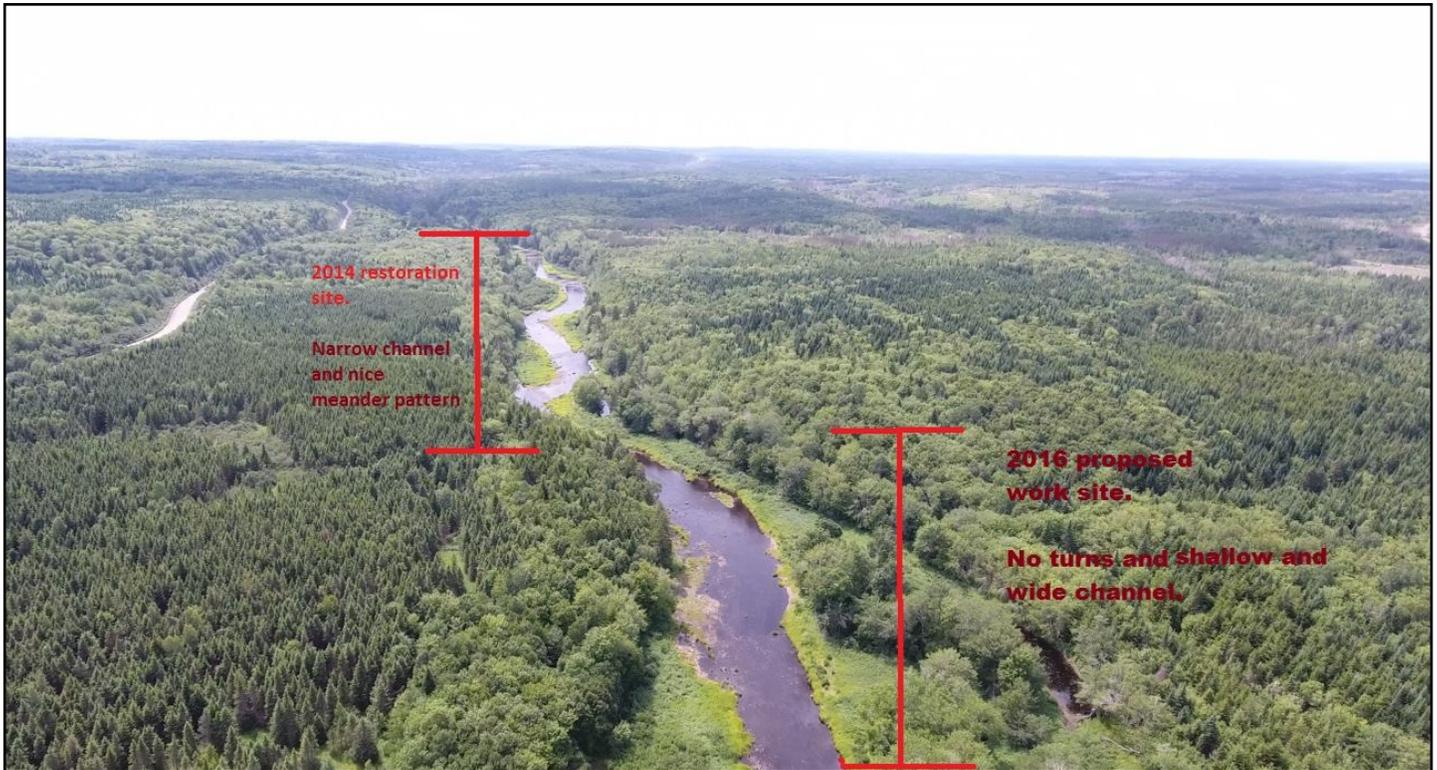
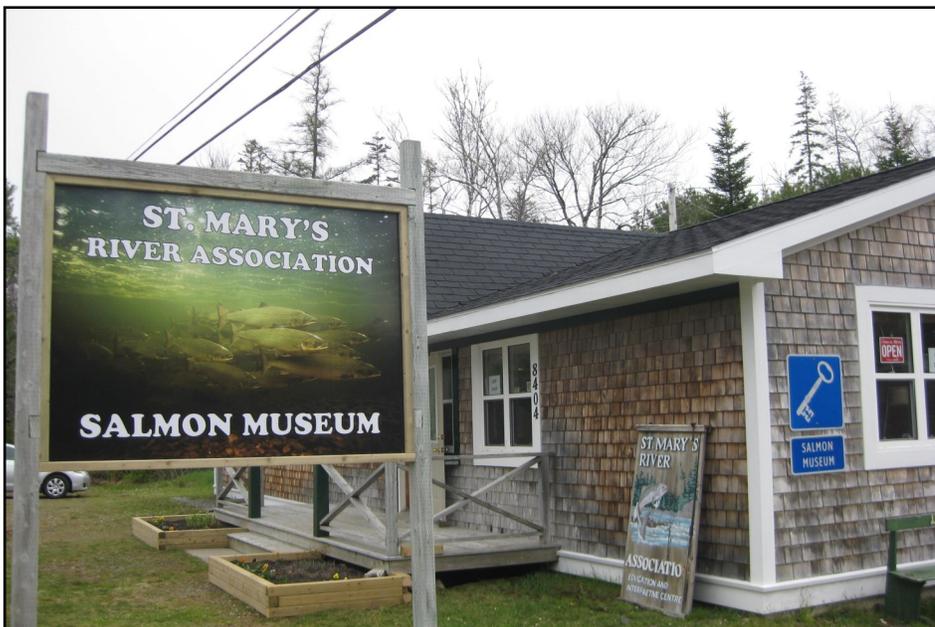


St. Mary's River Association Spring News 2017



The photo above shows how river restoration works after just a couple years. 2014 SMRA restoration results can be clearly seen, narrow channel and nice meander pattern. Project Manager Charlie MacInnis and SMRA volunteers continue to work on West Branch restoration. See pages 28-29 for further information on this project. Photo credit: Nick MacInnis



SMRA gets new road sign. Thank you to Gilbert Van Ryckevorsel for allowing us to use one of his underwater salmon prints for the sign.

Inside this issue:

President's Report

AGN Notice

Centre Update

Partner Reports

Member of the Year

West Branch Update

And lots more

Like us on Facebook :
StMarysRiverAssociation,

Follow us on Twitter
@smrasalmon,

Check out our new website:
www.stmarysriverassociation.com.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Scott Beaver

ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOCIATION

The St. Mary's River Association is a charitable, non-profit organization providing leadership and engaging partners to enhance, protect and promote the St. Mary's River as a healthy ecosystem for Atlantic salmon and other native animals and plant species as well as a rich community resource.

Our vision:

"Health for the river, the Atlantic salmon and our community."

SMRA News is a publication of the St. Mary's River Association as a service to our members.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the St. Mary's River Association, the editor or the publisher.

Memberships, suggestions and comments are welcome.

