

Will there still be Self-Sustaining Brook Trout Lakes in Algonquin Park by the end of the 21st Century?

Did you know that Algonquin Park is home to more than 250 self-sustaining coldwater brook trout lakes – one of the highest concentrations in the entire world? As the name implies, brook trout normally inhabit flowing water. Self-sustaining, lake dwelling (lacustrine) brook trout populations are therefore unusual, but abundant in Algonquin Park. One of the most beautiful and sought after fish in the trout and salmon family, brook trout thrive in headwater lakes such as those seen in the photo left below, provided that the right conditions are met. Algonquin Park presently provides suitable conditions for these fish to successfully reproduce. These unique lake-dwelling brook trout populations require pure cold water filtered through clean gravel (upwellings) in the lake for successful spawning and egg incubation. In addition, pure inflowing coldwater nursery creeks provide escape from predators for the newly hatched fry during their first year of life. Upwellings and nursery creeks are all fed by pure, cold, groundwater which flows from surrounding headwater areas, known as catchment basins.



If properly managed, this important component of the Algonquin Ecosystem will continue to provide suitable habitat for these self-sustaining lake-dwelling populations, as well as unparalleled sport-fishing opportunities, for generations to come (photo right).

This brook trout habitat must be fully protected, which is not easy, as successful nursery creeks may flow at rates as low as 1 litre per minute. Any disturbance in the adjacent upland/headwater catchment basin can result in diminished groundwater flow to upwellings and nursery creeks, ultimately reducing or removing the possibility of successful reproduction and sustainability for trout in these lakes.

Gravel removal from adjacent glacial deposits for the building and maintenance of logging roads, as well as the disturbance caused by logging machinery within headwater areas, can contribute to loss of groundwater flow.

Full protection for self-sustaining brook trout lakes was not achieved in the most recent Forest Management Plan for Algonquin Park. This is a major concern for Algonquin Eco Watch.

We subsequently submitted an "Application for Review" of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, plus the *Forest Management Guide for Preserving Biodiversity at the Stand and Site Scales**, through the office of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Algonquin Eco Watch felt, and still does, that such a review would allow for upgrading the level of sustainability within the logged portion of Algonquin Park, especially for self-sustaining headwater brook trout lakes, whose numbers are unique to the Park.

Our request was denied by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Short of expensive and time-consuming legal action, we have now exhausted all avenues available to us for achieving sustainability within Algonquin Park.

Our hope is that members of Algonquin Eco Watch and the public will make their voices heard in a final attempt to ensure sustainability for future generations within this most precious ecosystem.

**THE PROVINCIAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION RESERVES ACT NEEDS
REVIEW!**

Please contact your MPP

*If you would like to learn more about this and other Algonquin Eco Watch activities, please visit our website at www.algonquin-eco-watch.com .