

# St. Mary's River Association Spring News 2015



*Increasing Access and Mitigating Erosion Project 2013- 2014  
Pictured are Katie Malone with Chris Marchand and Winston Sawlor. Story on page 28 & 29*

## Restoration Begins on West Branch, St. Mary's River

In 2013, the St. Mary's River Association developed a Salmon Recovery Strategy. One aspect of the strategy identified the need to address the habitat deterioration that has resulted from past human activity, peak ice conditions, and flood events. The SMRA has applied for funding to review the entire river and identify those section requiring restoration as part of a multi-year habitat improvement plan. SMRA has hired Charles MacInnis to oversee the restoration plan and work. This past summer work began on the West Branch near Cameron Settlement. With additional funding, this work will continue for the next 5 years. See page 22 and 23 for more information on the scope of this project.

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And much more....

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## PRESIDENTS REPORT - Kenny Silver

### 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.

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Another year has come and gone. How time flies! It was an exciting year for the St. Mary's River Association as we were able to move forward on several projects.

#### Kelt Rejuvenation Project

In April and early May we tried to capture kelt so they could be reconditioned to spawn a second time. Unfortunately water conditions did not cooperate and although we did catch a few, we did not capture enough to make it feasible for DFO to collect them, keep them for the summer and release them again in the fall. In the wild less than five percent of these kelt return to the river to spawn a second time. We feel that by using the hatchery setting we would have been able to increase that to over ninety-five percent. This project has the potential to increase the number of juveniles leaving the river as smolts which is needed to off-set the mortality at sea. Hopefully the spring of 2015 will see something less than flood conditions as we try this project again.

#### Culvert Obstructions

Later in the spring the SMRA constructed fixes to a number of road culverts to enhance fish passage and open upstream areas on these smaller brooks for juvenile trout and salmon nursery areas. Studies have shown that well over half the culverts and stream crossing in the St. Mary's River watershed do not allow unobstructed fish passage. With thousands of stream crossing

in the St. Mary's River watershed this is a significant problem and has reduced the accessible habitat for a variety of migratory fish to spawn and juvenile fish to live and thrive.

#### West River Restoration

In 2013 the SMRA had prepared a recovery strategy and during this last summer we began the process of implementing its recommendations to address habitat issues on a two kilometres of the West Branch. Over the years the banks of all the river have eroded resulting in a wide shallow flows for long sections of the river. The increased surface area results in more ice during the winter with sections freezing the gravel stream beds and during spring thaws and ice break up further damaging the river. Not only can this cause more erosion, it can dig up salmon eggs that were laid the previous fall or deposit gravel on top of redds further down river. During the summer time the increased surface area allows waters to warm to an almost lethal level and exposes more beaches and small pools where small fish can be trapped die as the water warms and these back waters dry up.

This work is not cheap and it will take years to complete the entire West Branch, but without it, the productivity of our river will continue to decline. The long shallow sections of the West Branch mean fish can only migrate up the river during high water. This can act as a barrier and discourage fish from.....

## PRESIDENTS REPORT CONTINUED...

....returning upper sections of the river to some of their historical spawning grounds. I remember back to my childhood when you could canoe the West Branch during moderately high water conditions. Now it requires almost flood conditions in order to comfortably canoe the river without getting out frequently to walk the canoe over shallows and gravel bars.

It is not only the fish that can potentially benefit from the work of making a narrower deeper channel. It would provide canoeists with more and better opportunities and a narrower channel would reduce the surface area and increase the flow. Both of which would help minimize the amount of ice that breaks up each spring. The pictures below show water level from the Glannelg Bridge just after snow melt in the spring and during last summer's drought in August. Note how far up the water was on the beach on the right hand side. It is easy to see how small juvenile fish could get trapped in the pools and backwaters that were totally dry in August.

Pictured below: West River Glannelg (April 2014)



Pictured above: West River Glannelg (August 2014)

I want to acknowledge DFO's Recreational Fishery Conservation Protection Program, Nova Scotia Liquor Commission Adopt-A-Stream, The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation, DFO's Small Craft Harbours and the many volunteer hours that made it possible to start the restoration effort of the West River. This is very costly work (\$4-8 per square metre) and without the generous contribution of these funders it would not have been possible.

On the fund raising side I want to thank Florence Duffy, Joanne Mailman and all their helpers. They had a very successful Canada Day Yard Sale and on Saturday, October 25th they did an outstanding job organizing our bi-annual fund raising Dinner and Auction. Both events provide important funds that ensure we can continue to operate our museum and other activities. Without the many volunteer hours that Joanne, Flo, and their Committee spent, neither of these events would have been the fund raising success that they are! Thanks to all who made them happen!!

Hopefully we can keep the momentum going in 2015!

### **NOTICE TO MEMBERS**

#### **ANNUAL MEETING**

**The Annual General Meeting of the St. Mary's River Association will be held on Sunday May 24, 2015 at 2pm at the Association's Education & Interpretive Centre 8404 Highway7, Sherbrooke NS.**

**All are welcome.**

**All paid up members are eligible to vote at the meeting. Memberships will be available for those wishing to join or renew their membership.**

## SMRA EDUCATION & INTERPRETIVE CENTRE NEWS

### Joanne Mailman, Manager

The 2014 summer season started off with a hugely successful Canada Day bake and yard sale. Not only did we sell on Canada Day but throughout the summer. We raised over \$2600.00 this year! We could never have done this without the generous donation of items from the community. Thank you! Also thank you to our Canada Day helpers: Flo Duffy, Linda Redmond, Bev Pullen, Winston Sawlor, Christopher Sinclair, Martina Smith and Tim Sawlor. Some Highlights from the summer:

- Hosted and catered Department of Fisheries and Oceans Zone 21 Management Advisory Meeting.
- Visit from 28 graduate students and their 3 chaperones representing 14 USA universities. Kris Hunter presented a salmon program and they got a tour of the museum before enjoying lunch at the park.
- Sherbrooke Recreation Day Camp museum visit
- Fly tying demonstrations with Christopher
- Scott Beaver presented his program Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow
- Ruth Legge photo presentation of her visit to Laos and Cambodia

SMRA participated in this years' NSLC/AAS Eco Event at our local NSLC outlet. Jocelyn Ellis and Donnie Barnes manned our display booth. Thank you to Jocelyn and Donnie who took the time to talk to customers about SMRA and our work and pass out newsletters.

Our summer students this year were Christopher Sinclair who returned for a third year and Martina Smith.

The NS Nature Trust had a last minute change for their land dedication due to weather concerns. The Interpretive Centre was pleased to accommodate them for the Hardy Eshbaugh easement ceremony.

