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Preserving Pugnose Shiner habitat

BRUCE BELL

Local waterfront property owners on three Prince Edward County water courses are being encouraged to participate in a two-year program to help preserve shoreline habitat for Pugnose Shiner — a small fish identified as being a species at risk.

A partnership has been formed between Quinte Conservation, Friends of Wellers Bay, the West Lake Community Association, Volunteers on East Lake, the County Sustainability Group as Watersheds Canada has announced the development and implementation of a Pugnose Shiner habitat enhancement. Scheduled to last two years, the education and action project is designed to help shoreline property owners in the Quinte watershed, protect the last remaining habitats of the Pugnose Shiner.

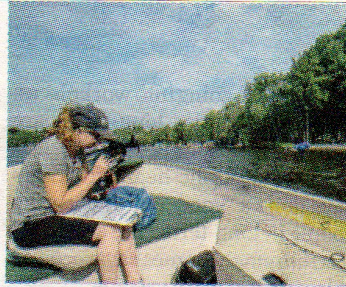
"It is exciting to see multiple partners and programs coming together to help restore critical habitat for the Pugnose Shiner. The communities are making a difference through their stewardship actions," said Melissa Dakers, Lake Stewardship coordinator with Watersheds Canada.

Funded by the Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk, the Pugnose Shiner Landowner Engagement and Shoreline Habitat Restoration Project will provide many shoreline property owners in the Quinte watershed with:

- Education and stewardship materials including informative videos;
- Shoreline restorations using native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers through the Natural Edge program;
- Property-specific and lake-level stewardship reports through the Love Your Lake Program; and
- Invasive aquatic vegetation surveys conducted by Quinte Conservation.

Residents and land owners on the three lakes can expect information correspondence from Watersheds Canada in the coming weeks explaining the scope of the project.

"Unless someone opts out we will



Maggie Stevenson of Watersheds Canada does an shoreline evaluation for a Love Your Lakes program.

be coming by in a boat and assessing their shoreline from probably about 20 feet away — we won't be coming onto their property," explained Dakers. "Then next spring (2022) they will receive another letter from us with a private code that will allow them to access a report on their property — only their property and no one else's — with recommendations on how they can improve their shoreline in an effort to enhance the Pugnose habitat."

The Pugnose Shiner is a small (minnow) fish found in a few areas in southwestern Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. It is extremely vulnerable to declining habitat quality. As such, this project will focus on landowner engagement and action to help enhance and restore local Pugnose Shiner populations and habitat quality.

"Much of our waterfront is in private ownership and these owners are the front-line caretakers of their lake," said Maya Navrot, the outreach and stewardship coordinator for Quinte Conservation. "This program not only makes recommendations to landowners, but more importantly acknowledges the positive work they are already doing. The results of the Love Your Lake Program will help guide stewardship efforts, available grant programs, and future studies on the lakes — all geared towards preserving and enhancing the health of our local lakes."

Watersheds Canada is a registered Canadian charity committed to providing programs to communities across the country to engage and help individuals enhance and protect the health of their lakes and rivers. Since 2002, they have worked with grassroots organizations to deliver freshwater stewardship programming, shoreline naturalizations and assessments, and in-water habitat restorations. To learn more, visit Watersheds.ca

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is the federal lead for safeguarding Canada's waters and managing Canada's fisheries, oceans and freshwater resources. They help ensure healthy and sustainable aquatic ecosystems through habitat protection and sound science