

30th Anniversary Issue

1979–2009

SMRA *NEWS*

SPRING, 2009

Volume 20, Issue 1



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St. Mary's River—This beautiful scene was taken by summer student Lindy Feltmate while she and Colin Rudolph, summer student field Researcher, walked Archibald's Brook on the West Branch June 13, 2008. During the summer, many brooks were studied as part of our Healthy Rivers, Vibrant Communities Initiative.

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

Office: (902) 522-2099 Fax: (902) 522-2241

Email: stmarysriver@ns.sympatico.ca

Website: www.geocities.com/stmarysriverassociation

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

stmarysriver@ns.sympatico.ca

Our website is:
www.geocities.com/
stmarysriverassociation

Registered Charity
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2007-2008 Executive

President.: Mark Pulsifer
Secretary: Jocelyn Ellis
Treasurer: Florence Duffy

Editing, Layout & Design:
Joanne Mailman
St. Mary's River Association

Printing:
Alex MacDonald Printing
812 East River Road
New Glasgow, NS

(see ad on page 27)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Mark Pulsifer

I deliberately held off writing this column until the salmon stocking workshop was over because I wanted to share with you some of the highlights that I think we should all be mindful of. You should know that the inspiration for the workshop came from members who wanted the Association to explore the possibilities of stocking the St. Mary's once again, and I thank them for their suggestion. At the time there was considerable discussion on the issue, and eventually, after weighing the pros and cons, the board decided against stocking at that time, but whole heartedly endorsed a workshop in which, "the advantages and disadvantages of stocking, in terms of biology, sociology, economics, and other considerations may be presented by informed guest speakers and then debated on the floor".

The workshop spanned an entire weekend and by all accounts was very successful. Everyone that I talked to said that this workshop was greatly needed and should have happened a long time ago. As expected, and hoped for, there were different points of view, but the one thing that I couldn't help notice was that each of the presenters and participants was passionate, and absolutely committed to what they were doing and truly believed in their respective positions on the issue of stocking. Participants were treated to presentations on the ecological effects of hatchery reared salmon on wild stocks, "successful" case studies, and socio-economic and biological issues by academics, hatchery managers, river association reps, government managers, First Nations and habitat biologists from the Atlantic region.

There was lots of time for discussion over coffee and snacks, and in

round-table sessions on Sunday. Although I am not sure that too many opinions changed, several said that they understood the other side of the issue much better. That in itself is the measure of success.

Here are just a few of the things that stuck with me throughout the workshop.

- Under the right circumstances stocking if done carefully can be a tool in the salmon restoration tool box, but you have to clearly identify the purpose for doing it. Are you trying to restore a fishery, or save a population?

- Stocking can be labour intensive, costly, and provide few long term benefits unless programs are maintained for years.

- As we have suspected for some time, precious few of our Nova Scotia rivers are meeting their conservation requirements. Since 1997 marine survival for stocked smolt is approximately 0.5%.

- Over the past ten years it is now recognized that because of the lack of true sexual selection, hatchery fish can change the gene pool of local wild populations. These changes affect survival, and future reproduction. Habitat is the key to "successful" stocking programs. You must have good habitat, and enough of it, or you are wasting your time and money.

I am sure that the debate over the short and long term value of stocking programs will continue within our membership, and in many areas where this issue is up for discussion. Whether or not stocking happens on the St. Mary's is a matter for the future. What I do know is that any decisions in that regard will be made with a clearer understanding of the benefits and impacts, thanks to this workshop.

In these challenging times I believe that there is one undeniable truth that river associations, including our own have been facing for some time. That

is, that many of our rivers and their salmon stocks are in trouble. We have known this for years, but what really brought it home for me was listening to Mr. Greg Stevens of Fisheries and Oceans Canada speak at our recently held stocking workshop. In his presentation, Mr. Stevens said that (with few exceptions) virtually none of Nova Scotia's salmon rivers were meeting their conservation requirements. Equally depressing is that the reasons for this are varied, complex and not well understood. But in this midst of all this, what I find heartening is that despite this somber message, river associations such as ours, and others have continued to do what we can, where we can, to try to fix a problem that may not be fixable.

Our association has always been about conservation and the wise use of resources within the St. Mary's River watershed. That is why our board has endorsed the *Healthy Rivers, Vibrant Communities* plan put forward by our Executive Director. Good science, good management, and good stewardship are the keys to providing some of the answers, and realizing good results on the land, and in the water. Resource managers over the past decade have realized that an integrated approach to management is the best approach. Because there is no one problem there can be no one solution. We have to examine the St. Mary's River watershed in all its complexities as best we can, understanding that what happens in the far reaches of the watershed ultimately has an impact several kilometers downstream on both the river itself, and whatever lives in it. I understand that this approach may not be the preferred approach of some of our membership, and I respect that. I would offer that this

our most important mandates, to protect our salmon stocks; but rather, it recognizes and elevates the seriousness, and complexity of the problem, while positioning it within a context that allows us to make better informed decisions.

By the time that you read this my term as president will be nearly over. I gladly took on this role because I wanted to help. I wanted to work with the St. Mary's River community, and to contribute where I could. I think that over these past two years our association has started down a path that recognizes the difficulties faced by river groups everywhere in this 21st century. Land use practices that affect our water ways are not going away. In fact, in these socio-economic times they may become intensified.

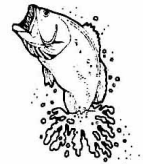
Our *Healthy Rivers – Vibrant Communities* plan is a first step in looking to the future. As always, I am extremely grateful to our board members who volunteer their time, and do an excellent job; but we need more people at our board room table with a desire to help guide our future directions. If you would like to participate, or would like to nominate someone as a board member please contact the association office.

This year marks our 30th anniversary. The St. Mary's River Association was formed in 1979. We are planning a number of activities to help us celebrate. We hope you will come out and join us!

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NOTICE TO MEMBERS ANNUAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the St. Mary's River Association will be held on Sunday May 31, 2009 at 2 pm at the Association's Education & Interpretive Centre, 9494 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.