This year we had visitors from as far away as Rio de Janeiro, London, Germany, Switzerland, California, Florida, Holland, Italy and even Queensland Australia! Nice to see people come from all over the world but even nicer to have locals discovering our heritage.

If you haven't been by in a while, drop in to say hi. We are looking forward to a busy summer 2015.



Pictured above and below are Sherbrooke Recreation day camp kids touring the museum with Christopher and Martina



Director Jocelyn Ellis at the Eco Event in Sherbrooke



President Kenny Silver congratulates SMRA 2014 member of the year Scott Beaver



New River Punt— donated by Historic Sherbrooke Village



New display inside Education & Interpretive Centre



Honorary Director Hardy Eshbaugh at the NSNT land dedication

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**INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT- Andrew Lowles, Sportfish Development Officer**



Broodstock Collection



Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative



Learn to Fish Program Participants

## INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION REPORT - Andrew Lowles, Sportfish Development Officer

### Sportfish Education

#### Nova Scotia's Learn to Fish Program

Staff and volunteers have completed a very busy ninth year of delivering the L2F program across the province. Students, youth groups and educators enjoyed the hands-on classroom component and were very excited to apply their knowledge in the outdoor fishing workshop.

L2F is geared towards youth grades 4 through to high school, and consists of two primary components: a classroom presentation, comprising of an introduction to freshwater sportfish in Nova Scotia, conservation of freshwater resources, habitat characteristics, an introduction to angling equipment, safety, ethics, and the importance of healthy living derived from outdoor recreation. The second part is a hands-on sportfishing workshop at a nearby lake or pond. Students learn and are reminded of safety anytime they are around water. They are taught the basics of casting, baiting the hook, catch and release techniques, and how to properly harvest and care for their catch. Students of the program are able to take home their fresh catch for the dinner table. The Learn to Fish program recruits the next generation of stewards of our aquatic resources, by teaching safe and ethical angling skills to youth.

In 2014, L2F was delivered 50 times, reaching over 1800 youth from a variety of backgrounds. The majority of programs were presented through schools, however the program was also run with various Scouting and Girl Guide groups, IWK Hospital, town recreation departments and at day camps. The L2F program has been busy reaching older youth; with

more interest coming from physical education teachers, and high school science educators. L2F aligns very well with active living and exploratory science classes.

The L2F program has received tremendous support from the people of Nova Scotia and the angling community. We wish to thank the Hants West Wildlife Association, Mr. Mark Weare of First Cast Radio Show, Richmond Wildlife Association, Port Morien Wildlife Association, Halifax Wildlife Association, Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Shakespeare, Shimano, Berkley, Pure Fishing, and the teachers, community groups and volunteers who helped get these young anglers out and fishing in 2014.

#### Collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources

We continue to partner with Natural Resources to deliver youth and family fishing programs during National Wildlife Week, and Kids in the Forest Day. We deliver fishing programs to youth and families at some of our parks across the province, including the Fishing Tackle Program which will continue to provide increased access to fishing rods, tackle, licences, sportfishing literature and safety equipment at five of our provincial camping parks: Mira River, Boylston, Dollar Lake, Laurie, and Smiley's. Fishing licences are required at Boylston, Dollar Lake, Laurie, and Smiley's Provincial Parks and may be purchased at the park offices or Natural Resources offices.

#### **Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program**

The cultural and economic importance of the Atlantic salmon fishery is recognized by the Province of

Nova Scotia. The Inland Fisheries Division's Atlantic Salmon Enhancement Program was developed in 2006. This program involves on-going consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other stakeholders around the Province. The objective of the program is to provide increased opportunities to angle Atlantic salmon. The rivers selected have salmon populations which are relatively stable but could benefit from additional enhancement. The Department relies heavily on the assistance from volunteer groups (NSSA affiliates, river associations, watershed stewardship organizations etc.) to provide help with broodstock collection, stocking juvenile salmon and provide local traditional knowledge.

Since the first broodstock collections of 2006, eight rivers have had their populations enhanced with fry, parr or smolt from the Fraser's Mills or Margaree fish hatcheries. The rivers are: Baddeck River, Middle River (Cape Breton), Margaree River, Mabou River, West River (Pictou), River Philip, St. Francis Harbour River, and Waugh's River. Hatchery enhancement is a critical factor in maintaining an open catch and release fall season on the Baddeck and Middle Rivers. In the fall of 2014, eggs were obtained from wild broodstock collected from Baddeck River, Middle River, Margaree River and West River Antigonish.

For information on any of the above programs, visit our website: [www.novascotia.ca/fish/sportfishing](http://www.novascotia.ca/fish/sportfishing) or contact Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Inland Fisheries Division at (902) 485-5056.




### FUNDING PARTNERS-THANKYOU

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**  
**Service Canada –Canada Summer Jobs**  
**Atlantic Salmon Conservation Federation**  
**NS Student Careers Skills**  
**Development Program**  
**Recreational Fisheries Conservation**  
**Partnerships Program**  
**DFO—Small Craft Harbours**  
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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.



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## NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST - St. Mary's River - YEAR IN REVIEW

August 9 was the glorious day that we celebrated the protection of the Waternish Conservation Lands on the St. Mary's River. At the celebration event at the St. Mary's River Association Education & Interpretative Centre, people shared cakes and stories over the news that the 160 acre property on the main branch of the river (downstream from the Crow's Nest Pool) would be protected forever, for wildlife and people to enjoy. Later, guests attended a guided walk on the property, where they experienced the beauty of floodplain forests, and learned of how the old fields will change over time. The extensive upland forest of the property is also protected, and use of the residence on the site will continue. Thanks to the conservation easement Hardy & Barbara Eshbaugh chose to enter into for the property, flora and fauna can now count on this site as a safe haven forever.

This success came about in part because of the Nature Trust's sustained work to protect the natural values of key properties important for conservation along the river. As

such, in 2014 we continued our outreach to owners of exceptional properties along the river's edge, to share with them information about the outstanding features of the river, and options for working with the Nature Trust to ensure the river's long-term health.

Field work on the river included property site visits to document wildlife species and forest communities, and we continue to be amazed by what we have found. In addition to Wood Turtle and Atlantic salmon, the river hosts numerous species at risk, including Canada Warbler, Common Nighthawk, Barn Swallow, and Olive-sided Flycatcher, all noted in 2014 by bird watchers volunteering with us in the summer. We continued to document the characteristics of an old-growth forest stand we are currently working to protect (see our website for more details). The more we study the river, the more we uncover about its unique natural character.