Address all correspondence to:

St. Mary's River Association
PO Box 179 Sherbrooke, NS
B0J 3C0 or by e-mail at
stmarysriver@ns.sympatico.ca

Registered Charity
#89145 0975 RR0001

Publisher, Editor, Layout and Design: Joanne Mailman
Printer: Bounty Print

Good day members of the St. Mary's River Association and friends. I am delighted to report that we have had a very successful year and although there is always more work to be done, our board members and executive have been working diligently on the goals and objectives of the organization. I will start my report by briefly summarizing a few of our committees' projects and their progress.

Starting with the River Habitat Committee:

As a result of this year's efforts and the previous two years we have now restored a total of 8kms of the West River branch. Congratulations! This project labeled as the "The St. Mary's West Branch Habitat Restoration Project" will be ongoing for many years to reach our goal of 40 km of restored river habitat. To date, \$600,000 has been spent during the last three summers. We are on target to restore an additional 2 to 3 kms during the summer of 2017 at an estimated cost of \$300,000 for which potential funding has been identified. This endeavor has taken a lot of hard work and resources. Thank you everyone involved for your dedication and commitment to this project. You can find a more detailed article written by Kenny Silver further along in this very newsletter.

The Salmon Enhancement Committee has also been pushing forward:

This committee has successfully partnered with Inland Fisheries to establish a much needed multiyear Sea Trout Stocking Project on the

St. Mary's River. Brood stock from the St. Mary's were captured during the fall of 2016 and taken to the Frasers Mills Hatchery. Breeding was successful and we expect to have approximately 20,000 first feeding fry to release back into selected brooks flowing into the St. Mary's River in June of 2017.

For the third year now the committee, in partnership with DFO, has successfully managed a "Kelt Rejuvenation Project". We currently have 41 rejuvenated salmon being held at the Cold Brook Hatchery which were caught in the spring of 2016. Some of these fish were spawned out during the fall of 2016 and their prodigy will be released back in the river in 2017. Unfortunately this program may be deferred this year due to a lack of funding and resources. We will keep you informed.

Finally, if possible, some of the rejuvenated salmon will be spawned out again in 2017 with the eggs being fertilized by the smolt captured in 2016 and their prodigy will be ready for release in 2018.

Paddlers Paradise Committee:

This committee has partnered with the Municipality on a river side sign project that mixes technology and river recreation all in one. Our QR coded signs (a type of barcode that is machine readable and provides information to the user, in our case using an app that can be downloaded to one's phone that will read the barcode) will be strategically located on a stretch of river starting at the Denver Bridge on the East

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued

branch going to the Ford Pool on the Main branch. These signs will be installed during the spring and summer of 2017. Please stay tuned for updates on this initiative on our web site under the RECREATION tab.

The committee successfully installed one of the two data loggers (an electronic device that measures and records data) last year which made the following information available on our website; water levels, pH readings and rain fall amounts, information important to paddlers or onlookers alike. Our 2017 goal is to have both data loggers up and running and to provide the data for the East and West branches on our web page. Looking forward to seeing the data and those river signs!

Our Museum Committee has been busy as usual. Spring and summer-time activities included:

Built a butterfly garden, with the hopes of planting flowers to which butterflies are attracted. As it turns out rabbits love the flowers too. A free butterfly presentation to whom ever wanted to attend was done by one of our summer students.

Presented a program about NS bird species and birdwatching. A bird walk was done at Stonewall Park where a number of species were seen and identified.

Engaged with the St. Mary's Academy chemistry class and doing a field trip to install the data logger stream side.

Engaged RBC volunteers to do tree

planting for the river habitat project.

Most notably though is the continued success of our bi-annual salmon fund raising dinner auction in partnership with the Antigonish Rivers Association and the Nova Scotia Salmon Association. What an event! Thank you Joanne and all involved from Antigonish for the hard work and dedication.

Our Information and Technology committee has shown continued resourcefulness and dedication.

Website content is created and updated regularly – did you know that from the SMRA website, you can explore local history, see local event information, access reporting on past initiatives and of course, see what the river association is up to today. Slideshows and videos of our activities are uploaded to the website on multiple topics.

Our online store has items for sale such as our hats, t-shirts, memberships & donations, and for the first time ever, the ability to purchase the auction/ dinner fundraiser tickets on line.

We have a Social Media presence on Facebook and Twitter. In 2016, our Facebook page has gained approximately 250 new likes. That is a gain of 35% in one year – we appreciate your interest in our activities.

Thank you all for the continuous construction and updates to our beautiful website. Behind the scenes Bill Carpan from Stillwater NS has been crucial to the development of our web site, thanks Bill.

Fundraising Committee:

This committee, so important to our future efforts, is working on a longer term fundraising campaign which we hope to unveil within the next year or so. A lot of work has gone into what I will call an in house 5 year Strategic Plan. This document is now completed and is intended to help communicate more efficiently with board members, member's at large, donors, sponsors, community organizations and provincial and federal bodies. This is a working document to transfer between the hands of one executive to the next, for new board members to understand procedures and projects currently on the books. This working document will be one that we can present to potential donors and say clearly who we are and what we are up to. Thank you Barrie for your contribution.

As you can see we are very busy here on the St. Mary's. We welcome anyone reading this to also check out our website - www.stmarysriverassociation.com – for any information on upcoming events, some history, past reports, pictures and even a story or two.

Perhaps we will see you on the banks of the St. Mary's.

Bye for now



SMRA EDUCATION & INTERPRETIVE CENTRE NEWS

Joanne Mailman, Manager

Another busy summer has come and gone at the Education & Interpretive Centre. We saw over 3,000 visitors walk through our door. With all the nice weather this summer, we were not surprised by the amount of people who dropped in to see us. Due to the hot and dry summer conditions, the river experienced records lows. However, the weather was optimal for working on the West Branch completing several river restoration projects. This summer we were able to hire two summer students, Jenny Kaiser and Matthew Smith.

We had many successful events this summer:

May 18th- Butterfly garden

May 19th- School trip

May 28th– Tree planting

May 29th- Annual General Meeting

June 4th- Introduction to Birding

June 11th- Bird walk through Stonewall Park

July 1st- Annual Canada Day Yard Sale

July 17th- Butterfly Presentation

August 17th- Magic on the River Event

October 15th- Bi-Annual Salmon Fundraiser

This year, with the help of Jocelyn and Earle Ellis and Winston Sawlor we were able to build garden beds on both sides of the main steps. Inside the garden beds, we planted a variety of plants and flowers that would attract butterflies. Donnie and Anna Lee Barnes donated butterfly bushes to add to our variety of plants. Jenny made a butterfly display focusing on Monarch butterflies and some common butterflies of Nova Scotia. She also had a Butterfly presentation that was well attend.

In June, Jocelyn held a birding presentation at the Centre. Following her presentation, the group decided to form the St. Mary's Birding Club and organized a bird walk for the next week at Stonewall Park. Birding has always been a popular activity in the area and we plan to continue events next year. Thank you Jocelyn for a wonderful presentation.