HEALTHY RIVER, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES– AN UPDATE by Sean Mitchell, Executive Director

In June 2008, the St. Mary's River Association (SMRA) formally began its ambitious, comprehensive restoration and resource management initiative within the St. Mary's River. Titled "*Healthy River, Vibrant Communities*", the first five months of 2008 were spent defining the initiative, promoting it, and developing a workplan for delivery. The goal of the initiative is to "*Restore the ecological integrity of the St. Mary's River watershed to the benefit of the natural environment and the people that live and work within the drainage*". The St. Mary's River is one of the largest watersheds in Nova Scotia, and so restoration, planning and management must consequently also be on a large scale. The SMRA has spent the last four years working up to this initiative and has kicked it off by producing an ambitious workplan composed of four streams of work: (1) Acquiring background information, (2) Monitoring existing conditions and rates of change, (3) Restoration of aquatic and riparian systems, and (4) Development of Integrated Watershed Management Plan.

In 2008 we were kept busy with analyses of historical data (water chemistry, hydrology, evaluating West Branch channel changes), reconnaissance level stream surveys to prioritize locations for restoration, identifying coldwater refugia for salmon, evaluating Governor Lake as a historical water source to the St. Mary's River, developing a St. Mary's River Atlantic salmon recovery strategy, and co-hosting (together with Habitat Unlimited and Integrated Studies in Aquatic Resources – St. Francis Xavier University) a highly successful workshop for community groups on the issue of stocking of hatchery reared salmon into rivers. In 2008, we had

seven employees and three contractors, in addition to the volunteers of the SMRA, working with us to complete the work we have. We are on schedule with the *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities* workplan and will now be transitioning from filling data gaps to physical restoration of identified sites and participating more fully in management within the watershed.

The year 2009 promises big things. The *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities* workplan for this year is ambitious with 36 projects. These projects range in intensity from being only several days in duration to ongoing throughout the year. The major focus in 2009 will be some fairly large scale restoration in the East Branch near Willowdale and also in Campbell's and Black Brook (also on the East Branch). We are also expecting to be working closely with Bob Rutherford and Amy Weston of the Adopt-a-Stream program on design and, hopefully, installation of several experimental structures in the West Branch to initiate the large scale West Branch restoration. The 'research' and filling of data gaps will continue as this is necessary to continue to add to our understanding of the processes and limitation within the river. This understanding is necessary to develop cost-effective restoration. Examples of such projects are hydrological and water chemistry monitoring, and surveys to identify barriers to salmon migration and location of suitable spawning areas. Further, we will be putting greater effort into public engagement and influencing management of resources within the St. Mary's River watershed. It is anticipated that our personnel requirements (employees and contractors) will increase this year over 2008, as the program moves into its second year.

This report is, by necessity, brief. However, the complete *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities* five year workplan, a detailed annual report for 2008, and workplan for 2009 are all available upon request for those seeking greater information.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities* initiative and our progress is invited to contact:

Sean Mitchell at (902)522-2099 or smitchel@stfx.ca.

IN MEMORIAM DONATIONS:

SMRA would be glad 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 *in memory* cards 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:
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B0J 3C0

Your donation, in a loved ones name, will help us in our continuing efforts to help the Atlantic salmon.

NOVA SCOTIA FISHING FACTS! By Mark Hamilton, Inland Fisheries

What do you do when you're surrounded by water? In Nova Scotia, the answer is: you go fishing!

Nova Scotia is a place of waters. We have 6,000 lakes (of more than two hectares in area), countless streams and rivers, and 7,400 km of coastline.

There are more than 100 angling derbies annually in Nova Scotia (45 brook trout tournaments, 52 bass derbies, and numerous pickerel, rainbow trout, striped bass and ice fishing derbies).

There were more than 57,000 licensed anglers in NS in 2008. National angling survey data tell us that the average amount spent on fishing per Nova Scotian angler is a little over \$1000 per year. That equals \$58,000,000 in direct expenditures last year, or factored at 1.25, recreational angling is worth more than \$73 million to the NS economy!

Nova Scotia has more than 50 active angling conservation and river enhancement groups, and more than 100 trained River Watch volunteers.

There are 25 barrier-free facilities available to disabled anglers in Nova Scotia.

The Inland Fisheries Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture runs an angling education program (Learn to Fish, or L2F) for youth in grades 4, 5, and 6. In 2008, 525 children went fishing with this program!

In 2000, Nova Scotian anglers fished 1.2 million days! 78 per cent of these were in fresh water and 22 per cent in salt water. Brook trout (our provincial fish) is the favorite species pursued by anglers, followed by rainbow

trout and smallmouth bass. Angling is recognized and protected as a Heritage Activity by the Province of Nova Scotia.

This summer a Nova Scotia Free Sportfishing Weekend is being held on June 6 and 7. It's a great opportunity to introduce kids to angling.

All Nova Scotians can fish FREE this weekend!

Bag limits and other regulations still apply—you can find these at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/>



Summer student Colin Rudolph demonstrates the art of fly tying during Magic on the River day camp



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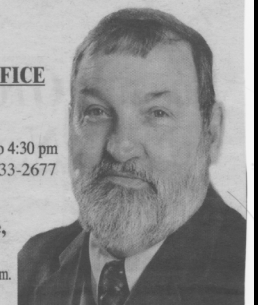
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Toll Free: 1-866-299-2248

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Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Phone: 1-902-885-3180



**LOTS TO CELEBRATE IN 60 YEARS OF ATLANTIC SALMON CONSERVATION -
Sue Scott, VP Communications, ASF and Lewis Hinks, Regional Director, N.S.**

Last year, the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) celebrated our 60th anniversary of conserving wild Atlantic salmon and the many milestones reached over the years. It was a great year to celebrate! Many rivers had their best runs of wild Atlantic salmon in years. It was an exceptional year in many respects, not the least of which is the continued beneficial partnership among ASF, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association and its affiliated organizations.

The increase in runs is still somewhat of a mystery but could be a result of better ocean conditions. ASF and our affiliated organizations also contributed to this unexpectedly good year through our conservation agreement with Greenland's commercial salmon fishermen, promotion and practice of live release angling and the restoration efforts taking place on rivers throughout the salmon's range.

Since 2002, our Greenland Conservation Agreement has suspended the commercial fishery there, allowing thousands more salmon to migrate from Greenland waters to their natal rivers to spawn. ASF carries out intensive education and public awareness programs on the benefits of releasing angled salmon to complete their spawning runs and increase future runs. Through our rewards and recognition program for private and outfitting camps, leaders who promote catch and release to anglers are acknowledged and provided with tangible benefits.

