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MANITOBA'S RICH FISHERY HERITAGE TO BE HONOURED WITH OFFICIAL PROVINCIAL FISH

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Drop Us a Line and Help Land Manitoba's Official Fish: Mackintosh

Manitobans are encouraged to help select Manitoba's official provincial fish, Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh announced today to mark the opening of the fishing season in southern Manitoba tomorrow.

"Selecting a provincial fish recognizes the important role of fishing to our province, culturally and economically," said Mackintosh. "Manitobans have some of the best fishing opportunities in the world, with access to more than 30 species of sport fish in diverse habitats across the province and the opportunity to see more than 60 other species in their native habitats. I want Manitobans to consider the value of our conservation efforts by providing them an opportunity to make a case for the fish they believe best represents our fishing heritage."

Starting tomorrow, Manitobans are invited to go online and nominate a fish at www.manitobafisheries.com. The nomination process will allow Manitobans to select a fish species and encourages them to share personal stories and explain why their fish of choice should be the provincial fish. Nominations will be reviewed by a committee of volunteers who share a passion for fishing in the province. The committee will recommend the top two species to government for a final decision.

Manitoba has the third most diverse freshwater fish population of all provinces and the minister said more than 80 of Manitoba's native fish will be considered as candidates. The deadline for nominations is Feb. 1, 2014.

The committee will also award 20 complimentary fishing licences for next year's season to those who submit the most compelling personal stories and the top three will also be posted online and in Manitoba's angling guide.

"Fishing is very important to Manitoba, both from a recreational and commercial perspective. We have a great resource and I am glad the province is recognizing it with this initiative," said Don Lamont, professional angler and committee chair. "Anything we can do as a province to promote and protect this resource is welcomed."

Once selected, the provincial fish will be proposed for official adoption as an amendment to the Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Act, Mackintosh said. The provincial flower is the prairie crocus (adopted in 1906), the provincial bird is the great gray owl (1987), the provincial tree is the white spruce (1991) and the provincial soil is Newdale soil (2010). The province unofficially recognizes the bison as the provincial animal.

The minister said the new official fish will also become prominent in tourism advertising and fishing publications to remind Manitobans and visitors of the thrilling fishing opportunities that are theirs to pursue in the province.

“Too often, we take the incredible fisheries resources in our province for granted. This program will allow Manitobans who are passionate about our fisheries to share that passion through a compelling story about their favourite species,” said David Carrick of Fish Futures. “Regardless of which species is ultimately chosen as the provincial fish, it will become a symbol for all of our fisheries, and provide Manitoba with a terrific opportunity to further brand the province as both a fishing destination and a jurisdiction that cherishes its fisheries resources.”

Many other jurisdictions have official fish including British Columbia (pacific salmon), Alberta (bull trout), Saskatchewan (walleye), Northwest Territories (arctic grayling), Minnesota (walleye) and North Dakota (northern pike).

The minister noted this process builds on TomorrowNow – Manitoba’s Green Plan, to establish the province as an eco-learning capital. TomorrowNow is an eight-year strategic action plan for mobilizing Manitobans to work together to protect the environment while ensuring a prosperous and environmentally-conscious economy. For more information on TomorrowNow, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/tomorrownowgreenplan/.