Scott Beaver met with the grade 12 *Bio/Chem* class from St. Mary's Academy and they went on a field trip to the site of our new data loggers. (More details on page 13.)

Volunteers from the Royal Bank in Sherbrooke, SMRA directors and crew planted trees along the banks of the West Branch of the St. Mary's River. This is an important component of the restoration project as trees help stabilize the river banks.

We held our annual yard sale on Canada Day and had over two hundred people attend. Visitors found lots of treasures and great deals! Throughout the summer, we continued to have yard sales and made over \$3,500, which helps offset the operating costs of the Centre. Without the much appreciated support of the community, this would not be possible. THANK YOU!

On August 17th, Matthew and Jenny hosted Magic on the River. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to change venue to the Recplex. We had fifteen participants attend. Events included a game of 'Salmon and hazards', a butterfly craft and fly-tying.

Other notable events included a SMRA display at the local NSLC store. Donnie Barnes and Jocelyn Ellis spoke to people on our projects and the St. Mary's River Association.

This year during Saltscapes in Halifax, we shared a booth with the Municipality. Kenny Silver attended and tied flies while promoting the Association.

In September we hosted the Sherbrooke Women's Institute with a presentation by Ruth Legge on her recent trip to Mongolia with International Crane Foundation co – founder George Archibald.

We also co-hosted the Bi-Annual Dinner and Auction Atlantic Salmon Fundraiser in Antigonish with Antigonish River Association and NS Salmon Association. With record ticket sales, the event raised over \$29,000 after expenses. Thank you to all who continue to support this event.

We are looking forward to 2017 as we celebrated Canada's 150th birthday. Special events are being planned, so check our website and Facebook page as we firm them up. See you this summer!

SMRA EDUCATION & INTERPRETIVE CENTRE NEWScontinued



SMRA directors Donnie Barnes (shown here) and Jocelyn Ellis took part in NSLC/AAS promotion at Sherbrooke NSLC in April



Summer student Matthew Smith shows our visitor Shane from Stewiacke the art of tying flies.



Summer student Jenny Kaiser wowed us with her Monarch and local Nova Scotia Butterfly Presentation.



SMRA director Jocelyn Ellis and the new St. Mary's Birding Club. Jocelyn's birding presentation can be viewed on our website.

HAPPY 150th BIRTHDAY CANADA!

Don't miss the Canada 150 celebrations happening across the country! Get out and enjoy your community's special events.

SMRA will be hosting several events during the summer so stayed tuned!

Education and Interpretive Centre Events Photo Gallery



PADDLE THE ST. MARY'S



SALMON DINNER AND AUCTION

Education and Interpretive Centre Programs Photo Gallery



St. Mary's Birding Club's first meeting



SMRA Butterfly Garden in front of Centre



SMRA Interpretive Centre new road sign



VIA Rail was just one of the many corporate sponsors



St. Mary's Birding Club bird walk at Stonewall Leisure Park



Tree Planting with RBC Sherbrooke staff & Volunteers

FUNDING PARTNERS-THANK YOU

We are very grateful to receive funding from our generous supporters, without whose financial assistance, much of the work of the St. Mary's River Association would not be possible. Thank you to the following:

- The Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Foundation**
 - NSLC Adopt a Stream Program**
 - Atlantic Salmon Conservation Federation**
 - NS Student Careers Skills Development Program**
 - Canada Summer Jobs**
 - Recreational Fisheries Conservation**
 - Partnerships Program**
 - Small Craft Harbours**
 - Michelin Canada Granton Plant**
 - Royal Bank Blue Water Community Fund**
 - Sage Environmental Fund**
 - Cumberland County River Enhancement Association**
 - Municipality of the District of St. Mary's**
- All donors who gave to our Bi-Annual Dinner/Auction Event –we couldn't do it without you!**

ALSO

To all our volunteers, a great big thank you! Without your generous contribution of time and energy, we would not be able to do this important work.



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NOTICE TO MEMBERS
GENERAL ANNUAL MEETING and BOARD NOMINATIONS

The Annual General Meeting of the St. Mary's River Association will be held on **Sunday May 28, 2017 at 2 pm** at the Education & Interpretive Centre, 8404 Highway 7, Sherbrooke NS. All paid up members are eligible to vote at the meeting. Memberships will be available for those wishing to join or renew their membership.

There are currently 13 open director positions. The Nominations Committee will be considering nominees for these or any other positions that become open. The membership may also submit nominations. In accordance with the Association's by-laws, nominations from the membership at large will be received by the Secretary at the address below up to the 1st day of April, 2017. Any member of the Association may submit nominations for candidates for any or all of the open director positions.

Nominations are open this year for the offices of President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary as their two year terms have expired. Nominations shall be in writing signed by the nominator and the nominee using the Board of Directors Nomination and Consent Form available below or from the Secretary at the address below or at the Interpretive Centre during open hours or on our web site at <http://www.stmarysriverassociation.com> .

All are welcome to attend. Jocelyn Ellis, Secretary jocelyn.ellis@bellaliant.net or mail to St. Mary's River Association, PO Box 179, Sherbrooke, N. S. B0J 3C0

SMRA Board of Directors Nomination and Consent Form

Please return this completed form as soon as possible in person, by mail or electronically. Candidates for President must reside in Nova Scotia.

Nominations will be accepted by the Secretary on or before the 1st of April 2017.

Nominee for Board of Directors (Please Print)

Full Name _____

Position Applied for _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone Bus () _____ Res () _____

Email _____

I, _____, am a Member in good standing and hereby consent to my nomination as a candidate for election to the Board of Directors of the of the St Mary's River Association, for a two year term of office, subject to my election. I am prepared to subscribe to the aims and objectives of the Association as stated in the St Mary's River Association Memorandum of Association.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Sponsor of Nominee (Please Print)

As a Member in good standing of the Association I nominate the above nominee for the position of _____.

Full Name _____

Position nominated for _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone Bus () _____ Res () _____

Email _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Form 001

Year in Review - Karen McKendry, Conservation Coordinator with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust

The St. Mary's River continues to inspire and encourage Nova Scotia Nature Trust staff and supporters. With 7 formally protected properties along the river's edge, the work of helping to ensure river habitat integrity through land conservation is coming along well. We hope you have visited these fantastic protected areas, including the most recently conserved: Hemlock Hill Conservation Lands, and Waternish Conservation Lands. These are places where we can all rest assured that flora and fauna are guaranteed a place to thrive, and people can go to recharge their souls. These lands are cared for by Nature Trust staff and volunteers, and by visitors. We would like to thank our Property Guardians and Bird's Eye View volunteers that have visited and monitored Conservation Lands on the St. Mary's River in 2016 – thank you for your efforts! If you would like to learn more about contributing to on-the-ground stewardship of Conservation Lands through volunteering with the Nature Trust, please get in touch (nature@nsnt.ca, or 902-425-5263).