Another reason for raising our glasses was the disbursement by the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation of its first round of

grants from the \$30 million established in 2007.

In Nova Scotia, the Little Sackville River Restoration, Mushamush River Habitat Restoration Project, Watershed Assessment and Preliminary Restoration Plan for the Little River, and the St. Francis River Restoration Project shared a total of \$50,000 for projects that will benefit wild Atlantic salmon.

In August, we reached a major milestone when the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, of which ASF is a founding member, announced its decision to purchase the Veazie, Great Works and Howland dams on the Penobscot River and restore 1600 km of habitat to sea-run fish.

ASF researchers finished another successful season of tracking migrating salmon smolt that is providing data on ocean migration and mortality. In 2008, more smolt than in previous years were recorded passing receivers anchored in the Strait of Belle Isle, the northern route from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and about halfway to their ocean feeding grounds off Greenland. Our tracking research received a grant of \$25,000 from the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation.

Introducing young people to angling and conservation programs is a goal of ASF and our Regional Councils. ASF has developed the Magic on the Rivers Program to support this effort. The program introduces students to fly casting and tying, reading water and scales, live release techniques, river etiquette, ethics and safety, proper ways to handle salmonids and some restoration techniques. The program has also been introduced to youth in the Sherbrooke area by the St. Mary's River Association, Chester Area

Middle School and to Cheticamp youth by the Cheticamp River Salmon Association. ASF affiliated organizations, schools as an extracurricular offering, summer camps and other organizations with an interest in Atlantic salmon and trout conservation can benefit from participating in Magic on the Rivers.

Fish Friends continues to be extremely popular, not only in Nova Scotia but all through eastern North America. As of this writing almost 70 schools are inviting Fish Friends into their classrooms in Nova Scotia for 2009. Students learn about salmon or trout life cycles, freshwater ecology, the web of life and the importance of a clean, healthy environment.

This highly acclaimed school program, with a curriculum aimed at grades 4, 5 and 6, has educated 260,000 students since it began in 1993. Volunteers are needed to help deliver Fish Friends, so take the opportunity at a local school. You will find it fun and rewarding.

Finally, ASF is pleased to be a partner and supporter of the West River Acid Rain Mitigation Project. This exciting project is showing positive results and we look forward to further restoration of this river and working with NSSA and its affiliate network, government and various other organizations on the development of additional acid rain restoration programs

Over the past 60 years, we have reached many milestones. The support and cooperation of our regional councils, formed in the 1980s, have resulted in many victories and will provide many opportunities for future celebration.



Storage has been an on-going problem for many years. Thanks to Nova Scotia Power Corporation and Central Home Improvement Warehouse we were able to purchase a storage barn. A grant was provided by the Nova Scotia Power Corporation's Good Neighbor Volunteer Fund and Central Home Improvement Warehouse offered us the wholesale cost of the barn. Thank you to NSPC employee and SMRA member Gary Kaiser (pictured here with SMRA manager, Joanne Mailman). Special thanks to Steven Benjamin, Store Manager at Central for being so helpful in choosing the type of barn to fit our needs and giving us the deal.

Carole Gartside

BARRISTER, SOLICITOR & MEDIATOR

Law Office
#8220, Hwy No. 7
P.O. Box 273
Sherbrooke NS B0J 3C0

Phone: (902) 522-2600
Fax: (902) 522-2601



Join other friends of the St. Mary's River in helping our Association protect, preserve and restore this wonderful river and our heritage.

Membership dues are payable April 1st of every year. Current fees are:

<i>Junior</i>	<i>\$5.00</i>
<i>Regular</i>	<i>\$20.00</i>
<i>Contributing</i>	<i>\$50.00</i>
<i>Corporate</i>	<i>\$200.00</i>
<i>Sponsoring:</i>	
<i>Gold</i>	<i>\$500.00</i>
<i>Silver</i>	<i>\$300.00</i>
<i>Bronze</i>	<i>\$100.00</i>

Membership can be renewed by mailing a cheque to P.O. Box 179 Sherbrooke NS B0J 3C0. A charitable donation receipt will be mailed to you as well as a membership card. New members are most welcome. Makes a great gift!

ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOCIATION LOTTERY WINNERS 2008

**Indicates proceeds given back to SMRA with our thanks!

The \$1200.00 winner is Owen & Linda Duffy...Congratulations!**January 2008 Winners:**

\$150.00 ... Jeff Eshbaugh**
 \$100.00 ... Steve Eshbaugh**
 \$50.00 ... Dave Clark
 \$25.00 ... Tom Purves
 \$25.00 ... Cliff Sherman
 \$25.00 ... George Archibald**
 \$25.00 ... Barb Eshbaugh**

February 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Owen & Linda Duffy
 \$100.00 ... Jim Barrett
 \$50.00 ... David Eshbaugh**
 \$25.00 ... Gerald Teasdale
 \$25.00 ... George Sutherland
 \$25.00 ... Charles Widgery
 \$25.00 ... Chris Fraser

March 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... John Silver
 \$100.00 ... Scottie Fraser
 \$50.00 ... Parker Wong
 \$25.00 ... Allie Jordan
 \$25.00 ... Jim Barrett
 \$25.00 ... Marjorie Widgery
 \$25.00 ... Jocelyn & Earle Ellis

April 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Barb Eshbaugh**
 \$100.00 ... Irene Hodder
 \$50.00 ... Steve Eshbaugh**
 \$25.00 ... Tom MacIntosh
 \$25.00 ... Sandy Horne
 \$25.00 ... David Eshbaugh**
 \$25.00 ... Marjorie Widgery

May 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Gerry MacIntosh
 \$100.00 ... Dale Archibald
 \$50.00 ... Joel Greenberg
 \$25.00 ... Scottie Fraser
 \$25.00 ... Dr. David Archibald**
 \$25.00 ... Kurt Mueller
 \$25.00 ... Sean Mitchell

June 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Allan MacDonald
 \$100.00 ... Richard Bennett
 \$50.00 ... Gerry Doucet
 \$25.00 ... Dale Archibald
 \$25.00 ... David Surrette
 \$25.00 ... Barb Eshbaugh**
 \$25.00 ... Tim Nobes

