**NEWSRELEASE:**

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**SPEAR LAKE RECLAIMED FOR TROUT FISHING**

The Municipality of Russell Binscarth along with local project partners, Russell Game and Fish and Fishing & Lake Improvement Project for the Parkland Region (FLIPPR), are proceeding with plans to reclaim Spear Lake as a trout fishery.

The plan is supported by the Manitoba Fisheries Branch and work will begin this spring with the trapping and relocation of fish from the lake to downstream waters. In addition to Manitoba Fisheries Branch the Municipality has sought the expertise of AAE Tech Services Inc. and Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement who will both assist with the project. The work is proceeding based on a fish and aquatic habitat assessment of the lake that was conducted by AAE Tech Services Inc. last spring.

Spear Lake was created in 1964 as a result of damming Conjuring Creek to create an impoundment to provide a water source for the Town of Russell. In the early 1980’s Russell developed a new source of potable water and no longer used Spear Lake. The Town and Russell Game and Fish then collaborated with the Fisheries Branch to develop a stocked trout water body. The lake and surrounding park area are located on Provincial Crown Land which is leased to the Russell Game and Fish.

Spear Lake was initially stocked with Rainbow trout in 1989. The stocked trout proved to be extremely popular and grew to a large trophy size. Consequently, the lake became a destination trophy trout fishery and was an economic boom to the Town of Russell and surrounding area. Stocking was discontinued in 2014 due to an ever increasing number of non-salmonid species that were actively competing for the finite food source in the lake and predation on the stocked trout fingerlings. The lake assessment conducted last year provided good evidence that the reclamation project could have positive results and all partners agreed to move forward on that basis.

Councillor Nick Foisy is the municipal representative appointed to this project. “The Municipality is excited to work with Russell Game and Fish and our other partners on this project. We’d really like to see the lake become a fly fishing destination like it was in the 1990’s”, says Foisy. “Being able to work with the Game and Fish, FLIPPR and the Province helps to ensure that our project is sustainable.”

The partners are also excited about working with students from Wawayseecappo’s Off-Campus Outdoor Education program and their instructor, Patrick Loewen. “It’s a great opportunity to have these youth involved in a hands-on project like this. It will be an awesome learning experience for them and we are really pleased to be included”, says Mr. Loewen, who anticipates having 6 or more students pitch in with fish relocation this spring.

The Municipality has committed $5,000 towards the project along with administrative support from Municipal staff. They have applied for funding support from the Manitoba Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund to help cover the remaining project costs and are counting on the generous volunteer support being provided by the Russell Game and Fish and the Waywayseecappo Off-Campus Outdoor Education program to keep the project on budget.

Anticipating that all goes well this spring and summer it is the intent to re-stock trout fingerlings in Spear Lake in the summer of 2019. The hope is that Spear Lake will be ready to fish in a couple of years and perhaps will be on the roster of lakes included when the Parkland region hosts the next Fly Fishing Nationals.