We continue to be surprised by how many people are connected to the river, and what it represents. In response to our campaign to protect a

property with both an amazing old growth forest and outstanding floodplain forests on large islands in the river, a veteran of conservation stepped forward. Rudy Haase, long time land conservationist and Nature Trust supporter, swooped in with a \$100,000 loan to help us buy the property in question just before the purchase deadline. Rudy, like so many of us, has been all over Nova Scotia, and knows that relatively wild rivers are becoming increasingly rare and threatened in the province. His gift inspires us to continue our work to protect Nova Scotia's natural heritage, with the support of the thousands of others who are also passionate about this province.

We hope that St. Mary's River Association supporters continue to view our work as valuable and integral to the mission and work of the SMRA. Please do get in touch anytime with any questions you may have about the Nature Trust's work on the river, or if you want to get involved.

**Karen McKendry- St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign Program Coordinator**



**Pictured here are Barbara and Hardy Eshbaugh along with Bonnie Sutherland, NSNT Executive Director and Peter Green, NSNT Conservation Coordinator in Waternish.**



## FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA- Alex Levy, Paul LeBlanc, and Shane O'Neil

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Science completed another year of salmon assessment work in the Southern Upland, including juvenile assessments on the St. Mary's River and smolt, juvenile and adult assessments on the LaHave River. Electrofishing was more challenging on the St. Mary's in 2014 due to low water conditions. As a result, one week of electrofishing was completed in July (week of July 21<sup>st</sup>) and another week was conducted in September (week of Sept 8<sup>th</sup>). Despite the conditions, we were still able to survey 10 sites in total, which included 5 sites on the East Branch and 5 sites on the West Branch. For the East Branch, the average fry (age-0) density (fish/100m<sup>2</sup>) was 10.5 (see Figure 1) and the average total parr density (age-1, age-2, and age-3 combined) was 4.1 (see Figure 2). For the West Branch the average fry density was 8.4 and the average total parr density was 2.7. The estimated fry and total parr densities for the East Branch were lower than the previous year and lower than the previous 5-year means. Estimated fry densities on the West Branch in 2014 were higher than the previous year and comparable to the previous 5-year mean. However, the total parr density on the West Branch was lower than the previous year and lower than the previous 5-year mean. As part of these electrofishing surveys, we were able to collect another year of data on a site above SMRA's culvert restoration project on McQuarries Brook; however, water levels were too low to complete electrofishing surveys at SMRA's other culvert restoration site on the West Branch.

Adult salmon counts at the Morgan Falls fish ladder on the LaHave River during 2014 consisted of 43 grilse and 21 multi-sea-winter salmon. This was a decrease in returns compared to 2013 when 75 grilse and 111 multi-sea-winter salmon were counted. Returns continue to be well below the Conservation Requirement for the LaHave. Egg depositions from the 2014 returns is less than 5% of the Conservation Requirement, and is the lowest wild egg deposition observed on the LaHave River since 1976.

Many of you are aware that the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) designated Atlantic Salmon populations in the Southern Upland (SFA 20, 21 and part of 22) and Eastern Cape Breton (SFA 19) as Endangered in November 2010. The Federal Government is currently in the process of determining if Southern Upland and Eastern Cape Breton Atlantic Salmon populations will be listed under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). Recovery Potential Assessments, Socio-Economic Analyses, and Public Consultations have been completed for these population assemblages and the Regional listing recommendation to the Minister is anticipated to occur this spring. The earliest timeframe for the decision regarding the SARA listing of these populations will be the Spring of 2016.

In recognition of the need for DFO to collaborate with internal and external clients, a working group was established in June 2013 called the *Southern Upland Salmon Collaborative Projects Working Group*. The working group has a focus on Science and their role is to identify internal and external client issues and priorities for Southern Upland salmon; to determine which of these would benefit most by collaboration with DFO Population Ecology Division staff; and how these collaborations can be accommodated given current resources. The group is represented by members of the federal and provincial government, First Nations, industry, academia, and NGOs (including Nova Scotia Salmon Association, Atlantic Salmon Federation, the St. Mary's River Association, and various other watershed / salmon associations). As part of this process a number of sub-groups have been established to review topics relating to habitat fragmentation, water quality, acidification, and estuarine survival.

We are preparing for another year of salmon assessment work on the St. Mary's and will be focusing again on juvenile salmon assessment work via electrofishing surveys. As always, we enjoy working on the St. Mary's and look forward to another year of assessment work.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA– continued

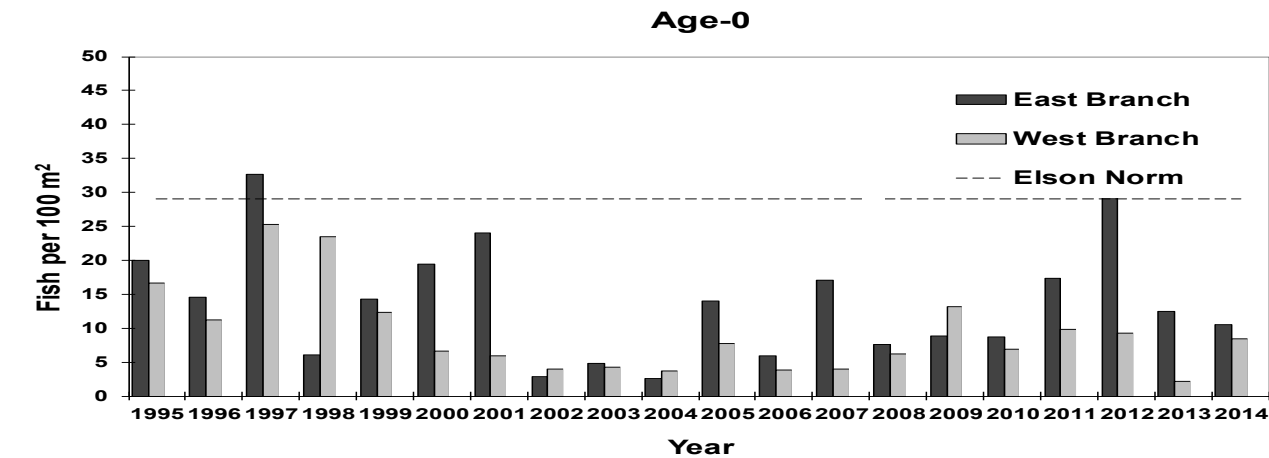


Figure 1. Mean fry (age-0) density for juvenile Atlantic Salmon in the St. Mary’s River (East and West branches shown separately) during 1995 to 2014. Note: Area fished vs. standard area was used to calculate densities in 2009. The Elson’s Norm value of 29 fry / 100 m<sup>2</sup> has been used as a reference for juvenile production in fresh water.