July 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Norn Kelly
 \$100.00 ... Pat King
 \$50.00 ... Owen Beaver
 \$25.00 ... Robert Sidler
 \$25.00 ... Sandy MacLeod
 \$25.00 ... Tim & Winston Sawler
 \$25.00 ... George Archibald*

August 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Brian McMillan
 \$100.00 ... Jackie Silver
 \$50.00 ... Gerry MacIntosh
 \$25.00 ... Walter Smith
 \$25.00 ... Lois Kelly
 \$25.00 ... Sean Mitchell
 \$25.00 ... Jim Lerikos

September 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Keith Whidden
 \$100.00 ... Jeff Eshbaugh*
 \$50.00 ... John Camerson Sr.
 \$25.00 ... Jocelyn & Earl Ellis
 \$25.00 ... Ron Clark
 \$25.00 ... Dan Smith
 \$25.00 ... Leo Gallant

October 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Marjorie Widgery
 \$100.00 ... Dave Clark
 \$50.00 ... David Surrette
 \$25.00 ... David Eshbaugh*
 \$25.00 ... Dr. David Archibald*
 \$25.00 ... Peter Alex
 \$25.00 ... George Newell

November 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Dave Clark
 \$100.00 ... Pat King
 \$50.00 ... Norman Kelly
 \$25.00 ... Don MacLean
 \$25.00 ... Owen Beaver
 \$25.00 ... Mark Pulsifer
 \$25.00 ... Peter Alex

December 2008 Winners:

\$150.00 ... Florence Duffy
 \$100.00 ... Chris Fraser
 \$50.00 ... Douglas Wolfe
 \$25.00 ... Bob Bancroft
 \$25.00 ... Marjorie Widgery
 \$25.00 ... Dr. David Archibald
 \$25.00 ... Gordon Steedman

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THE RIVER PUNT

submitted by Mark Smith

(The SMRA gets numerous requests for river punt plans. It's nice to see that they are being used.)

A few buddies and myself built a St. Mary's River longboat last winter. It is kind of like old school meets new school. We built it as a gift to a friend of ours who bought a new cottage on the St. Mary's river. He wanted the camp to be used by all of us since we are all avid trout and salmon fishermen, but didn't want us to pitch in any money for the cottage. So we surprised him one night with a new 20' river boat. He loved it. We took video of the entire process of making the boat. We named her "TaraCarol" after his daughter and wife. We are all in our early 30's and our friend that owns the cottage just turned 60, but acts like he's 30. It just goes to show you how fishing and friends have no age limitations. We have an annual trip we go on called the JBFC. We've been going on this trip for 10 years now and we now call St. Mary's our h o m e r i v e r .



Giving the Community a Voice



Since 2000, a 20-member Forest Advisory Committee has provided the Woodlands Unit at NewPage Port Hawkesbury invaluable input on the company's long-term Sustainable Forest Management Plan. The Committee also examines our on-the-ground harvest practices through annual field tours.

Goals of the Committee

- Influence forest management decisions
- Encourage dialogue, cooperation and information sharing
- Provide input on forest management planning & decision
- Encourage promotion of sustainable practices

Influencing forest management decisions begins with the public.

To learn more about the Forest Advisory Committee visit:

<http://fac.newpage.googlepages.com>

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At NewPage's Woodlands Unit, we're proud to be certified to the Canadian standard for sustainable forest management (CSA Z809) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Maritime standard for responsible forest management.

To learn more about how we manage the forest, ask for a copy of our *Green Balance Report*.

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ST. MARY'S RIVER WATERSEHD NATURAL HISTORY BOOK PROJECT

Submitted by Duncan Pulsifer

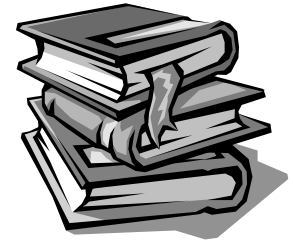
It is well known that the St. Mary's River is an area rich in both human and natural history. What happens in the watershed ultimately affects the river. Once known only as a part of the Mi'kmaq district Eski'kewaq (translated as the 'skin dresser's district'), the St. Mary's watershed is renowned for its natural resources. It is, or has been home to pristine forestland to fuel the timber trade, gold and other mineral deposits, and abundant populations of fish and game such as fur bearing animals, caribou, moose, white-tailed deer, gaspereau, trout, and most famous of all, the Atlantic salmon. It comes as no surprise that community pioneers chose to make the St. Mary's their home. There is, and always has been, an intimate connection between the river and those that choose to inhabit the communities along its banks.

The St. Mary's and its inhabitants have experienced a great deal throughout history, and are together, part of an important, yet ever-changing relationship. This unique dynamic between people and river is a relationship worth exploring. Thus, as part of the *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities Initiative*, the St. Mary's River Association, alongside the Nova Forest Alliance, has begun the early stages of the development of a natural history book on the St. Mary's River Watershed and its people. While this will be a natural history book, it will focus on several hundred years of human history within the watershed. It will explore the relationship between people and the river and will hopefully include some of the local stories, legend, and lore that make this area so unique. For instance, did you know that when spearing salmon by torch

light in the late 19th century, locals would often paint their faces black and wear women's clothing to skew their identity? Duncan Pulsifer, a historical researcher and graduate of St. Francis Xavier University, was contracted in December of 2008 and has been making great strides in acquiring and organizing resources and creating a timeline and usable framework for the further development of this book. A tentative publication date of late Autumn of 2011 is expected.

Recognizing the important historical contributions of community members, both past and present, the St. Mary's River Association is hoping to include local contributions in the creation and development of this natural history book.

It is a goal of the SMRA to include interesting historical stories, photographs, etc. that demonstrate the rich history and culture of the area. If you would be interested in contributing historical documents, whether they are farm, fish, or forestry records, letters, photographs, sketches, maps, stories, etc., for possible inclusion, please contact Duncan Pulsifer at (902)522-2099, or via email at duncanpulsifer@gmail.com.



