



Lake Simcoe's  
**OPERATION  
BAIT BUCKET**

★ HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES ★



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## Presentation Outline:

- About Lake Simcoe
- Lake Simcoe Protection Plan & Invasive Species
- Operation Bait Bucket – What it is and Why it's Important
- Outcomes and Future Effectiveness Monitoring



# About Lake Simcoe

- Most intensively fished 'inland' lake in Ontario
- Less than an hour from Toronto
- 740 sq km ... Ontario's 6th largest inland lake.
- More angler effort occurs between Jan 1-March 15 than the rest of the year combined
- About 20 commercial ice hut operations
- Diverse winter fishery- excellent lake trout, whitefish, cisco and perch
- Well established populations of AIS including Zebra mussels, round goby, rusty crayfish & spiny water flea. Also VHS!





# Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

- Lake Simcoe Protection Act came into effect in 2008
- Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSPP) released in 2009 to protect and restore the ecological health of the lake and its watershed
- LSPP addresses long term environmental issues in Lake Simcoe, including invasive species
  - *“Many of the aquatic species found in Lake Simcoe have spread from the Great Lakes through activities such as boating, angling, and other pathways.”*
- Chapter 7 of the Plan focuses on Invasive Species and Policy 7.1-SA commits: ... *MNR and partners will deliver information and education programs annually for the general public and key stakeholders on how to prevent the spread of, and how to detect, aquatic and terrestrial invasive species.*
- Two major initiatives were developed: Operation Boat Clean for summer and Operation Bait Bucket (OBB) for winter

# OPERATION BAIT BUCKET

★ HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES ★

## Two person crew

### What is OBB?

- Since 2011 ... a joint education and awareness program between Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

### How It Works?

- Roving MNR crews travel the lake on snow machines, talking to ice anglers about invasive species and diseases like VHS
- Primary message is preventing introduction of aquatic invasive species
- KEY MESSAGES:
  - Don't dump leftover baitfish down the hole!
  - Buy and use baitfish locally!





## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Deliver our messages one-on-one with anglers on their turf
- Educate anglers and encourage them to make a commitment to help us protect the Lake
- Change behavior

## FEEDBACK

- OBB staff are very well received - positive interest and feedback from anglers and media
- And a chance for them to share their ideas on how to manage the fishery

