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Ontario's Hypocrisy on Invasive Species

Toronto, August 18, 2006: While it is widely acknowledged that invasive species pose one of the greatest threats to preserving natural ecosystems, yesterday's announcement by the McGuinty government to stop the introduction of invasive species into the Great Lakes needs a serious reality check.

Dalton McGuinty has no credibility on this issue because his government deliberately introduces and protects invasive species if they serve an economic or political purpose.

Here is a short sample list:

Pacific salmon is one of the greatest intruders of the Great Lakes, an aggressive top predator that out competes native fish for food. It is artificially raised and stocked into the Great Lakes by government run programs.

Alewife is a non-native baitfish deeply entrenched into the Great Lakes food chain. Without intense predator pressure their population will soar. The presence of alewife suppresses native fish such as perch and herring.

The only natural predator of alewife is the double-crested cormorant, a native fish-eating migratory bird. Alewife is the main diet of cormorants, yet the McGuinty government is killing these birds by the thousands.

The goal is to protect alewife as a baitfish, primarily as a food source for pacific salmon.

"If anglers want to fish for Pacific salmon, then they should buy a plane ticket to British Columbia," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "And stop turning the natural ecology of the Great Lakes upside down and backwards."

In the lower Great Lakes, double-crested cormorants have taken to eating round gobies, a recent arrival to the Great Lakes, yet the McGuinty has killed over ten thousand cormorants on Lake Ontario alone.

"The Peaceful Parks Coalition supports an assertive policy to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species, but we cannot ignore the blatant hypocrisy of this government. They are willing to kill off a competing native species, the cormorant, to protect select invasive species, Pacific salmon and alewife, to promote recreational angling."

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