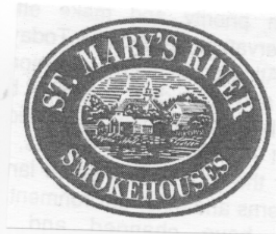
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RECOVERY PLAN FOR ATLANTIC SALMON IN THE ST. MARY'S RIVER by Danielle Murray

The development of a watershed-based recovery plan for salmon is a fundamental cornerstone of the salmon restoration aspect of the *Healthy River, Vibrant Communities* initiative. The recovery plan lays out the road map to restoring a sustainable salmon stock. Historical commercial and recreational data on the salmon fishery were analyzed to understand past population abundances, how they have changed over time and possible reasons for population decline. Gaps in our knowledge of the salmon population characteristics have been identified and suggestions for future research opportunities included.

A mail-out survey was distributed

in March and results presented in the recovery plan, to provide information on the socio-economic importance of salmon for the watershed community. Potential recovery actions have been identified and a cost benefit analysis for each recovery action conducted. It is hoped that this pilot project will inspire other watershed and salmon associations to gain ideas from this recovery plan and that they will apply them to their own watersheds locally, regionally or globally.

Funding for this project was provided by Service Canada-Career Focus.



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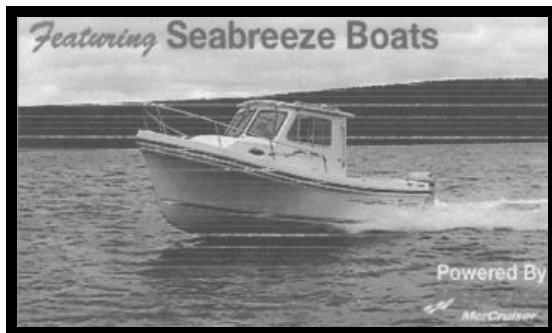
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SALMON ASSESSMENTS ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER by Jamie Gibson and Heather Bowlby, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

It was a busy year for our collaborative salmon assessment projects on the St. Mary's River. From spring to fall, the smolt monitoring program, electrofishing surveys, adult assessment, and release of mature adults took place. In the addition to being used for the regular annual assessments, this year the monitoring data have also been provided to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to assist in their review of the status of all Atlantic salmon populations in Canada.

Smolt monitoring in 2008 was delayed slightly due to mechanical trouble and physical damage to the smolt wheel. A special thanks goes out to all of the people in the SMRA who helped get the wheel fixed and back in the river so quickly. Continuous monitoring took place between May 8th and June 6th, 2008. The highest daily smolt catch was 65 smolts on May 19th and in total, 485 smolts were captured. Based on the smolt wheel

efficiency of 3.1%, an estimated

15,217 smolts (statistical range: 9,451 to 24,154) migrated from the West Branch of the St. Mary's River, and approximately 91% of them were two years old. Smolt catches at the wheel have been sufficient to estimate abundance and determine biological characteristics since 2005. There has been no clear trend (either increasing or decreasing) in the smolt abundance estimates over the last 4 years, and during the last 2 years, smolt production has remained relatively constant. Freshwater habitat in the St. Mary's River is producing between 34 and 115 smolts for every 100m², which is similar to values from the LaHave River. The general characteristics of the smolt run are similar to other populations in the Southern Upland region (SFA 20 and 21), where juveniles spend two or three years in freshwater before exiting the river during the spring.

Water levels on the St. Mary's River were extremely high at the end of July and throughout August. Therefore, the electrofishing

survey was completed slightly later than in previous years. In the last two weeks of September, 12 sites were electrofished for juvenile salmon, 6 in the East Branch and 6 in the West Branch. Age-0, age-1 and age-2 densities (fish/100m²) were 7.6, 2.3 and 0.2 respectively in the East Branch, and 4.7, 2.7 and 0.4 respectively in the West Branch. For the entire river, juvenile densities were 6.1 fish/100m² for fry (age-0) and 2.8 fish/100m² for parr (age-1 and age-2+). These values are slightly lower than those observed in 2007, but are similar to means from the previous 5 years.

Fall seining took place in Cumming's, Indian Man, and Sutherland's pools in the first and third week of October. The estimate of abundance in the West Branch from the seining was 397 adults (statistical range: 175 to 781), of which 91% were grilse. This is the highest estimate recorded in the last 4 years and is more than double the 2007 estimate of 170 adults. It is interesting to note that similar increases in adult abundance were found for many salmon populations

Year	Wheel		Abundance		Production		
	Efficiency	Estimate	90% CI		per habitat unit (smolts/100m ²)	Age 2	Age 3
2005	0.103**	7350	6000	9100	34	81%	19%
2006	0.028	25100	18700	40300	115	93%	7%
2007	0.054	16110	12735	20835	73	92%	8%
2008	0.031	15217	9451	24154	69	91%	8%

**two wheels were deployed side-by-side

in Atlantic Canada in 2008. On the LaHave River, adult counts at Morgan Falls fishway increased from 382 fish in 2007 to 691 fish in 2008. In the St. John River, the number of wild grilse returning to Mactaquac Dam in 2008 increased by 62% in comparison with 2007. Similarly, the abundance of grilse on the majority of monitored rivers in Newfoundland and Labrador increased in 2008. For many rivers, high water conditions throughout the summer and into fall would have helped salmon access freshwater habitat for spawning, which may have contributed to the increase in returns. There is also some indication from Newfoundland that mortality at sea for immature salmon was lower during the winter of 2007/2008, which would lead to more grilse returning to the rivers to spawn.

In 2006 and 2007, DFO collected juvenile salmon (fry and parr) from different tributaries on the St. Mary's River and reared the fish to the adult stage at the ColdBrook Biodiversity facility. These collections were intended as an insurance policy against further population declines. In 2008, 201 of the collected juveniles matured and were ready to spawn. On October 22nd, the adults were released back into the St. Mary's River at Sutherland's Bridge, the Foot Bridge pool, Caledonia Bridge and South Brook to spawn naturally in the river. This supportive-rearing program differs from traditional stocking for fisheries enhancement because the collection methods and release strategies were designed to minimize the impact on the wild population, and should not reduce its ability to rebuild naturally. The adults were released as close as possible to the tributary that they were taken from as juveniles, which will hopefully increase their spawning success and help to maintain the natural structure of the population within the river. To be able to distinguish the supplementary adults from the wild fish after

release, they were marked with a V-notch in the adipose fin (the small fin on the back just ahead of the tail).

This mark will be visible in 2009 and will be something to watch for during the fishing season and the fall seining survey next year.