In 2016 we continued our work in reaching out to landowners along the river that own properties of outstanding conservation value. These are properties with intact forests and river shorelines, which are key for maintaining the health of the river. There are excellent opportunities for these landowners to work in partnership with the Nature Trust to ensure that their special property stay wild, forever.

Land conservation is one piece of the puzzle we are all working on to maintain and restore the health of the planet. Every landowner with shoreline on their property can take action to encourage native wildlife and plant species to thrive on their land, thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation. Here's an example: the "riparian zone" is the wet area between the edge of a lake or river and upland (e.g., forest, field) ecosystems. This zone often has specialized vegetation that is adapted to very wet conditions, such as willows. It is an incredibly dynamic and biologically diverse ecosystem. Not only do riparian zones benefit us, through reducing soil erosion and flood damage, they are vital for wildlife- up to 90% of our wildlife species use or depend on riparian habitat to complete their lifecycle. Any landowner whose property borders the river can encourage the health of their riparian

zone by keeping it intact (not covering it with fill), and eliminating pesticide use upslope from the zone. Landowners and wildlife benefit from a lush, wide riparian zone.

Protect Nova Scotia's outstanding natural legacy through land conservation continues to be our mission in 2017. We envision a future in which Nova Scotia's native species, and unique habitats and natural landscapes are protected in perpetuity, and in which this natural legacy is appreciated and actively stewarded. Our work in partnership with the St. Mary's River Association, and local landowners and volunteers, begins its 11th year in 2017. Here's to continued success. Stay tuned for an announcement of a newly protected property on the river in spring 2017. We plan to lead a free, guided walk to new Conservation Lands property in summer 2017, and hope to see you there.

Your partner in conservation,

Karen McKendry
Conservation Coordinator
Nova Scotia Nature Trust

karen@nsnt.ca

902-425-5263

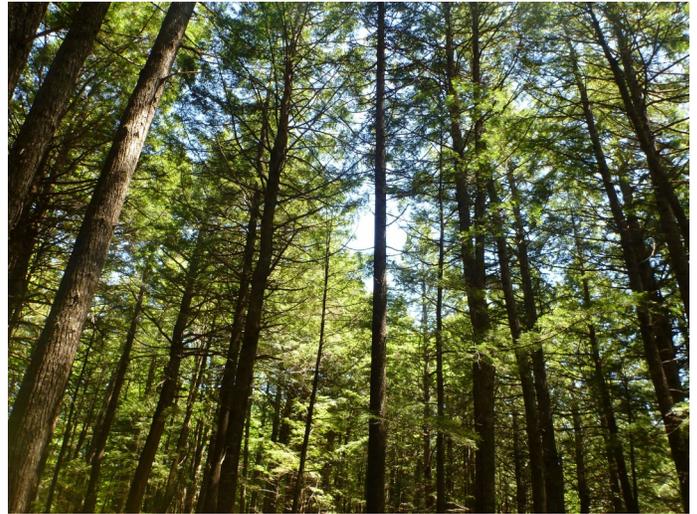
Find the Nova Scotia Nature Trust on the web, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram



NSNT Year in Review continued



Hikers along the St. Mary's River Conservation Lands



Old Growth Forestry Property along the St. Mary's River



Hikers explore the Hemlock Hill Conservation Lands during a guided walk to the property in summer 2015.
Photo by Bonnie McGrath



Karen McKendry in the field January 18, 2017 on the frozen shores of the St. Mary's River with Zack Metcalfe

NSNT Mission

To protect Nova Scotia's outstanding natural legacy through land conservation.

NSNT Vision

We envision a future in which Nova Scotia's native species, and unique habitats and natural landscapes are protected in perpetuity, and in which this natural legacy is appreciated and actively stewarded.

Report a Fisheries Violation

Canada's freshwater and marine species are a priceless heritage, the common property of all the people of Canada.

Everyone who uses or enjoys the outdoors has a responsibility to protect and maintain it, but not everyone takes this responsibility seriously. Each year, Fishery Officers lay charges for illegal fishing, damage to fish habitat, polluting, disturbance to marine mammals and other violations of the Fisheries Act and associated regulations.

If you observe a fisheries violation, you are encouraged to report it.

In any province or territory this may be done through Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

DFO (via Canadian Coast Guard Regional Operations Centre) 1-800-565-1633

Additional Reporting Numbers for Nova Scotia

Natural Resources Canada:

Report a Poacher - 1-800-565-2224

Information obtained from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) website:

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/enf-loi/report-signaler-eng.htm>



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

The Salmon assessment results will be posted in DFO Status Update this spring.

The link to the CSAS website is:

<http://www.isdm-gdsi.gc.ca/csas-sccs/applications/publications/index-eng.asp>

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ST. MARY'S RIVER DAYS AT SHERBROOKE VILLAGE - Two days of celebrations along the St. Mary's River at Sherbrooke Village with children's activities including: field games, ice cream making and crafts; cardboard boat regatta; concert, fireworks, guided nature and bird watching hike and Sawmill & Goldmine Frolic with woodsmen's competitions, gold panning and samples of our home-made baked beans and brown bread.

St. Mary's River Association pH Data Logging Project

*In 2016, the St. Mary's River Association was awarded the **Michelin Tire Environmental Stewardship Grant** in the amount of \$12,000.00 for its pH Data Logging Project.*

Acidic precipitation is an issue that all Southern Upland Nova Scotia River's face and the St. Mary's River is no exception. While much of the river has not experienced the extreme acidification that many other rivers have, tributaries on the lower portion of the river and southern side of the West Branch are stressed with acidic runoff. Even though salmon can continue to thrive and reproduce on much of the river, the productivity of the river could be enhanced through some form of targeted acidic mitigation. Without action this is just another factor that is limiting the reproductive capacity of wild naturally spawning salmon. Like the habitat restoration, remediation for acidic precipitation is costly and takes time and resources to address. In addition to the negative affect acid rain is having on fish stocks, it is also stressing our forests and their capacity to regenerate and support sustainable wood harvesting practices needed for the economic health of the area. Any action that can be taken to increase the acidic buffering capacity of the lands within the St. Mary's River watershed will also help the

productivity of the river.

Two pH data loggers were purchased to monitor the pH levels on the St. Mary's River. These data loggers will allow us to monitor pH levels at constant intervals and compare data from one branch to the next. Primarily, these data loggers will give us the support we need to introduce a pH mitigation plan. Secondly, they will be the start to a water analysis site for the river. Our intent is to provide pH data and a collection station where our summer students, university students and our local high school students can be involved in the science of water quality. Other sensors on our radar are a rain gauge, pressure sensor for level and possibly flow. This process and sites will take time and we will add an aspect of water quality analysis in the years to follow to our stations. The site will be located at the St. Mary's River Association's Interpretive Center for Salmon. The pH data loggers will be located strategically on our river. Data will stream live and can be followed on our website www.stmarysriverassociation.com.

