

## Ringwood fish hatchery closing

For close to 30 years, the Ringwood Fish Culture Station was the nerve centre for the chinook salmon stocking program in Ontario.

Since the Ministry of Natural Resources elected to stock chinook into Lake Ontario, all of the rearing was carried out at Ringwood's 120-acre facility.

But that will cease after Sept. 28 as the ministry is decommissioning the Ringwood plant, on Hwy. 48 north of Stouffville Road.

The move surprised volunteers who work at the facility.

With Ringwood operating in the final year of a five-year agreement between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the ministry announced it will move its chinook production operations to the Normandale Fish Culture Station located near Simcoe.

Kevin Loftus, manager of the ministry's fish culture section for their fish and wildlife services branch in Peterborough, said the ministry can now resume responsibility for the culture of chinook salmon, a highly popular sports species.

During the five-year agreement, volunteer members of the Metro East Anglers Association did the work in Ringwood.

The Normandale facility is undergoing a major renovation.

A new sub station will be a brood stock facility. The main station, comprised of two major buildings, will rear atlantic salmon and brown trout in one slated to be finished by the summer of 2012 while a smaller facility to be completed by this fall will raise chinook salmon.

Ringwood's final target production for chinook salmon this year is 540,000, fish.

"The ministry greatly appreciates the efforts of the OFAH and Metro East Anglers Association over these past few years in maintaining chinook salmon production at a time when we (the ministry) was unable to do so," Mr. Loftus said.

While Ringwood's primary function was to rear chinook salmon, it also produced rainbow trout and coho salmon on a smaller scale. That was not part of any official ministry stocking target, but was an internal Metro East Anglers Association target approved by the ministry, Mr. Loftus said.

Andy Rubaszek, Ringwood hatchery co-ordinator and Metro East Anglers Association vice-president, said they raise some 17,500 rainbow trout to be seeded into the Rouge River, and 75,000 cohos for Lake Ontario. Cohos will be discontinued after this year, he said.

With the Ringwood set to close its doors later this year, Mr. Rubaszek's association is looking for another hatchery to continue its rainbow trout work.

"If we can't find another hatchery there won't be any more rainbows to raise," he said.

As for the future of the Ringwood facility, Mr. Loftus said the ministry hasn't made any decisions.

Mr. Rubaszek was saddened and surprised by the ministry's decision.

"When we signed the agreement five years ago none of us thought about it," he said.

"No one thought it would be the end. This surprised a lot of the group members."

Mr. Rubaszek hopes something can happen before September to give the Ringwood facility a new lease on life.

"A lot can change between now and then," he said.