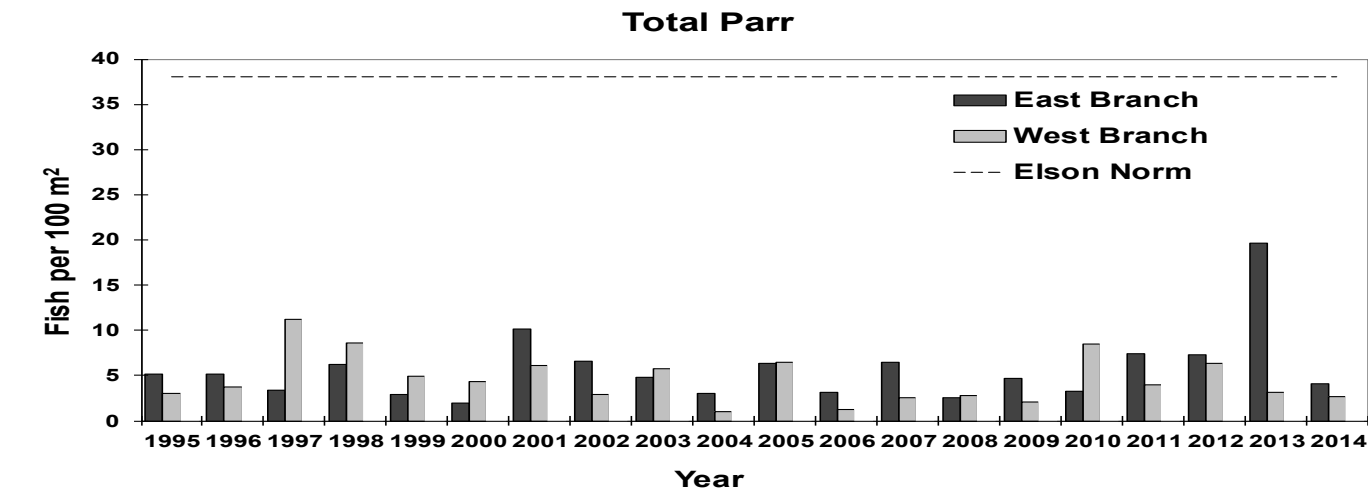


Figure 2. Mean total parr density for juvenile Atlantic Salmon in the St. Mary’s River (East and West branches shown separately) during 1995 to 2014. Note: Area fished vs. standard area was used to calculate densities in 2009. The Elson’s Norm value of 38 parr / 100 m<sup>2</sup> has been used as a reference for juvenile production in fresh water.

## 2014 Salmon Benefit Dinner & Auction

Well they said it couldn't be done. The 2012 Dinner and Auction was such a great time that you just could not capture that spirit again. But Chairs Jim Lerikos, Gerry Doucet and the Dinner Committee proved that not only could they equal but actually surpass the successes of the past.

The evening began with the Fly Tying conclave organized by Bob MacDonald and featured notable tiers such as Parker Wong, Gordie MacKin-



non, and a group of young tiers: Aidan Doucet, Eric Grenier, Jack Clapperton, and Donovan Chaisson. The fur and the feathers flew, scissors snipped and tinsel flashed as tiers produced many killer local patterns which eventually made it home with a lucky auction winner. While tiers answered questions and told fishing stories, smoked wild BC salmon and local mackerel were served and the bar opened. Friendships were renewed and lots of fishing stories were told as wily veterans scouted the silent auction tables to plan their bidding.

Master of Ceremonies Terry Macintyre took over as dinner was served. Rene Chaisson, President of NSSA, offered opening remarks as did Gerry Doucet. Raffle tables and silent auction displays

did a steady business during dinner. There were lots of luminaries from the salmon fishing world so the fishing stories and queries for tips, trips and patterns were intense. We were pleased to welcome Martin Silverstone, Atlantic Salmon Journal Editor, Amy Weston and the NSLC Adopt-A-Stream crew, Don MacLean and the NS Inland Fisheries team, Antigonish MLA and Minister of the Environment Randy Delorey and Guysborough MLA Lloyd Hines, Lewis Hinks, ASF Regional Director and many more friends of the salmon.

A highlight of the night was the presentation of a Special Recognition Award to Bob MacDonald for his work in salmon and trout conservation and especially for his decades long campaign to restore salmon and trout runs in Guysborough County. For a good insight into Bob's work see <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/104059-man-angling-to-restore-salmon-to-guysborough-river#.T89hJGnaKzU.email>

As Silent Auction tables began to close a lively and competitive live auction began. Ann Smith's Quebec Sporting Gaspé Adventure started things off and the action did not slow down. Noted artist Bruce Wood was on hand as his spectacular scene of a fall fishing outing at Addington Forks Bridge provoked perhaps the hottest bidding of the evening as several bidders battled it out.

We would like to thank our partners the St. Mary's River Association and the Nova Scotia Salmon Association who are vital to the success of the dinner and auction. Our extremely hard working Dinner Committee is a great example of all groups working together for a common passion!

**Submitted by Dave MacNeil, President ARA**

2014 Salmon Benefit Dinner & Auction Pictures



***MEMBER OF THE YEAR***

**The St. Mary's River Association is pleased to nominate Joanne Mailman as our 2015 volunteer member of the year. All your efforts on behalf of the organization are greatly appreciated.**

**Thank you !**

**Picture on the left is Joanne Mailman with Florence Duffy at the 2014 Salmon Benefit Dinner and Auction**

## MATCHING THE HATCH IN THE MARITIMES- Flies of Stone by Don MacLean

As their name implies these insects are found on, and under stones in fast, clean running water. Stoneflies belong to the order of insects known as the Plecoptera. They are similar to mayflies in that they begin life as eggs, hatching into a nymph and finally emerging as an adult. The nymph stage can take up to three years and, as a result they are an important part of the diet of fish. In appearance stonefly nymphs resemble those of mayflies but they tend to be a little larger and have two distinctive wings cases or pods as well as two tails and antennae. Another distinguishing characteristic are the light coloured gill filaments located between their six legs. Stonefly nymphs spend their lives crawling on and under stones. Occasionally they will be caught in the current and washed downstream. Trout often set up a feeding station in areas where the current will direct drifting nymphs to them.