The SMRA is very appreciative of Michelin Tire for their continued support in our conservation efforts.



Grade 12 Students from St. Mary's Academy listen to Kris Hunter talk about the data logger.

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IN MEMORIAM DONATIONS:

SMRA would be thankful to receive in memoriam donations from friends and family of people whose angling experiences on the St. Mary's River contributed to their enjoyment of life. We will provide an in memory card and send them to family and friends acknowledging that a donation was made in memoriam by you. A tax receipt will be issued to the donor.

Please mail donations to:

St. Mary's River Association PO Box 179 Sherbrooke NS B0J 3C0

Your donation will help us in our continued efforts to help the wild Atlantic salmon.

THANK YOU!



RBC Royal Bank

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St. Mary's District

Lions Club

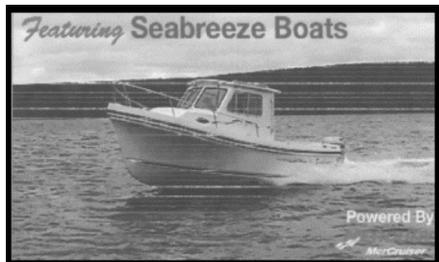
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Tel: 902-522-2005

www.thebestsmokedsalmon.com

NSLC Adopt-A-Stream News - Amy Weston

We hit a major milestone this year in Nova Scotia: the Nova Scotia Salmon Association's NSLC Adopt A Stream program and the community groups it assists surpassed **2 million square meters** of fish habitat area restored since the NSSA began managing the program in 1998. A big boost came when the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation signed on as title sponsor in 2010. Since then, more than 1 million square meters of habitat has been improved.

Equally important to this achievement is the Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund – directed revenue contributed by recreational anglers and collected by the Province – which provides the lion's share of project funding for habitat work by community groups.

In 2016, there were 22 participating community groups receiving project funding, training, and technical advice to carry out habitat restoration work in their local watersheds. Restoring the natural productivity of river systems requires a long-term commitment; it is achieved by incrementally improving significant portions of degraded habitat to provide for all the freshwater life stages of salmon and trout: migration, spawning, rearing, and overwintering. Many of the groups involved this past year have been actively working on their local rivers for more than a decade, promoting improved stream channel structure, greater habitat diversity, and increased spawning and juvenile populations in restored areas.

Improving fish passage at stream crossings also remains a priority for NSLC Adopt A Stream. Our Aquatic Connectivity initiative includes culvert assessment training, data analysis, site prioritization and remediation. Our lead field technician, Will Daniels, provided training to 8 groups interested in assessing culverts for fish passage. He also provided technical design and installation assistance for 15 remediation sites. More than 60 kilometers of stream was made accessible. The NSSA is pleased to receive project funding from the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program to support fish passage remediation and habitat restoration.

This past year, the Adopt A Stream team also includ-

ed field technician Nick MacInnis, based in Antigonish County, who provided more assistance to our groups, particularly in the northeastern portion of the province, along the Northumberland Strait and Cape Breton. Nick provided considerable supervision for the joint Antigonish/ St. Mary's field crew. The SMRA did the administration of the crew payroll which made things easy.

The crew split its time between repairs to structures in the West River, Antigonish watershed; installing habitat restoration structures in treatment sites of a trout habitat restoration study; and work on Sutherland's Brook which enters the West branch through a back channel near Cumming's Pool.

Through its Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative, the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture has been undertaking a long term trout habitat restoration study. For the past five years, population and habitat assessments have been conducted at 4 paired study sites on 8 Antigonish County streams. 2016 was restoration year. The study areas will be assessed for the next 5 years to look at habitat change and utilization by Brook trout and other fish species.

The SMRA made use of the NSLC Adopt A Stream "Sandwand" equipment on Sutherlands Brook to remove embedded silt and sand from areas of spawning gravel. The gear consists of two pumps, hoses, and the "hooded" wand. Water is pumped into the substrate under the hood to suspend the fines, the dirty water is then pumped into the riparian area where the sediment is filtered out by the vegetation and the clear water finds its way back to the brook. The crew also installed 7 instream structures to improve pool quality and the pool-to-riffle sequencing.

And of course the SMRA's major habitat restoration on the West Branch itself was also supported by NSLC Adopt A Stream. This exciting and ambitious project is already showing positive results and will contribute significantly to the productivity of salmon spawning and rearing potential in the St Mary's as additional reaches of the channel are restored.

NSCL Adopt - A- Stream News continued

Looking ahead to the coming field season, river associations and community groups have plans for many great habitat and fish passage restoration projects. We wish everyone great success in their efforts to conserve and restore our rivers.

Amy Weston

*Nova Scotia Salmon Association
Program Manager, NSLC Adopt-A-Stream
Tel. 902-644-1276
email: amyweston@adoptastream.ca
www.nssalmon.ca*



Top pictures: Will Daniel instructs staff on sand wand operation at Sutherland Brook.

Bottom picture: In Sutherland Brook, the crew had the opportunity to use the sand wand to collect excess amounts of fine substrates from the river to improve the quality of fish habitat.



Top picture: Crew: Katie Chisholm, Allison White and Tim Mac-Dougall.

Bottom picture: Sutherland Brook was the first site where crew installed structures which included 1 digger log with deflector, 2 deflectors, and 4 bank logs.



ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION REPORT - Lewis Hinks, Director NS and PEI Programs

The Atlantic Salmon Federation had successes in 2016 and opened up new fronts in the fight to conserve wild Atlantic salmon.

The general North American trend for Atlantic salmon returns has been upward since the record lows of 2014. Reports from anglers and counting facilities in many areas indicate relatively high returns of large, multi sea winter (MSW) fish in 2016. This means the 2017 year class may be strong.

In Nova Scotia, severe drought in most of the province meant extreme low water, especially in the mainland rivers. As a result fewer fish moved upstream during the summer. With some fall rains, rivers did come up, but the overall effect of the drought is still being evaluated.

On the LaHave River, 45 MSW and 23 grilse were counted at the Morgan Falls fishway. Anecdotal reports from other rivers tell of low returns, but in areas of Nova Scotia, where more rain fell, reports indicate larger salmon runs. Data from the Gulf of St. Lawrence rivers is still being evaluated, but from many of the folks I talked to, the fishing was decent this year.

The Fall fish seemed to come a bit later than usual, but I again have heard of some fair reports. Like you, I am anxious to see what the official estimates are for this season. Stay tuned!

Regionally, the work of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon, struck by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in 2014, continues to guide salmon conservation decisions. Several recommendations from the committee's final report were turned into DFO action this year.

Examples include extending catch and release only rules in 2016 for Gulf region recreational salmon fisheries and a new 10-year river-by-river management plan in Quebec that reduces the number of fish caught and killed.

