

Witchhopple Lake Atlantic Salmon Assessment (Survey #:621211)

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Witchhopple Lake (ONT-19-40-P493-7-P528) is a 92.7-acre lake located in Herkimer County in Five Ponds Wilderness and has a maximum depth of 28 feet. Atlantic salmon are currently stocked into Witchhopple Lake to provide anglers with the opportunity to catch salmonids in what was once a brook trout water. The Atlantic Salmon are approximately 7 inches when stocked in the spring. Smallmouth bass have migrated up from Stillwater Reservoir and now inhabit this remote water making it difficult for brook trout to survive. Three experimental gill nets were set overnight to assess the Atlantic salmon stocking. Angling was also used to help supplement catch data.

Smallmouth bass are the dominant gamefish in Witchhopple Lake now. Twenty smallmouth bass were collected and ranged in length between 5.2 and 16 inches with an average length of 12.2 inches (Figure 1). One stocked Atlantic salmon was caught that measured 14.7 inches. Additional species collected include yellow perch, pumpkinseed, brown bullhead, and white sucker.

This was the first survey of Witchhopple Lake since Atlantic salmon stocking began in 2015. It is also the first survey to document the presence of smallmouth bass. Given the number and size of the smallmouth bass in this water, predation on stocked salmon may be high. We recommend an additional survey effort be conducted to further assess the salmon population since it appears that survival of stocked salmon does occur but at low numbers. Stocking Atlantic salmon in this water may provide very little opportunity for anglers targeting salmonids.