When the nymphs have completed their life cycle they swim to the surface to emerge as adult stoneflies. Stoneflies crawl out of the water onto dry areas of shoreline and emerge as adult flies. They leave an empty nymphal case or shuck behind on the shore. You will often see them if you check the shoreline of

your local trout stream. If you see several of these shucks it is always a good idea to tie on a nymph pattern and drift it through the run in case trout are still in a feeding mood.

Adult stoneflies vary in colour from yellow to brown and have four wings which are visible when they are flying. Whenever I see adult stoneflies flying they remind me of tiny helicopters as they flutter over the water. At rest stoneflies carry their wings flat on their back, in marked contrast to both mayflies and caddis. Mating takes place following emergence and the females deposit their eggs on the water surface either by dipping their body in the water repeatedly or floating on the surface as the eggs wash off. Regardless of the method used the female continues to beat her wings while the eggs are deposited.

While less well known than our caddis and mayflies you should always have a few stonefly patterns in your fly box. Nova Scotia has several species of this insects, some of them very large, up to two inches in length. One pattern you should have in a variety of colours and sizes is the Stimulator. It will imitate most of the stoneflies we have in the Maritimes.



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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:***

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

***THANK YOU!***



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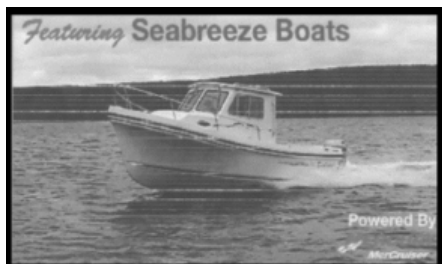
***Dinner meetings 2nd—4th Thursdays, 7pm***

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## Great news from NSLC Adopt-A-Stream

Submitted by Amy Weston

2014 was a milestone year for the Nova Scotia Salmon Association's NSLC Adopt-A-Stream program and for anglers and community groups committed to improving fish habitat and aquatic health in our rivers. We celebrated the five-year anniversary of our partnership with the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC), our excellent title sponsor. The sponsorship has provided more than \$500,000 so far, allowing us to expand the program, offering more project funding, training, and technical support to community groups.

We are thrilled to say that this sponsorship has been renewed for another 5 years! This spring the NSLC Adopt A-Stream Sale will be held March 30 to May 3. When you visit an NSLC store, you will be able to select products from our contributing suppliers, including Keiths, Peller Estates, Smirnoff, and Coors Light. Not only do you save money, a donation will be made to the NSLC Adopt-A-Stream program.

This year also marks the tenth anniversary of the NS Sportfish Habitat Fund – a source of dedicated funding contributed by anglers via a levy on recreational fishing license fees. The Fund continues to be the core support for on-the-ground fish habitat restoration across Nova Scotia.

Speaking of on-the-ground success, we are really pleased to be supporting the beginning of the West

Branch St. Mary's channel restoration project. It has been a long time coming, and is gravely needed. SMRA members may recall that at the 2009 AGM, Bob Rutherford, the Adopt-A-Stream Chair, presented a habitat restoration plan with a general prescription for restoring the main channel. Bob and Charles MacInnis are close collaborators and leading experts in habitat restoration in the Maritimes. Charles is doing an outstanding job of overseeing this major project.

Besides the great strides on the St. Mary's, 22 other community groups also undertook diverse projects with NSLC Adopt-A-Stream in 2014. In all, a remarkable 169,149 square meters of habitat was restored; fish passage was re-established to some 40 kilometers of stream; and 2462 trees were planted streamside. The people power behind this effort included 460 volunteers giving 9357 hours of their time, in addition to labour provided by 89 summer field staff at work in communities across the province. We are anticipating another great field season in 2015, thanks to the commitment of anglers, strong corporate stewardship on the part of the NSLC, and the dedication of community groups like the SMRA.

For more information about the program, visit our website [www.adoptastream.ca](http://www.adoptastream.ca) or contact [amyweston@adoptastream.ca](mailto:amyweston@adoptastream.ca) or tel. 902-644-1276.

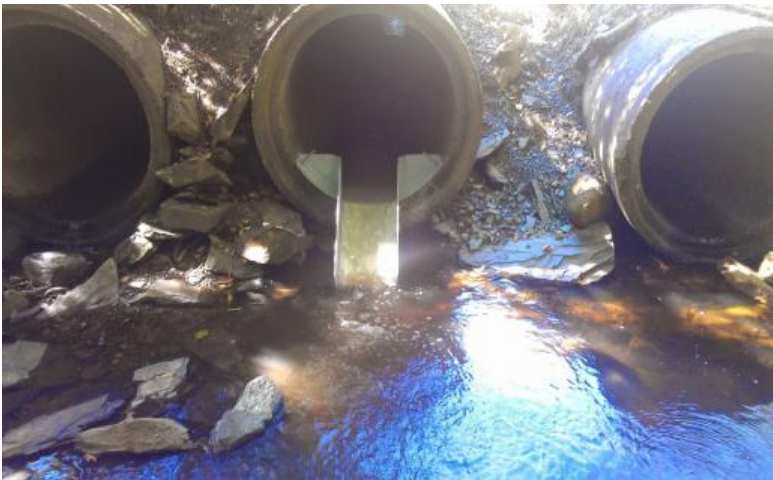


Each summer, NSLC Adopt-A-Stream offers stream habitat restoration training for community group volunteers and summer field crews. Pictured is the Habitat Unlimited crew installing a perfect digger log during the training session in River John, hosted by Pictou County Rivers Association. Photo credit: Amy Weston



In 2014, six culvert assessment training sessions were held as part of the NSLC Adopt-A-Stream Aquatic Connectivity Program. There were participants from seven Nova Scotia community groups as well as local staff with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance from New Brunswick. In all, 37 people received hands-on training in how to survey, using a transit and rod, to assess culvert stream crossings for fish passage. Photo Credit: Lauryn Leblanc

This past year, with the help of a grant from the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnership Program, NSLC Adopt-A-Stream has been developing and trying out various prefabricated chutes, weir and baffle devices to address some velocity and outflow drop barriers. These devices offer a lot of opportunity to make significant habitat gains. Pictured on the left is a stainless steel baffle and chute installed in a concrete culvert on Halfway Brook, part of the Sackville River watershed and Halifax Water's infrastructure. Picture on the right is a 2 chamber fiberglass pool and weir fishway installed at the end of a NSTIR box culvert.



