

Wil Wegman

Yesterday Gabby Liddle and I were out on Lake Simcoe doing some habitat site assessment work, and once we were done we took a tour of the south side of Georgina Island to check on the wild rice plantings we have done over the last two years. To our great delight we found several patches of wild rice in the very spots



we planted and I wanted both of you (Kerry Ann Charles and Andrew Big Canoe) to be amongst the very first to know!

As you likely recall, in 2012 Greg Lunn and I planted most of the seeds in the large bay just east of East Point Marina. We planted thousands of seeds in several 10 metre square plots (created by ranger crews earlier that summer) that included fenced off plots to keep geese and carp out; non fenced plots and fenced plots with bottom vegetation raked away to increase likelihood of seeds taking hold. Last year when I returned to the site to see if there were any rice plants... it was disappointing to not see any there. We were told however by experts that wild rice does not necessarily sprout each year and that it can apparently lie dormant for decades. Such was seemingly the case at the bottom end of Cooks Bay, where it reportedly flourished until the ~1930's. When Steve Varga from this office and I found some large patches there in 2010 it more or less sparked a plan to try and restore this historically and culturally significant native plant to some other traditional areas of the lake as well. With your expertise Andrew (when you accompanied Emily Funnell and I in our workboat in 2012) you were able to identify the bay near East Point Marina as one where your ancestors had told you wild rice did exist at one time. We found the habitat there still suitable as well and therefore it became our primary seeding area in 2012. So despite no growth in 2013 ... yesterday for the first time in many decades, the south side of Georgina Island once again was home to wild rice. We were thrilled to say the least!

Yesterday Gabby and I also checked out the bay just west of the Ferry Boat landing area – a place that Andrew you had also identified as past home to wild rice. Here Emma Followes (formerly from our office) and I planted wild rice last year. Gabby and I didn't see any patches of wild rice yesterday... except for one possible lone plant. We are encouraged however as the site still looks very promising and hopeful that, like the east point bay site, more wild rice will be evident next year.

Next Steps:

Fortunately thru increased funding we were able to secure (for rehab work related to the Lake Simcoe Muskie Restoration Program) we were able to pre-purchase twice as many wild rice seeds as last year. These will be ready for us in early September to be planted within a day after they arrive here from Shoal Lake. We have several sites around the lake already selected for the rehab work ... some of which may include wild rice plantings, but we also plan to re-seed the Georgina Island sites. Of course if either of you have any suggestions for additional planting sites ... please let me know.

I have attached a few photos for you that show some of the wild rice plants that we saw. These are still immature plants and will continue to grow until about the end of August. Some have been nipped by waterfowl already so we do plan on more enclosed plots to protect the plants next year.

Please feel free to share the photos ... and this update as well if you like.

Thanks and have a great day!



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