



PEACEFUL
PARKS
COALITION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - MARCH 29, 2005

Niagara Falls Ontario, March 29, 2005: Science only has value if it is free of political bias. This is the message the Peaceful Parks Coalition will be delivering to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission today. The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission has taken the political position that double-crested cormorants are depleting fish stocks even though government biologists know that colonial waterbirds cannot deplete native fish stocks.

"It is impossible," says Susan Krajnc of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "Wildlife cannot deplete their own food supply. Their population would crash long before their food source disappears. This is basic ecology".

Yet the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission continues to propagate the simple-minded and biologically illiterate equation: cormorants eat fish, therefore too many cormorants will eat too many fish.

A recent study on Lake Huron conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources concluded that double-crested cormorants consume approximately 19% of the overall biomass - an average and predictable amount compared to other fish-eating birds. They also acknowledge that cormorants pose no ecological risk

Yet they continue to advocate for a major population reduction, even though cormorants feed primarily on exotic species such as alewife and round goby.

"We are attending this meeting because we want them to stop blaming cormorants for fisheries depletion and take responsibility for their own mismanagement of the Great Lakes fisheries," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition.

In these sort of government meetings, a lot is discussed that is not made public. For example, in a stunning and confusing shift in policy, fisheries managers are now advocating for the protection of alewife, over a native species - cormorants - because it has become the primary prey species within the Great Lakes for sport fish, specifically pacific salmon - another exotic species.

Is this ecologically or scientifically ethical?

It is time that these government agencies, unknown to the broader public but yet set public policy, be approached and asked to take the politics out of the science.

The Great Lakes is blessed with a huge volume of water, filled with a wide variety of naturally occurring fish. But that's not enough, so still more fish, many not native, are dumped into the water for the benefit of sport fishers. And still the cormorants are supposed to be "controlled" because of irrational fears that somehow cormorants will do the impossible and reduce fish stocks.

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press release



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Note to the Editor:

The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission consists of government fisheries managers from both Ontario and the United States. The Commission will meet over the next two days, March 29 and 30, and is a meeting of the Lower Lakes Committee – Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. On Wednesday March 30 at 9am, the Commission will present the results of the stomach contents of cormorants shot at Presqu'île Provincial Park on Lake Ontario last spring.

The meeting takes place at the Renaissance Fallsview Hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario beginning at 1pm on Tuesday March 29, 2005.

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