We are getting ready for another year of salmon assessment in 2009. As always, we welcome your participation and thank you again for volunteering to make the programs run smoothly.

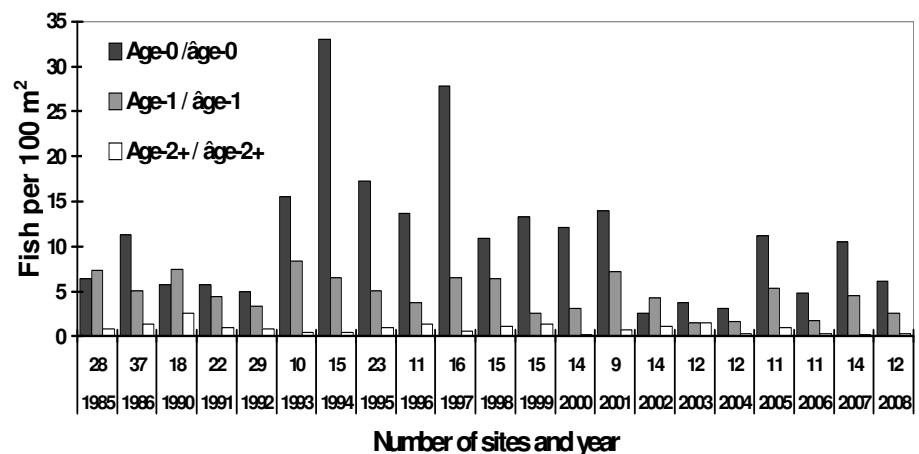
St. Mary's River Reported Recreational Catches.*

2007	Retained	Released
Grilse	3	220
Salmon	0	95
Rod Days	624	

2006	Retained	Released
Grilse	2	218
Salmon	0	69
Rod Days	476	

* http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/CSAS/Csas/Publications/ScRS/2008/2008_001_E.pdf

Electrofishing results: 1985 - 2008



Megan Myers releasing a captive-reared adult salmon into Sutherland's Pool.

MEGAN MYERS - Researcher

Growing up in Glenelg I spent a lot of time swimming, fishing, and canoeing in the St. Mary's River and developed an appreciation for its beauty at an early age. I believe this led to my pursuing a degree in Environmental Biology and in September I was lucky enough to be hired on by the Association.

My job consists of analyzing historic and current hydrology and climate data for the watershed, dating back to 1915, to determine what changes are taking place and to develop a better understanding of its characteristics (i.e. flood frequencies, low flow frequencies and mean precipitation). I've been examining water quality data with the goal of identifying specific areas of concern and changes over time. I am looking at aerial photos from 1980 and 1998 to determine what changes are occurring in the channels over time (i.e. gravel bars, erosion, etc). The end result will be written reports and maps summarizing the conditions in the watershed and will aid in selecting sites for future restoration work.

Funding for this project was provided by Environment Canada Science Horizons Youth Internship Program and SageEnvironmental Program.

FUNDING PARTNERS

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

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 Science Horizons Youth Internship Program
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 Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council
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To all our volunteers, a great big thank you goes out to you as well. Without your generous contribution of time and energy, we would not be here. THANK YOU!

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Margaret Mead***

EDUCATION & INTERPRETIVE CENTRE SUMMER REVIEW by Joanne Mailman, Manager

The 2008 summer season was an exciting one for all of us. Many changes took place with our new executive director coming on staff in January. For a start, the gift shop saw renovations to make a new office for Sean. When visitors walk in, they are welcomed with many unique gift shop items. With excellent water conditions, we saw many returning fisherman, who loved to spend a few hours reliving good memories of past fishing seasons.

At our AGM in May, we partnered with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and many enjoyed the walks and BBQ.

We started the 2008 season on a high note followed by a busy tourist season. While other tourism operators reported a slow season, we saw similar numbers to last season. This year Lindy Feltmate was hired as our summer student. Not only was Lindy doing historical research, she also acted as a museum guide as well as accompanied research students out in the field.

Our annual Canada Day yard sale saw many buyers anxious to get good deals. We thank everyone who made this event a success. Magic on the River day camp was very successful. Daylong activities included a tour of the museum, a

"wanted dead or alive" nature walk, fly tying and talk on the aquatic life in the watershed. Thank you goes out to Lindy Feltmate, Jocelyn Ellis, Sean Mitchell, Colin Rudolph, Allison Coady and Kraig Porter. Special thank you to St. Francis Xavier University Biology Department for the use of the microscope and an array of stuffed animals, which were an extra special attraction in the Centre.

In October, we partnered with the Antigonish Town and County Anglers Association and Nova Scotia Salmon Association to organize a dinner, live and silent auction in Antigonish. The funds raised go toward habitat conservation. The event was a huge success and we hope to continue to host such an event every two years.

We were able to purchase the book "Silver Ghost" with photographs by Thaddeus Holownia and text by Harry Thurston which we donated to the Sherbrooke Library. Mr. Holownia then donated a copy for our own library here at the Centre. Everyone is welcomed to come in and take a look at this beautiful book.

We are looking forward to another busy summer so make sure you drop in to see us, I know you will enjoy your visit!



Magic on the River day camp

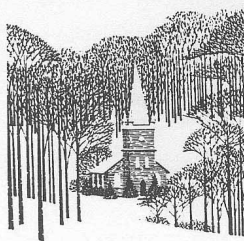


Summer student Lindy Feltmate



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THE NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST – The St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign – Year in Review by Lauren Allen, Conservation Projects Coordinator

The past year has been an exciting one for the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign*, an initiative that began in 2006 with the goal of protecting some of the most outstanding natural areas along the river. Last April, we celebrated the protection of the *Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands*, a stunning 220-acre property on the West Branch supporting old-growth hemlock forest. The property was protected in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, and will remain forever wild, as a Nature Reserve.

Our latest conservation success is the protection of the *C.W. Anderson Conservation Lands*, which is the fourth property protected through the project. Thanks to the strong conservation ethic of the Anderson family, who wished to see the land preserved in its natural state, this 110-acre property on the Main Branch was acquired by

the Nature Trust to be protected in perpetuity. The property is located across the river from the SMRA Interpretive Centre, and is renowned for its beautiful fall colours, the Mad Falls waterfalls, and as an important bald eagle feeding site.

