

American Eel ladders installed in Crysler and Russell

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The rare American Eel is getting a little help, in the form of specialized fish ladders installed on October 17 for eels to use, alongside dams and weirs in Crysler and Russell on the Castor River, and in Chesterville on the South Nation.

The American Eel used to be a plentiful fish in Ontario and was considered a major food source for First Nations and peoples which hunted and fished in this area for thousands of years. The installation of water control and hydroelectric dams prevented the eels from traveling upstream to spawn, particularly the dams that transformed the St. Lawrence River into the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1960s.

American Eels have a complex life cycle that makes them vulnerable to disruption. Like salmon, they hatch and live in small rivers and streams far inland, then they migrate to the ocean and spend much of their lives in the area of the Sargasso Sea. They return to their original homes to spawn. Prevention of travel to spawning grounds and overfishing have reduced the eel population by about 90 per cent.

The South Nation Conservation Authority, which installed the eel ladders, are hoping they will help to increase species numbers, which could have a beneficial effect on local aquatic ecosystems. American Eels were



Eel ladders were installed at dams and weirs in Crysler, Chesterville and Russell on October 17, by South Nation Conservation Authority. Here SNCA and Russell Environmental Advisory Council members are shown at the Russell weir.

released earlier this year and one that did not seem to be part of the released group was netted this summer. Biologist Naomi Langlois-Anderson of the SNCA asks the public to inform them of any eel sightings in the watershed. www.nation.on.ca