After our general messaging it opens the door for all kinds of questions



# Staff Training and Safety

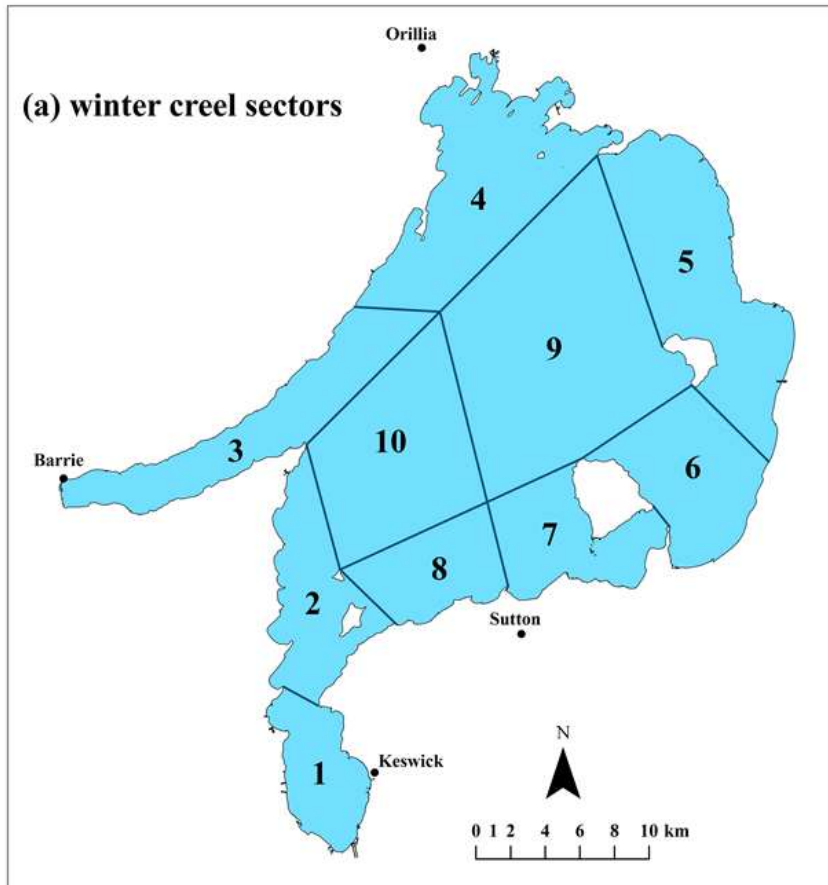


- Crews are fully trained and adhere to MNR's Working On Ice Policy and Safe Operating Procedures
- Includes On-Ice Safety training & rescue and snowmobile operation courses



# Planning our Approach

(a) winter creel sectors



## Dividing the lake into sectors:

- 1)Cooks Bay
- 2)Innisfil –Snake and Fox Island
- 3)Kempenfelt Bay
- 4)Oro Lines
- 5)Beaverton
- 6)Port Bolster
- 7)Virginia
- 8)Willow Beach
- 9)Mid Lake-Whites Shoal
- 10) Mid Lake- Long Shoal

- Coordinate efforts with Lake Creel Survey Staff and Conservations Officers



- OBB runs from safe ice (mid Jan) until mid March
- Average 3 times weekly. Stay off the ice during whiteouts or poor ice





## Costs

\$2,000-\$3,000 in operating expenses, plus \$20k salary etc



## Getting the Message Out

- Ice Hut Operators put up posters in huts to help spread the word
- Large signs posted lake-side and road-side
- Hand outs for anglers to reinforce messaging: stickers, whistles, brochure, and leftover baitfish bags





# OPERATION BAIT BUCKET

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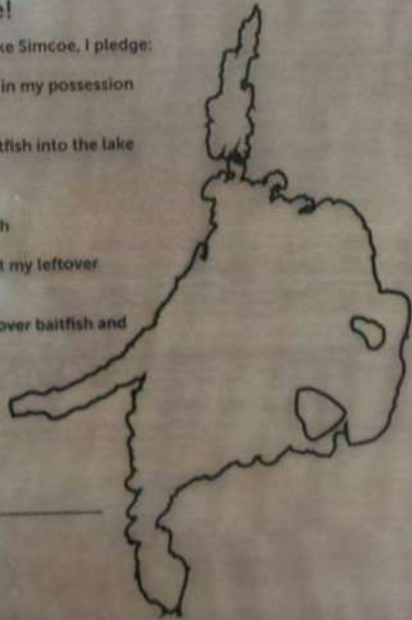
## PERSONAL LEFTOVER BAITFISH BAG

Commit to Protecting Lake Simcoe's Fishery

### Take the Baitfish Pledge!

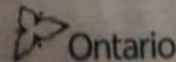
As a responsible licensed angler on Lake Simcoe, I pledge:

- ✓ To only have up to 120 baitfish in my possession – live or dead
- ✓ To never dump my leftover baitfish into the lake
- ✓ To use baitfish bought locally
- ✓ To never chum with live baitfish
- ✓ To use this bag to freeze or salt my leftover baitfish for future use OR
- ✓ To properly dispose of my leftover baitfish and bait bucket water off the ice



Signed \_\_\_\_\_

OPERATION BAIT BUCKET



### MNR LAKE SIMCOE FISH STOCKING RECORDS FROM 1985 TO 2013

LAKE TRUPEE			LAKE SIMCOE		
Year	Species	Quantity	Year	Species	Quantity
1985	Walleye	1000	1985	Walleye	1000
1986	Walleye	1000	1986	Walleye	1000
1987	Walleye	1000	1987	Walleye	1000
1988	Walleye	1000	1988	Walleye	1000
1989	Walleye	1000	1989	Walleye	1000
1990	Walleye	1000	1990	Walleye	1000
1991	Walleye	1000	1991	Walleye	1000
1992	Walleye	1000	1992	Walleye	1000
1993	Walleye	1000	1993	Walleye	1000
1994	Walleye	1000	1994	Walleye	1000
1995	Walleye	1000	1995	Walleye	1000
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2001	Walleye	1000	2001	Walleye	1000
2002	Walleye	1000	2002	Walleye	1000
2003	Walleye	1000	2003	Walleye	1000
2004	Walleye	1000	2004	Walleye	1000
2005	Walleye	1000	2005	Walleye	1000
2006	Walleye	1000	2006	Walleye	1000
2007	Walleye	1000	2007	Walleye	1000
2008	Walleye	1000	2008	Walleye	1000
2009	Walleye	1000	2009	Walleye	1000
2010	Walleye	1000	2010	Walleye	1000
2011	Walleye	1000	2011	Walleye	1000
2012	Walleye	1000	2012	Walleye	1000
2013	Walleye	1000	2013	Walleye	1000

