



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SMELT MONITORING PROJECTS IDENTIFIES WATER LEVELS AS POTENTIAL THREAT**

**BLACKS HARBOUR**—This past spring, staff at Eastern Charlotte Waterways visited the spawning streams of the Lake Utopia Rainbow Smelt pair to conduct environmental monitoring. They discovered that the streams have high water quality, but that water levels are unpredictable.

The Rainbow Smelt populations of Lake Utopia are unique, consisting of two behaviourally and genetically distinct types, the dwarf and long-bodied form. In 2003, the dwarf form was listed as threatened under the Canadian Species at Risk Act, and public consultations are currently being held to consider providing the long bodied form with the same distinction.

In order to protect this unique sympatric pair and ensure their continued co-existence, Eastern Charlotte Waterways visited five known spawning streams during the spawning season and evaluated water quality, water levels, and other obstructions to fish passage. Slightly elevated levels of ions such as fluoride were found in the streams, but are likely caused by erosion of the granite that underlies the area. Measurements of colour correlated well with those of Total Organic Carbon, suggesting the characteristic tea colour of Lake Utopia is likely caused by natural decomposition. Levels of dissolved oxygen and temperatures were favourable to fish spawning on all the streams throughout the spawning season. However, water level measurements revealed fluctuations of plus or minus half a metre throughout the same period. Water levels were observed hourly using remote depth loggers, and the dramatic changes that were recorded present a potential threat to the spawning habitat.

“What this means for the smelt, especially in the shallower streams,” says Emma Hebb, Eastern Charlotte Waterways Environmental Project Manager, “is one day the stream is inaccessible because water levels are so low, the next it’s pond like and over flowing the banks”

The project was financially supported by the Government of Canada’s Environmental Damages Fund and the Habitat Stewardship Program. The Environmental Damages Fund will continue to support the monitoring efforts of Eastern Charlotte Waterways over the 2013 spawning season. The full report on the spawning season can be accessed online at [ecwinc.org/smelt.pdf](http://ecwinc.org/smelt.pdf).

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For more information or to schedule an interview contact:

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**Notes to Editors:** Eastern Charlotte Waterways (ECW) is a non-profit environmental organization based in Blacks Harbour New Brunswick that undertakes public outreach, research, and monitoring in an effort to protect coastal and freshwater resources in Southwestern New Brunswick.

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