A new Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture, organized by DFO, satisfies the recommendation that government collaborate with academics and NGOs to coordinate research and share results. ASF will receive

\$250,000 as a partner in the joint venture to expand our tracking network into the Labrador Sea, and establish a study river in Labrador.

However there have been setbacks. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the federal and provincial governments have agreed that the largest open net pen salmon aquaculture project in Canadian history can proceed without a full environmental assessment.

This project would include the first use of European strain salmon in the Canadian marine environment and so-called escape proof net pens that have not been tested in Placentia Bay. This development would be situated among a wild salmon population considered *Threatened* by the expert Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

As a result, ASF has applied for a judicial review in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are challenging Environment and Climate Change Minister Perry Trimper's authority to release the project from environmental assessment despite the risks and overwhelming public concern. Our case will be heard in 2017 and could set precedent for future aquaculture proposals in Canada.

We know if this project goes ahead without any program for monitoring and mitigating impacts, there will be severe negative consequences for the 19 salmon rivers in Placentia Bay.

In October, ASF released a report prepared by Gardner Pinfold Consultants that makes an objective comparison of aquaculture regulations in Canada, Maine, and Norway. Using the Aquaculture Stewardship Council Salmon Standard as a baseline, results indicate that no jurisdiction has laws and regulations that meet the requirements of this third party certification.

Newfoundland and New Brunswick were shown to have the weakest protections in place for wild fish and the environment.

While Nova Scotia fared better than the other Atlantic Provinces, it is fair to say marine based net pen aquaculture can still have an impact on wild Atlantic salmon. The new Nova Scotia regulations are an

ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION REPORT continued

improvement but we can all agree that more needs to be done. The minister has stated on several occasions that the new regulations are a 'living document,' meant to improve and evolve over time. If this is indeed the case, then I prefer to look at the new regulations as not a ceiling to attain but a floor from which to improve. The aquaculture file is a long-term process, but we are making strides.

A critical ASF initiative for Nova Scotia and PEI salmon is to renegotiate a multi-year deal with Greenlandic fishermen that hold the mixed stock gill net fishery to minimum levels. Since 2011, when the past deal between ASF, the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, and Greenlandic fishermen expired, the catch has climbed significantly. Last year fishermen went beyond their self imposed 45-tonne quota and netted 53 tonnes of mixed Atlantic salmon. This year's haul is expected to be around 25-tonnes.

Since our latest offer was rejected in August, we have resumed negotiation and are confident that a compromise can be reached in 2017 that respects

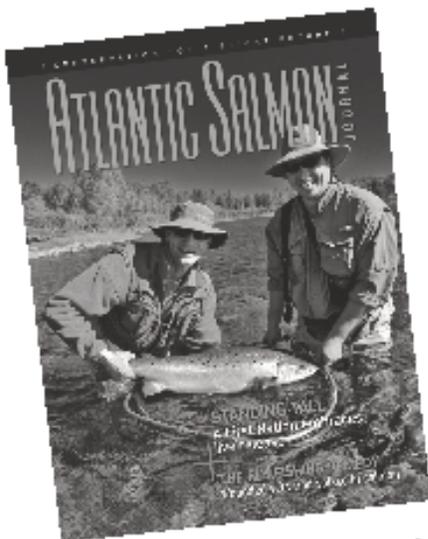
the right of locals to fish, without unreasonably harming North American salmon populations.

Closer to home, the NSSA is ramping up the West River, Sheet Harbour project. Liming of the watershed from helicopter has begun, along with major habitat improvement projects and the installation of a second doser. The NSSA is putting all the restoration efforts they can at this river.

This project is especially important given that the Southern Upland population is being reviewed for listing under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). What we learn at West River, Sheet Harbour can potentially be applied to other Southern Upland rivers. We should know about the SARA decision in 2017, at least that is what we are hearing.

I would like to wish the St. Mary's River Rivers Association all the best in your work and thank you for your efforts to conserve wild Atlantic salmon. It is because of groups such as the SMRA that our natural resources have a fighting chance.

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SMRA YEAR IN REVIEW



SMRA director Allan MacDonald with DFO staff releasing salmon fry.



SMRA director Ralph Jack and SMRA president Scott Beaver during kelt fishery.



Above: Smolt wheel installed at the Glenelg bridge.

Below: Directors Ralph Jack and Sandy Barnhill install new sign.



Above: Building a deflector on Sutherland's Brook.

Below: Charlie MacInnis with DFO staff at site inspection.



Member of the Year



St. Mary's River Association is please to nominate:

Winston Sawlor as Member of the Year

Winston has been a member since 1985 and has been actively involved in many aspects of the Association. Before moving to Melrose, he faithfully attended our Annual General

Meeting, travelling from Eastern Passage. He was also a great supporter of our lottery – one of the first to buy a ticket every year. He is always willing to volunteer his time, in any capacity, for the SMRA. Whether it's tree planting, helping make butterfly beds, or volunteering to man the tables at the Canada Day yard sale, you could always count on Winston. Other areas he volunteered were with the smolt wheel and kelt fishery. Thank you Winston for all you do for SMRA. Congratulations!

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INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT - Andrew Lowles, Fish Biologist

It was another busy season with the Inland Fisheries Division. We were out performing and supporting various research projects including another sea trout population assessment, promoting and development of our great sportfishery, stocking trout and researching invasive species across Nova Scotia. The following are a few highlights from our work over the past year:

River Denys Sea Trout Assessment

The River Denys sea trout fishery and population was previously assessed in 2008 and 2010 as well as 2016. Regulations were changed in 2012 and included a change in the season opening to 1 May, a reduction in the daily bag limit to three trout and a size limit that allowed for the retention of one trout over 35cm. The preliminary results of the 2016 study indicated that the regulations improved the quality of the sea trout fishery. The percentage of large trout (>30cm) caught by anglers increased from 47% to 70% and the percentage of very large trout (>35cm) caught by anglers increased from 17% to 29%. Improvement in the quality of the sea trout fishery has also been observed in the West River of Antigonish after that system was designated a Special Trout Management Area. Reducing harvest can improve seatrout fisheries.

The practice of catch and release has increased from 25% in 1980 to 60% in 2010. John reviewed tips to improve survival rate of released

fish. Ten out of ten fish prefer water and it is important to keep air exposure to a minimum. When unhooking a fish try to keep the fish in the water. Photos can be stressful and if you decide to take a picture, keep air exposure to a minimum (10 seconds). If the fish has swallowed the hook deeply or is bleeding, consider adding fish to your creel or cut the line and release immediately. Cutting the line can reduce mortality significantly. Water Temperature is also related to handling mortality. In May, cool water temperatures can benefit survival and as water temperatures warm to 20°C there is a greater incidence of release mortality. Handling your catch with wet hands instead of using a net is beneficial. The type of net used can impact release mortality. The use of knotted coarse mesh can damage fish by removal of protective slime and scales. If the use of nets is warranted or preferred the use of rubberized nets or knotless mesh can reduce harm to your catch.