Above: Charles Macinnis, inspecting completed work on the West Branch. Photo credit: Amy Weston



An excavator places core material into a rock sill constructed on the West Branch St. Mary's. Photo credit: Charles MacInnis



# ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION REPORT

Overall wild Atlantic salmon runs and fishing last year were disappointing throughout most of eastern Canada, and for that matter around much of the North Atlantic. The most recent Miramichi salmon run exemplifies what is happening on many rivers. Despite good fishing conditions throughout most of the season on the Miramichi, there seemed to be far fewer salmon and grilse in the river. It was the third year for poor runs and it's leading to much concern over the future of Canadian wild Atlantic salmon.

Last fall, the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) and the Miramichi Salmon Association issued a joint call to government to take immediate action to deal with the crisis facing wild Atlantic salmon, specifically urging the Prime Minister to create a Wild Atlantic Salmon Action Plan and appoint a task force that will ensure its development and implementation. The committee, made up of members from the four Atlantic provinces, Quebec and First Nations, is slated to meet a minimum of four times between February and June of this year. ASF is hopeful committee members will recommend precautionary management measures that the Government of Canada can implement in time for the upcoming season.

In Nova Scotia, there continues to be great concern about the low numbers in the rivers of the southern uplands. The returns to the LaHave River were disappointing with only 64 fish being reported at the counter last year (43 grilse and 21 salmon). Last fall, the Northumberland Strait Rivers experienced extended peri-

ods of low water, reduced returns and angling effort. In Cape Breton, overall there may be some decline. The salmon populations in inner Bay of Fundy rivers continue to be at critical low levels. While numbers in the Middle River, Cape Breton, are down, it is encouraging that the Mi'kmaq are asking fellow members for a moratorium on harvests on that river. Stay tuned for results of DFO assessments.

In Quebec, every river with counting facilities indicated a reduction in salmon runs in 2014 from 2013. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there was a mixed bag of returns. Runs were down on the Exploits, Campbellton, Terra Nova, and up on Middle Brook, Harry's River, the Torrent, and Western Arm Brook. In Labrador, the runs to the English and Paradise rivers increased, while runs to the Sandhill River and Muddy Bay Brook declined. Anecdotal reports from anglers suggest the salmon runs and fishing were much better in northern Labrador and Ungava.

Newfoundland's Conne River returns last year were less than half that of 2013 returns and show a frightening decrease in long-term averages since 1991. This river is on the south coast in Newfoundland's salmon farming area and the Conne's wild salmon run has the added stress of damage from genetic introgression and potential impacts from sea lice and disease outbreaks in the nearby salmon farming industry. The Conne's salmon are fast going the way of the salmon run in the Magaguadavic River, situated in the middle of the Bay of Fundy salmon farming industry in New Brunswick

where ASF has been studying the interactions of wild and farmed salmon for more than 20 years. This year, the Magaguadavic had 9 wild and 27 farmed salmon escapees turn up at the fish way. The wild run for this river averaged 800 annually in the 1980s.

In 2014, a total of only 294 Atlantic salmon returned to Maine, fewer than half last year's return which was itself disappointing. Obviously the situation in Maine is critical. ASF and Maine Council are working hard to address this serious situation.

The West River Sheet Harbour liming project continues to provide encouraging results with the smolt estimate again in the 9-12,000 range. This is up from about 3,500 when the project began. Our next step is to try and get an estimate of returning adults. Work continues on the watershed liming experiment on the Gold River. The results are interesting and we are learning how much lime needs to be spread on the watershed to have a real impact on the stream and we will create a user guide that watershed groups can use to initiate similar projects.

In January, dozens of community groups and organizations from around the province rallied at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax to show their support for the recently released final report of the Independent Aquaculture Regulatory Review for Nova Scotia, chaired by Dalhousie Law Professors Meinhard Doelle and Bill Lahey. Their support is conditional on government accepting and implementing the entire package as an integrated whole.

## ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION REPORT– CONTINUED

ASF delivered a brief to the two Chairmen in December 2013, and we commented on the draft report, sharing our comments with the Premier of Nova Scotia. ASF Program Director of Nova Scotia Lewis Hinks participated in the roundtable committee struck to debate issues around aquaculture.

A major deficiency in the report is the lack of support for a concrete plan to transition to closed-containment facilities. We found encouraging, however, the view of the panel that development of closed-containment systems could be a tremendous benefit to Nova Scotia's future in aquaculture, and that a worthy objective of Nova Scotia's efforts to develop its aquaculture industry should be to establish the Nova Scotia industry as a leader in the development and deployment of closed-containment systems for salmon aquaculture. We are also pleased that the panel has recommended that Nova Scotia continue its commitment to not process new applications for aquaculture sites until the new regulatory system is in place and that the new regulatory system be imposed as soon as practical.

These last three years of poor runs emphasize the need to understand what is happening during the salmon's migration that is contributing to such poor returns. ASF has been tracking smolt migrating from the Miramichi, Restigouche and Cascapedia rivers since 2003 and our long-term data is showing high mortality in the estuary and bay areas. This season we launched new predator studies on the Miramichi

and Restigouche. In partnership with the Miramichi Salmon Association and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, we began tracking striped bass to determine if they are found in the same areas as smolt and looked at stomach contents to determine what percentage of smolt may be in their diet.

On the Restigouche, in partnership with the Restigouche River Watershed Management Committee, Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council, DFO and Institut national de la recherche scientifique, we began determining the cormorant colony size during the smolt run and analyzing the diet of cormorants to gauge the impact of predation. In 2014, a Masters student collected cormorant pellets on Bonamy Island to identify daily diet composition. Estimates of the size of the smolt run and the cormorant colony were carried out and cormorant movements were observed and recorded.

ASF continues to communicate to the public and anglers the importance of live release in countering the growing problem of declining numbers of Atlantic salmon. In cooperation with our Regional Councils, we constantly recommend that government promote live release in the recreational fishery and selective harvest using trap nets in First Nations fisheries. This past season, further restrictions on the number of grilse that can be retained in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were implemented and live release only was mandated for the recreational salmon fishery on the Northwest Miramichi River in New Brunswick.

We are grateful to The Mi'kmaq First Nation at Red Bank for its decision to no longer use gill nets to harvest its allocation on the Northwest and Little Southwest Miramichi rivers, and to release all large females. This past season was the second one of the ten-year agreement between the Gesgapegiag First Nation and camp owners on the Grand Cascapedia River and the Quebec government to suspend gill-netting and to adhere to live-release angling to keep salmon runs healthy and support the area's economy.

ASF will continue this year to work with the Nova Scotia Salmon Association and affiliates to stem the decline in numbers and implement research, restoration, education and protection programs that work. We thank all our supporters who help us in these challenging times.

