. These fish are often the same size or larger in circumference than the targeted whitefish and lake trout. Don’t believe that because you don’t see these species sold at the local market doesn’t mean they

aren’t being sold — drop by a commercial boat when it docks and ask for ANYTHING that swims in Georgian Bay — you can buy it. For a buck a pound.

To the various clubs and individuals who own a vested interest in the great lakes sport fishery and health of the resource; I implore not another government funded dollar, volunteer hour, or club raised fish be allowed to leave our hatcheries to be unceremoniously harvested in nets from the inshore waters of Owen Sound and Colpoys Bay and sold back to the public who paid for them to be placed there.

**Jamie Fenton
Owen Sound**