Three generations were keen to see the land protected: Murray Anderson, his son, Jamie, and grandson, Reid. The lands are named after C.W. Anderson, who was a key figure in Sherbrooke in the early 1900s.

We will be having a River Days event again this year, in partnership with the SMRA, and hope to see you there! It was great to see so many faces enjoying last year's event.

The Nature Trust is very grateful to our major campaign supporters who make our work on the St. Mary's possible: the David and

Faye Sobey Foundation, Exxon-Mobil, EnCana Corporation, and the Donner Canadian Foundation. We would also like to thank the St. Mary's River Association and the many other individuals and volunteers who support the project.

For more information on the St. Mary's River Project, becoming involved, or on ways the Nature Trust can help you protect your land, please contact Lauren at (902) 406-3320 or lauren@nsnt.ca.

"What makes a river so restful to people is that it doesn't have any doubt—it is sure to get where it is going, and it doesn't want to go anywhere else." Hal Boyle

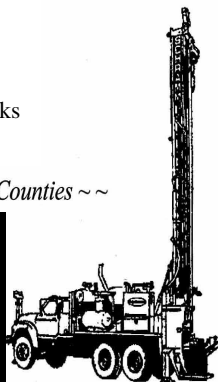
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Old-growth hemlocks tower above the mossy forest floor at the Hemlock Falls Conservation Lands.

ST. MARY'S NATURALIST CLUB by Jocelyn Ellis

The St. Mary's Naturalist Club is planning another year of activities. Tentative plans for spring include the following programs.

Dr. Kurt Mueller is preparing a slide show presentation and walk along the banks of Archibald's Brook to find hidden treasures, known only to fisherman. We hope to find aquatic insects such as mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies. We are also planning a leisurely walk through the woods near Sherbrooke. The path we take will be ablaze with wildflowers. We look forward to sharing these special events of early spring with the members of the community. Updated information on times and dates for these programs will be posted on the Naturalist Club link of the St. Mary's River Association website

www.geocities.com/stmarysriverassociation.

Also on the website you will also find a "Did You Know" article written by Pearl Sarty. Monthly Naturalist Club articles highlight a natural history topic that we hope will be of interest to visitors to our website. The article will also be published in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Monthly Newsletter for residents who do not have access to a computer. Last year, the inaugural year for the Naturalist Club, was a busy one with many participants enjoying the following natural history programs.

Wildflower Walk 6 Participants
Estuary Walk with George Archibald 32 Participants

Vietnam Crane Reserve Program with Rob McGrail 32 Participants
Watercolor Class with Ann Stone 10 Participants

Suggestions for future programs and activities are always welcome. Also, we encourage anyone with knowledge of wildlife, forests, birds, astronomy or other natural history topics to contact us. Perhaps you would like to share your knowledge with residents of Sherbrooke. The success of the Naturalist Club depends on participation and support from the community.

You can contact the St. Mary's River Association at the above email address or Jocelyn Ellis at earle.jocelyn@comcast.net for more information.

SANDHILL CRANES IN GUYSBOROUGH COUNTY by George Archibald

The eastern population of the Greater Sandhill Crane, a huge grey bird with a red cap, until recently was native to North Central USA and southwestern Ontario. The population has grown from a few hundred in the 1930s to perhaps as many as 40,000. And they are expanding east. Several pairs nested in Maine last year and scattered birds are seen in Nova Scotia especially near Canso.

The Canso peninsula is a trap for lost birds. Occasionally song birds from the west somehow come east, meet the ocean and follow its shores. When they reach the Canso peninsula it appears they do not have the strength to fly across the Chedabucto Bay and the Strait of Canso to Cape Breton. They gather at the bird feeders of Tom Kavanaugh. Bird watchers then come from far and wide to see such oddities as the occasional Bullocks Oriole and the Western

Tanager. The peninsula might also be a gathering point for Sandhills. In May, several cranes sometime appear in the fields near the town.

My friend, Bob Bancroft and I wondered if cranes might be nesting in the barrens of the Canso peninsula. So in mid-August of 2008, we conducted an aerial survey using a small fixed-wing aircraft. Wide expanses of bare granite with a sprinkling of glacial boulders, were interspaced by small wetlands, bogs and forests. The landscapes seemed beardless but for a scattering of whimbrels and a few crows. Likely the cranes reach the Canso peninsula, stay for a few weeks in spring and then leave.

For successful breeding most pairs of Sandhills need a shallow wetland in which to nest in spring. They also require open uplands bordering the wetland where they feed on earthworms, insects and seeds. They return to the wetland in the evening to

roost and escape terrestrial predators.

Sandhill Cranes were seen on a field in Aspen on the property of Ian Cameron. The cranes stayed a few days then disappeared. Perhaps, one day, the wetlands and fields of the Cameron farm will provide excellent breeding habitat for several pairs of Sandhills.

I look forward to that day.



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BIRDS

by W. Hardy Eshbaugh

It won't be long until one of the more unusual birds found, but seldom seen, along the banks of St. Mary's River makes its annual appearance. Various known as timberdoodle, bog sucker, Labrador twister, night partridge, and wood snipe this bird is actually a woodland sandpiper that we call an upland ground (game) bird. It doesn't look like any other bird in our area, we call it the American Woodcock.

The woodcock is a mottled brown bird weighing from 125-240 grams and averaging 28 cm in length. The unusual appearance of the woodcock is characterized by the bird's buff-mottled body colour, long beak, bulging eyes, and short wings. It is perfectly camouflaged sitting in the leaf litter of the forest floor. Its diet consists primarily of earthworms although it consumes other invertebrates and some vegetable matter. A foraging woodcock is aided by a prehensile beak, which allows it to grasp an earthworm and pull it out from the sub-surface soil layer.

But perhaps what we become most aware of in and around the

St. Mary's River is the memorable spring courtship flight of this remarkable bird. This little shorebird's courtship flight in which the males spiral up high on twittering wings with melodious chirping and then circle back sharply to the ground to resume their unique preening display is unforgettable. Aldo Leopold, one of the Americas greatest naturalists, concluded that such dawn and dusk "sky dances" are "a refutation of the theory that the utility of a game bird is to serve as a target, or to pose gracefully on a slice of toast." You will never see the woodcock in the middle of a bright sunny day but more often just after dawn or before dusk on a grey day.