Currently regulations in Special Trout Management Areas vary in bag limit, season, and size limit. A more consistent approach is needed to reduce the complexity of regulations on Sea trout fisheries. For all Special Management Areas that have a bag limit of more than one trout, proposed changes include a change in the bag limit to 3 trout with a size limit of 35cm that allows for the retention of one large (>35cm) trout. Changes to a season opening to 1 May will also be considered in the future.

Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative

The Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative (FFRC) was established several years ago to facilitate applied research with universities. This initiative was set up to address fisheries management questions and address the research interests of anglers and the Inland Fisheries Division. In 2016, a total cash investment of 35k dollars was made toward FFRC projects and a total in-kind was 99k dollars. In-kind contributions were associated with labour, supervisory, and equipment from partners. In 2016, the following FFRC partnerships received funding: 1) Evaluation of stream restoration, Kris Hunter, St FX University, 2) Impacts of Aluminum toxicity on salmon and trout, Dr. Shannon Sterling, Dalhousie University, and 3) Evaluation of angler catches in the Upper Medway River, Amanda Lavers, Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute.

Kris Hunter, Saint Xavier University, 2016 was year six of an eleven-year study on water chemistry, habitat and electrofishing results to evaluate the impacts of commonly used in-stream restoration initiatives to improve habitat for trout and salmon. The eight sites were monitored on an annual basis to assess habitat and fish populations. This year, three of the eight sites were restored and monitoring will continue for another five years (post-restoration). Long term studies are sometimes needed to evaluate annual natural fluctuations to

INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT continued

obtain a true picture of the impacts of restoration.

Dr. Shannon Sterling, Dalhousie University is evaluating the toxicity levels of Aluminum and PH in streams in the Southern Uplands of Nova Scotia. The information to be produced by this survey is important for planning the initiatives to restore wild salmonid populations, such as terrestrial liming, habitat restoration and increasing habitat connectivity. The purpose is to identify streams in the Southern Upland regions that have high aluminum levels and the data collection will focus on key periods in the life cycle for salmon and trout (smolt stage in May, etc.). This project is a part of the West River Sheet Harbour Project where a lime doser is in place to improve water quality by reducing acidity.

Amanda Lavers, Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute, conducted an angler creel survey in the Upper Medway system. Anglers expressed concern about overfishing and the spread of invasive smallmouth and pickerel in the Upper Medway region as these lands have been turned over from Bowater Mersey to the Province and they are now more accessible. Volunteer angler check points were established on main access roads in May and June. These data will allow for comparison of the results of similar surveys in Keji Park and in the Tangier Grand Lakes Wilderness Area, as well as, provide a baseline for the evaluation of any future changes in regulations in this region.

Promotion and Development Programs

The Learn to Fish (L2F) Program continues to focus on introducing young people across the province to recreational angling. This year was the largest year ever for the Learn to Fish Program, seeing almost 3,000 students, 700 more students than previous year. The program was delivered in school classrooms (but has been extended to include high school students), Scouts, Guides, 4-H clubs and recreation departments.

The Department has contracted a study to look for ways to further grow and develop the sportfishing industry in Nova Scotia. This study will deliver three components 1) an assessment of the current marine and freshwater sportfish resource in Nova Scotia, 2) a review of non-resident angler preferences and behaviours from Canada, the United States and Europe, and how these relate to the current sportfishing resource in Nova Scotia, 3) a list of recommendations/considerations that may increase future participation in sportfishing and the marketability of sportfishing in Nova Scotia.

Some of you may have received a questionnaire as part of the National Sportfishing Survey. Every five years, in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, each province asks for the cooperation of their licenced anglers in replying to a sportfishing survey. The survey, which is tallied by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, is then distributed back to the provinces for

further analysis. This study will provide valuable data that enables us to estimate participation and demographics, the value of the fishery, concerns by anglers, etc. The data from this study is still under review from DFO, but it should be to the provinces shortly.

Fisheries Enhancement

Each spring provincial hatcheries stock approximately 200 lakes across Nova Scotia. Most of these are stocked with brook trout; additionally, over 20 lakes are provided with Rainbow trout from the Fraser's Mills Hatchery. In recent years, much of the stocking effort has been directed to lakes in populated centers to provide additional recreational angling opportunities. There are more than 25 wheelchair accessible, barrier-free facilities in Nova Scotia. Most are located on stocking fishing sites that receive trout from the hatcheries. Approximately 50 trout fishing derbies, sponsored by volunteer organizations, received trout from the hatcheries.

Fall Trout Stocking

Trout stocking with finger-sized juvenile trout is carried out in October and November. Lakes stocked in the fall are typically more remote than the spring-stocked lakes, but still have significant fishing pressure. These fish are presumed to grow for a season before becoming large enough to be caught. Approximately 175 lakes receive brook trout in the fall. Most brown trout stocking takes place in the fall of year in rivers where the fingerlings have access to estuaries where they can grow quickly.

.....Continued on page 31

A Classic Fly with a New Twist - Don MacLean

I've been busy lately tying flies for next season. I get a great deal of enjoyment from tying my own flies, and that pleasure is doubled when I catch a fish on one of my creations. Some of the flies I tie will follow the fly dressing pattern fairly closely but often I use my imagination, and whatever is on my fly tying desk at that moment. Like many fly tiers I am a scrounger when it comes to fly tying and I am always on the hunt for new fly tying materials. Often the search takes me to craft or dollar stores but, just as frequently, new fly tying materials comes from friends who know I enjoy fly tying. That was the case a few years ago when I was visiting Stillwater resident Bill Carpan's fly shop and he gave me some coyote hair he was experimenting with as a fly tying material. The piece Bill gave me had been dyed orange, one of my favourite colours for trout and salmon flies, and I've been using it to put a new twist on a classic fly, the muddler minnow. I am a big fan of this fly and tie a number of variations, but none with coyote hair, until Bill gave me the sample. Since that first experiment I also received a piece of hair from a naturally black, or melanistic coyote. Finding a melanistic coyote is as rare as finding an albino so I save that piece of hair for special flies.

If you check an anglers' fly box in Eastern Canada there is a good chance you will find an assortment of muddler minnow flies. The muddler minnow, it has been argued, is the best trout fly every developed and there are few anglers who would argue with this statement. Famed angling writer, the late Joe Brooks, was a fan of the fly and its greatest promoter. In a 1963 article he wrote for Outdoor Life magazine Brooks gave the history of the muddler minnow. Its developer, Don Gapen, first tied the fly when fishing the Nipigon River in Ontario. He tied the fly in an at-

tempt to imitate a freshwater sculpin which was a popular bait fish in the river. The minnow had a broad flat head and a tapered body which Gapen was able to imitate using spun deer hair combined with gray squirrel tail and a turkey wing tail.