For more information on these and other issues in Nova Scotia, contact ASF's Program Director for Nova Scotia, Lewis Hinks at 902-275-3407 or [lhinks@auracom.com](mailto:lhinks@auracom.com)

Submitted by Lewis Hinks, ASF



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July 1	Canada Day Parade and Fireworks
July 2	Road to Stanfest Grand Finale Concert
July 9 - Sept 18	Courthouse Concert Series (Weekly)
July 10 - 12	Murder Mystery Weekend
July 18 - 19	3rd Annual Time Traveler's Reunion
July 26	Sawmill & Goldmine Frolic
August 8	A Sporting Day of Traditional Horse & Carriages
August 15 - 16	18th Century Military Re-enactment
August 17 - 20	Sherbrooke Village Photography Camp
August 28 & 29	Rally That Gives: Motorcycle fundraiser for Cancer Society
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September 19 - 20	Pumpkin Harvest Weekend
November 27- Dec 6	Old Fashioned Christmas

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## 2014 PROJECT SUMMARY - WEST BRANCH

The summer of 2014 marked the beginning of a habitat restoration project on the West Branch of the St. Mary's River, Guysborough County, Nova Scotia. The project addresses 11 sites in the upper third of the West Branch (from Upper Bryden Brook to Crooked Lake Brook). In this area, the channel is wide and shallow with many bank breeches and back channels. The project aims to create a single, meandering channel of the proper width (as dictated by the hydrology of the area) containing the appropriate mixture of pool and riffle habitat. This will improve summer water depths and temperatures for adult salmon and decrease winter ice damage to the river bed and banks.

The key structures being used for restoration in this area are rock sills, with associated deflectors, bank protection, and channel blockers, all of which help the sill do its job. In rivers with gravel beds, such as this, key structures are placed approximately five to six channel widths apart. For example, at Site 2 (MacKay Property) the bank-full width and channel design is 30 m; therefore, structures are spaced approximately 175 m apart.

Of the 11 sites that have been identified as needing restoration, five sites have been partially funded and three sites received work in 2014. Almost all of the required work at Site 2 (MacKay Property) has been completed. Three of the six structures planned for Site 4 have been completed and all structures at Site 5 have been completed.

In total, nine sills were constructed on the West River in 2014. Approximately \$150,000 was spent to construct these sills. Therefore, each sill with supporting structures is costing approximately \$16,000-17,000. Approximately 100 tons of rock is used on a 40 m sill; however, some costs are being saved by excavating gravel from the surrounding river. The 2014 work cost approximately \$75,000 per kilometre, but the cost of next year's work will be higher (\$100,000 - 150,000), due to difficult

access and degraded channel conditions.

For the five sites that have been partially funded (sites 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), detailed plans are completed, and restoration work will be carried out over two years (2014 and 2015), with three years of monitoring thereafter. However, fully implementing the entire restoration plan (eleven sites) will require at least ten years (based on current funding levels).

The current estimated project costs (for the 5 partially funded sites) on the West branch of the St. Mary's River is \$333,000. This amount includes a \$15,000 non-monetary contribution by the St. Mary's River Association, signifying the impressive amount of work completed by volunteers. An earlier draft of the planning report for this project has garnered over \$250,000 of this funding. Moving forward, the SMRA is hopeful that additional funding will be obtained to continue to implement this plan, and eventually move toward restoring lower reaches of the West Branch.

An ongoing riparian and floodplain planting program will also be initiated in the summer of 2015 to address the lack of vegetation on floodplain and help to prevent bank erosion in the future.

### Overall Project Results for 2014:

Total number and type of structures: 26 in stream structures (9 rock sills, 6 deflectors, 5 bank protection and 6 channel blockers)

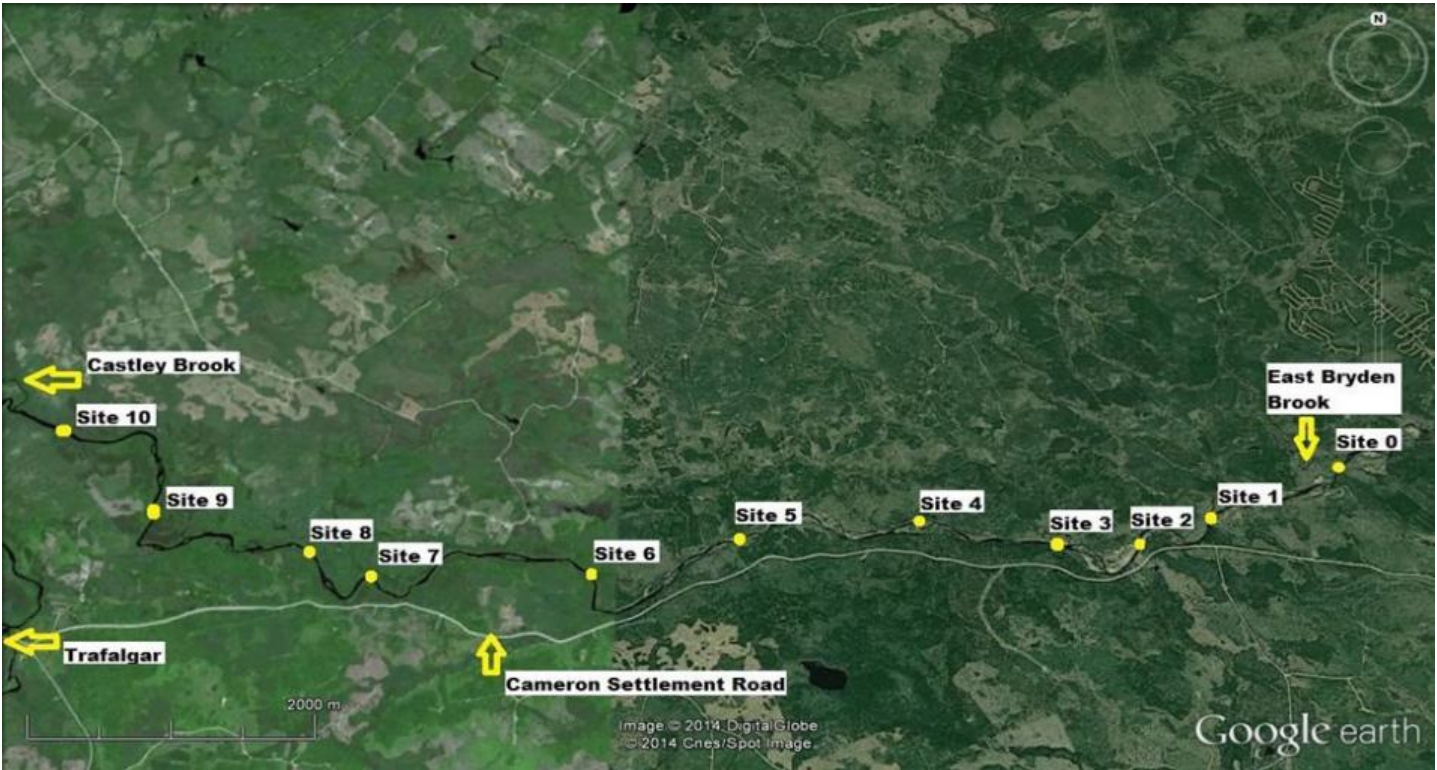
Total length of stream restored: 2,000 m

Total stream area restored: 60,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Preliminary observations: the structures are all holding and doing their job; gravel is sorting around the structures, pools are forming below sills, and the river is returning to a more natural shape; Salmon are spawning (redds observed) near sills.

