

Gravel washing as a lacustrine spawning habitat restoration method for smallmouth bass



Smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) spawn on gravel and cobble in the littoral zone of lakes that may become degraded by the presence of fine sediments and decomposing organic matter. Substrate size and composition have been identified as important variables for nest site selection by male smallmouth bass. We tested whether 'cleaning' substrate by removing sediment with a pressure washer would increase the number of bass nests or the average total length (mm) of nesting smallmouth bass in selected areas of Big Rideau Lake, Ontario, Canada the following year using a before-after control-impact design. Treatment was not a significant predictor of nest abundance or average male length. Considering the strength of the experimental design it is reasonable to conclude that this intervention failed to enhance spawning substrate for smallmouth bass. Understanding the factors that maintain productive spawning sites for smallmouth bass is important to restoration effectiveness and determining where habitat enhancement will provide the greatest benefits.

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