



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Resources Office  
11 Lincoln Street  
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

### Finding of No Significant Impact:

#### Environmental Assessment for Proposed Changes to a Long-Term Sea Lamprey Control Program on Lake Champlain

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to evaluate a proposal to expand the long-term sea lamprey control program on Lake Champlain. This EA was made available for public review and comment from June 26, 2008 through July 26, 2008. Two public information meetings were held to inform the public of the proposal and solicit comments on the proposed action.

Pursuant to requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, this EA (copy attached) was prepared to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposal to expand the sea lamprey control program and two alternatives to the proposal:

- Alternative 1: Expansion of the sea lamprey control program to include the Lamoille River, Otter Creak, and Pond Brook in Vermont and Mill Brook in New York.
- Alternative 2: Partial expansion of the sea lamprey control program to include the Lamoille River and Pond Brook in Vermont and Mill Brook in New York (Proposed Action).
- Alternative 3: Continue the sea lamprey control program without expansion (No Action).

The Lake Champlain sea lamprey control program is a vital component of a multidimensional effort to revitalize lake trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon populations, restore their status as the lake's top predators, and provide a quality fishery that benefits the regional economy. Sea lamprey are parasitic fish that have had devastating impacts on the fishes of Lake Champlain. In 2001, after an eight-year experimental program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) outlining a long-term program of sea lamprey control for Lake Champlain. Pursuant to CFR 40 1508.28 and 1502.20, this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA are tiered documents, which rely on the SEIS. Specific information relating to the proposed action (Alternative 2) is to be considered in addition to the information included in the SEIS.

The Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative will continue its program of Integrated Pest Management whereby lampricide treatments of larval lamprey, physical barriers, and selective trapping of spawning adults are used in concert to reduce the lamprey population in Lake Champlain. Currently, lampricide treatments are conducted or are scheduled on twelve tributaries of Lake Champlain.

The proposed action (Alternative 2) will partially expand the ongoing long-term sea lamprey control program by adding three Lake Champlain tributaries where populations of sea lamprey larvae have been recently discovered. These streams include the Lamoille River, Pond Brook, and Mill Brook. The control methods used in the twelve currently treated streams will be individually tailored according to the

features of these three tributaries. While there may be significant impacts, all were addressed in the original SEIS and none are new or unique—only the location of the effects is different.

Alternative 1 is different from the proposed action (Alternative 2) only in that it includes Otter Creek in the control program. Despite the overwhelming public support for the inclusion of Otter Creek in the program, a comprehensive survey in 2007 failed to find a substantial population of sea lamprey larvae after they were first detected in the creek in 2003. Because of the dynamic nature of sea lamprey populations, however, it may be necessary to consider the inclusion of Otter Creek in the long-term program at a later date. If lamprey control in Otter Creek is deemed necessary at a later date, this FONSI can be amended. Because Otter Creek has been fully considered in this EA, an additional EA for Otter Creek would not be required.

Alternative 3 would continue the sea lamprey control program as it was outlined in the original SEIS. Without any expansion into the Lamoille River, Pond Brook, and Mill Brook—tributaries where sea lamprey populations have been recently discovered—the control program would continue at *status quo* levels and wounding rates of native fish may remain unacceptably high.

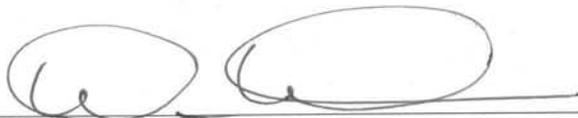
The proposal has been coordinated with interested and/or affected agencies and organizations. The public was informed of the availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment, the original 2001 Final Environmental Impact Statement outlining the long-term control program, and a comprehensive evaluation of the eight-year experimental control program. These documents were posted to the Lake Champlain Ecosystem web page of the Service's website (<http://www.fws.gov/r5lcfwro/lamprey.htm>) and mailed to interested parties at their request. A total of 72 written comments were received. All aforementioned documents and FONSI are available upon request from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 11 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452, or by phone: (802) 872-0629.

Based on a review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA, I have determined that the proposed action (Partial expansion of the sea lamprey control program outlined in the SEIS) would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for the proposed action is not required.



Project Leader

12 September, 2008  
Date



16 September, 2008  
Date