Gapen tied the fly in several sizes and fished them in a variety of methods. Smaller sizes he fished like dry flies

while larger sizes were fished as streamers, casting out into the current and fishing the fly back while retrieving it in short strips. In eddies he would let the fly drift till the water grabbed the fly and dragged it into the current. The muddler imitates wide variety of trout food found in freshwater and that is the key to its effectiveness. Tied in large sizes it is a fair representation of a mouse, in a smaller size it can imitate a caddisfly or stonefly as well as grasshoppers and crickets.

Joe Brooks called the muddler minnow the best all-around fly of its kind that he had ever used and he always carried an assortment in his vest from hook size 10 all the way up to 1/0. He suggested that it was most effective later in the season when big fish were on a feeding spree as they prepared for winter. Does my coyote muddlers catch more fish than the original? Perhaps not, but I certainly have fun experimenting with them. Whether you fish the original and its many modifications, or design your own, make sure you have an assortment of muddler minnows in your fly box this year. Day in and day out it will bring fish to the net. I hope you have a safe, and successful fishing season this year.

Tight Lines

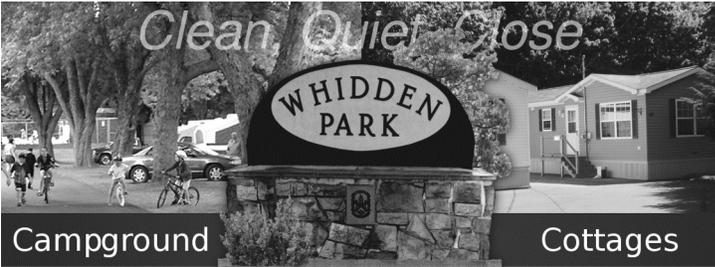


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WEST BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE -submitted by Kenny Silver

The St. Mary's River Association has had another successful year restoring habitat on the upper section of the West Branch of the St. Mary's River. The work included installing rock sills, reinforcing the bank, etc. at several sites to create a narrower deeper river channel. The deeper channel and increase in pools and riffles creates ideal habitat for juvenile salmon and during the winter reduces the ice build up that can destroy the salmon eggs that were laid in the fall.

Monitoring of the restored sites last summer showed a 4 – 5 time increase in the number and depth of the pools that were created and during the site visits volunteers noted juvenile salmon were present. In the fall SMRA conducted Redd Counts (locations where salmon deposit their eggs) of several sections of the restored area, Sutherlands Brook and a Control Site where no restoration is planned for several years. In the Control Site only one red was observed while there were 10 – 20 in each of the restored section counted and monitoring of the entire restored area showed that the number of redds increased from only a few before any work was started to almost 100 this fall. From this it is clear that spawning salmon prefer the changes to the river resulting from the restoration work, which supports the need to continue the restoration along the remainder of the river.

The St. Mary's River Association is very interest in promoting this work to show the impact habitat restoration can have on the river and the flora and fauna that rely on it. Not only is it important to show the impact habitat restoration can have on the river and salmon stocks, "show casing" our efforts is an important way encourage new funders and sponsors to contribute so that we can complete the work along the remainder of the river. Because of the relatively short season where water conditions permit restoration activity in the river and the time needed to raise the amount of money required, it will take many years to complete the entire river.

This work is costly but critical for the future survival of Atlantic Salmon in the St. Mary's River. The SMRA has raised and spent almost \$600,000 from the time we started the project in 2014 until the end of 2016 and have applied for another \$300,000 in funding to continue the work in 2017. The improved habitat productivity is needed is to offset increasing "at sea" mortality of the maturing salmon. For example from 100 juvenile salmon that mature to return to the ocean, the number returning adults has declined over the last number of years from 4 or 5 to 2 or 3 adults. So instead of 100 juveniles, we now need about 150



Site 3 before restoration



Site 3 Bank stabilization with Armour rock



Site 3 Breech above sill at top of site

WEST BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE continued



Completed restoration sites



Building access road to site



Pictured above is West Branch Site 3 aerial view of groynes and sills after restoration



Site 3 Breech at top of site

to return to the ocean so the same number of adults will return to the river to spawn. Habitat restoration will create better fresh water conditions so more eggs hatch and more of the resulting juveniles survive to return to the ocean. But it will take time to complete sufficient habitat restoration to have a meaningful change in the watershed survival so the total increase in juveniles returning to the ocean is sufficient to offset the “at sea” mortality and the resulting lower return rates.

Within the overall project area on the West Branch, eleven sites have been identified as needing restoration work. The type of work needed has been defined, the cost of work has been determined, and restoration work has begun. As mentioned, we have raised close to \$600,000 over the past three years and our fundraising efforts continue. To date we have completed

seven sites. In 2017 work on two more sites will begin.

Thank you to volunteers and project funders Small Craft Harbours (SCH), Nova Scotia Liquor Commission /Adopt a Stream Program (NSLC/AAS), the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund (ASCF), Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (RFCPP), The AVIVA Community Fund and RBC/Blue Water Community Fund.

Please check out our web site www.stmarysriverassociation.com or visit our facebook page at www.facebook.com/StMarysRiverAssociation to learn more about this work and other things that the Association is doing.

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Winter Trout Stocking

Nova Scotians are encouraged to remain active all year and many do so by getting out and enjoying time ice fishing for trout. Twenty lakes, including the Bras d'Or Lakes, are stocked with either rainbow or speckled trout in November and December, in anticipation of the winter season. Several other lakes which are stocked in the spring remain open year-round. This year, two new lakes have been opened for winter fishing: McKeen Lake, Guysborough County and Dalem (Round) Lake, Victoria County.

Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program

This was the tenth year that the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture has been working to support the Atlantic salmon and enhance the fishery. On Cape Breton Island, the Margaree Hatchery provided fall parr for Margaree River, Baddeck River and Middle River. It is unlikely that the fall salmon season on the Middle River and Baddeck River (both stocked 2010-2016) would have been

permissible without the stocking program. On the mainland, Fraser's Mills Hatchery provided fry and fall parr for West River Antigonish. With assistance from many volunteers, successful broodstock collections took place on for West River Antigonish, West River Pictou (Fish Friends), Middle River, Baddeck River, Mabou River and Margaree River. In addition to providing brook trout for local watersheds and selected sites on Cape Breton Island, the Margaree hatchery typically supplies 130,000-160,000 parr each fall and 30,000-40,000 Atlantic salmon smolt in the spring, for the Margaree River.

Broodstock salmon from Baddeck River, Middle River, Mabou River as well as the Margaree River are now held at Margaree Hatchery to provide eggs for next year's production. Broodstock from West River Antigonish and West River Pictou (Fish Friends) are held at Fraser's Mills Hatchery.

Tight Lines,

Andrew Lowles
Fisheries Biologist

If undelivered return to:

St. Mary's River Association

PO Box 179

Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia, Canada

B0J 3C0



***St. Mary's River Association
Education & Interpretive
Centre***

8404 Highway #7, SHERBROOKE, NS

1-902-522-2099

stmarysriver@ns.sympatico.ca

Exhibits related to salmon angling