Since 1968 this species has been in serious decline. There are many reasons for this including habitat loss but overall the decline remains unexplained. One concern relates to pesticide and herbicide use and the possibility that earthworms may sequester these toxins and then pass them on to the woodcock when it feeds. Woodcock are on the Audubon Watchlist of those species that are in slow decline and of national conservation concern. In the eastern region the decline is estimated to be 2.1 percent annually.

Look around the St. Mary's River and see if you can discover one of its more unusual avian summer residents. Who knows you may even encounter a mother escorting a line of young across a meadow or field.

Happy birding!



This woodcock photo was taken by Amy Weston on the West Branch of the SMR.



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BARN YARD FLY FISHING MATERIALS by Don MacLean

(Don MacLean is a Nova Scotia biologist who writes on sportfishing topics. He is the author of two books, Discover Nova Scotia Sportfishing and A Little Thing I Tied Myself, Stories from Atlantic Canadian Fly Tiers.)

I am always on the lookout for new materials for tying flies. In a recent issue of a fly tying magazine I read an article about using horsehair for flies. But it was not just any horsehair, the material they used was from horses in Iceland. Apparently the climate results in very high quality hair. The big advantage is the length. If you need long tapered hair to tie large saltwater streamers then this is just what the doctor ordered. While reading the article I was reminded of the first recorded references to the use of hair wing salmon flies in Eastern Canada. Joseph Bates in his book, Atlantic Salmon Flies & Fishing (1970) quotes Herbert Howard, a renowned angler, fly tier and angling historian who wrote that he had seen a family bible which belonged to a Newfoundland family named Stirling. The Bible had several hand written entries dated between the years of

1720 and 1896. One of the entries, dated 1795, described a hair wing fly called the red cow fly and said that salmon were caught on it.

In the early days of sportfishing horsehair from the tail was twisted together to form a line which would be tied to a fishing rod and used to cast a fly. The hair was often dyed, using a variety of material ranging from ale to leaves or soot, except for the last one or two hairs which were tied to the fly. They were left natural. Horsehair lines required a lot of work to make and fortunately the material is very rot resistant which meant these hand made fly lines were often passed down from fathers to their sons.

Angling scholars credit Charles Cotton with being the first writer to provide instructions on how to make a tapered fly line. Cotton, with Isaac Walton,

wrote what many consider to be the anglers bible, The Compleat Angler. Even back then anglers knew about the importance of the leader in fooling trout. In the fifth edition of the Compleat Angler, published in 1676, Cotton wrote that, working from the fly, the first two lengths should be two hairs, the next three, above them four, and so on through five, six, and seven until you reach the rod. Cotton boasted that "He that cannot kill a trout of twenty inches with two hairs in a river clear of wood and weeds deserves not the name of angler." Well known author Joe Brooks questioned the strength of Cotton's two hair leader and wrote in his book, Trout Fishing, of testing the strength of two horse hairs and found the average breaking strength to be a surprising five pounds, very close to what many of us use as leader material today.

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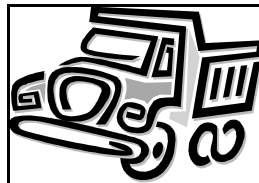
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ADOPT-A-STREAM ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER by Amy Weston

Despite lots of rain and higher than usual flows this past summer, 22 community groups across Nova Scotia continued to advance their goals of restoring fish habitat and aquatic function in their local watersheds. This effort was made possible with financial and technical assistance – including a blanket permit process for in-stream work – from the NSSA's Adopt-A-Stream program.

Thanks to anglers in this province, the Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund provided \$240,000 for Adopt-A-Stream projects. For every dollar that came from this fund, recipient groups raised an additional \$2 in project funding and in-kind contributions, including more than 8000 hours of volunteer work, towards habitat restoration in their local watersheds.

On the St. Mary's, restoration work continued on several of the West branch tributaries - particularly on Tait Brook with obstruction removals, along fish passage through old beaver dams. High water levels hampered efforts somewhat however, the stream assessments and project planning for the upcoming field season should allow for good progress this year.

Across Nova Scotia, 45 watercourses benefited, from main rivers to headwater streams. Approximately 85,000 square meters of in-stream habitat were newly put under restoration; many kilometres of stream were made accessible through the removal of debris jams; and more than 73,000 square meters of riparian habitat was protected by livestock fencing,

bank stabilization, and the planting of 6645 trees and shrubs.

Restoring the productivity of degraded watercourses requires ongoing efforts to maintain a sufficient area of high-quality habitats within any given watershed. In the 10 years since the Nova Scotia Salmon Association has been at the helm of Adopt-A-Stream, the program has overseen the improvement of more than one million square meters of fish habitat. With hopes for a successful field season in 2009, community groups and anglers across the province look forward to continued gains.

Making connections – AAS Workshop held for Community groups

At a day-long Adopt-A-Stream workshop held in Truro on January 17,



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Sean Mitchell and Wayne Croft at Indian Man Brook



ADOPT-A-STREAM ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER continued:

opening speaker Murray Hill reminded participants of the fundamental shift that happened when this program was removed from direct government administration to be taken over by the Nova Scotia Salmon Association in 1998.

"It was the first that ever transferred the decision making authority from the bureaucrats to the volunteers," said Hill, director of Inland Fisheries for the Province. "It's a mistake to underestimate the importance of that point."

The workshop attracted representatives from 19 of the community groups involved with Adopt-A-Stream, giving them a chance to learn from each other's experiences and to share ideas. Altogether there were

more than 50 participants including staff from federal and provincial fisheries departments and members of the NSSA Board of Directors.

St. Mary's River Association staff deserve a special thank you for helping make the workshop a success. Danielle Murray and Megan Myers served as recording secretaries for the days proceeding and did a wonderful job of it!

Sean Mitchell, as a director of the NSSA, was a member of the workshop organizing committee providing good input and assistance as well as presenting on watershed planning.

For more information about Adopt-A-Stream contact:

Amy Weston, program manager
Tel (902) 644-1276
amy.weston@ns.sympatico.ca



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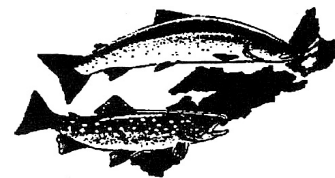
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