### INVASIVE SPECIES & DISEASE:

Lake Simcoe has been identified as an Invasive Species Hotspot. Invasive species and diseases can harm the lake's ecosystem and affect the health of the fishery. It is important to prevent the spread of these species and diseases. Learn how you can help by visiting the Invasive Species website.



To report sightings and file Invasive Species Notices at 1-800-563-7711 or visit [www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com)

## ICE FISHING LAKE SIMCOE



### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

For more information on ice fishing regulations, visit the website or call the toll-free number. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority logo.

QR CODE!

# Protect Lake Simcoe

# Don't Dump Leftover Baitfish!



You could be spreading invasive species or disease. Dispose of unused baitfish and water on land or in the trash. Buy baitfish close to where you fish.

**1-800-563-7711**  
[www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com)





# Two-sided signage at key access sites around Lake Simcoe



Winter signs can be switched out to summer messaging



- 2011 - 7 days, 921 contacts, 275 km travelled
  - 2012 - 9 days, 667 contacts, 163 km travelled
  - 2013 - 11 days, 946 contacts, 308 km travelled
  - 2014 - 16 days, 1424 contacts, 549 km travelled
  - 2015 – 13 days, 1151 contacts, 338 km travelled
- Total - 56 days 5,109 contacts, 1633 km**





## Total and average anglers reached by period of the week for 2011-2015

<b>Period or Day</b>	<b>Total # days on the ice</b>	<b>Average # of anglers per day</b>	<b>Total anglers contacted</b>
Monday-Thursday	37	87	3222
Friday	13	100	1302
Saturday	4	146	585
Sunday	0	0	0

# Effectiveness Monitoring Survey - 2017

## 1) Thinking of the last 5 winters, on average, how often did you ice fish Lake Simcoe?

- a) Today is the first time ice fishing Lake Simcoe
- b) 1-2 times each winter
- c) 3- 5 times each winter
- d) 6-10 times each winter
- e) More than 10; as often as I can, including weekdays

## 2 ) Have you encountered an MNRF staff person from Operation Bait Bucket (OBB) while out ice fishing in the last 5 years?

- a) Yes: How many times? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) No
- c) Don't know/can't remember

**IF ANGLER ANSWERS NO, SKIP QUESTION 3 & 4, EXPLAIN OBB / PROVIDE KEY MESSAGES**

## 3) What do you recall was their *primary* message?

- a) Don't dump leftover minnows
- b) Reuse leftover minnows or dispose of properly on shore
- c) Report new invasive species
- d) Buy baitfish locally
- e) All of the above
- f) Don't know/can't remember

# Effectiveness Survey Continued

4) Has (or will) your encounter with an OBB crew member changed your behavior in terms of what you do with leftover minnows?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not sure
- d) I've never released/dumped minnows

5) On a 5 point scale, where 1 means “totally disagree” and 5 means “totally agree”, please consider the following statements in regards to Invasive Species:

It is important to prevent the introduction of invasive species to Lake Simcoe.	1	2	3	4	5
You can spread disease like Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) or Invasive Species by dumping your leftover baitfish (or the water they're in) into a lake	1	2	3	4	5
Helping to prevent the spread of invasive species is every angler's responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
It's illegal to use round gobies for bait	1	2	3	4	5

6) Do you think OBB crews are having a positive influence visiting one- on-one with Lake Simcoe ice anglers?

- a) Yes
- b) No



# Conclusion

- It's important to **raise public awareness about preventing invasive species**
- Programs like OBB change angler behavior and protect this **important lake and its fishery for future generations**



Thank You!  
Any Questions?