Submitted by Charlie MacInnis and Andrea Flynn

Pictured below is the project area on the West Branch  
- the eleven sites have been identified as needing restoration work.




Erosion of the bank at the MacKay





Rock placement 40 meter erosion


## DID YOU KNOW: Here are 24 Funky Salmon Facts !!

1. Atlantic Salmon can jump up to 12 to 14 feet in the air.
2. Atlantic Salmon have 'pin-like' teeth when at sea, which they lose when they return to the ocean and are replaced by triangular teeth.
3. Atlantic Salmon are one of sixty Anadromous (able to live in both fresh and salt water) fish of 22,000 species of bony fish.
4. The tail of an Atlantic Salmon elongates when they move from fresh water to salt water.
5. Salmon return to the place of their birth to spawn by using their sense of smell to find their way home.
6. Atlantic Salmon can detect one drop of a scent in 10 Olympic size swimming pools.
7. A female Atlantic Salmon will lay approximately 1,500 to 1,600 eggs per kilogram of her weight when she spawns.
8. Atlantic Salmon can go for up to 22 months without eating.
9. Atlantic Salmon can live up to 15 years of age.
10. Atlantic Salmon can reach swimming speeds of up to 30 km/h.
11. When in freshwater Atlantic Salmon are most sensitive to yellow and green colors, then when switching to salt water, their eyes change and become more sensitive to blue.
12. Atlantic Salmon vary slightly in size and shape according to the brook or river system they originate from.
13. The rings on the Atlantic Salmon's scales tell the story of their age; sections of growth and spawning can all be determined from their scales.
14. DNA from the scales of Atlantic Salmon can tell where they were born.
15. Celtic lore holds the Atlantic Salmon as the symbol of secret knowledge.
16. Some historians believe that Julius Caesar was said to give the Salmon their original name, which was, "Salmo Salar," meaning "the leaper".
17. The biggest Atlantic Salmon hooked to date was 103 pounds and was caught in a net off the coast of Ireland.
18. Some Atlantic Salmon never go to sea; instead they inhabit lakes and river systems bordering the North Atlantic.
19. Atlantic Salmon lay their eggs in "redds".
20. The Atlantic Salmon is one of only 87 fish species that migrate between fresh water and the ocean.
21. Unlike Pacific salmon that die after spawning, wild Atlantic Salmon survive and can repeat their migration cycle and spawn again.
22. For every million Atlantic Salmon eggs spawned, one albino fish will be produced.
23. Although many runs of Salmon are extinct or reduced, Atlantic Salmon can still be found in the rivers of Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, France, Spain and the United States.
24. Atlantic Salmon are known as the "King of Fish"!









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## THE SILVER FAMILY: A BRIEF HISTORY ON THE ST. MARY'S

Dr. Lewis M. Silver was a diagnostic specialist living in Halifax who loved to fish. He was a dedicated sportsman. In the early years Dr. Lewis Silver and his wife Kathleen would come to New Glasgow by train from Halifax with their rods and ride the horse and wagon down to the pools on the river. They stayed for two or three weeks at a time and initially stayed with Mrs. Coffery at the Crow's Nest House on the west side of the St. Mary's River. They came for many years, even after their only son Gordon was born. Mrs. Kate Silver was just as avid sports person as her husband.

In 1918 he purchased some land overlooking the Forks Pool where the bridge begins on the east side and built a camp. Here, he and his family began a long and productive summer residence on one of the best pools on the river, the Forks. The name of the pool was shortly changed to be known as Silver's, revealing his presence and love. In 1927 the bungalow burnt and was rebuilt the following year.

Dr. Lewis Silver's son Gordon was born in Halifax in 1911 and he became a medical doctor. He also loved fishing and after he completed his medical degree, he moved to Sherbrooke in 1935 and began his lifetime of medicine and salmon angling.

Dr. Gordon Silver and his wife Ruth raised two sons, John and Kenny who are avid fisherman. John still lives in Sherbrooke and Kenny lives in Dartmouth. Kenny is currently SMRA president. Each and every Silver has imparted their presence on the St. Mary's River.

There are several photos on display at the museum.

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## SUMMARY OF CULVERT PROJECT submitted by Kris Hunter

The watershed recovery plan has identified that salmon production and survival are low within the St. Mary's watershed and these have to be augmented in order to facilitate recovery. Previous work has estimated that large portions of the watershed are inaccessible for salmon spawning and rearing due to barriers to fish passage and that habitat degradation has caused over widening, temperature increases and increased sedimentation. This project addressed some of those issues by creating access to McQuarries Brook (almost 9km of inaccessible decent quality habitat) and to a tributary to MacLeod's Lake (over 3 km of inaccessible decent quality habitat). The project also enhanced habitat on the East Branch of the St. Mary's, which has good quality low temperature water, by cutting off the erosion occurring near MacKeen's farm.

The project objectives were to:

- Increase access to McQuarries brook by mitigating the culvert at Highway 348, which acts as a velocity and outfall drop barrier (0.5m) to fish passage, with a low cost fish passage device
- Increase access to the tributary to MacLeod's Lake by mitigating the culvert at Highway 348, which has insufficient water depth and outfall drop barrier (0.4m) to fish passage, with a low cost fish passage device
- Stabilize the stream bank eroding on East Branch near MacKeen's farm.

The anticipated outcomes of the project were the restoration of access to 8.85 km of habitat in McQuarries Brook and 3.3km of habitat in the tributary to MacLeod's Lake. The erosion control on Indian Man Brook should stabilize 50 m of stream bank.

Despite numerous delays the project once completed resulted in the remediation of five culverts through the installation of baffles and a novel fish way and the stabilization of 50m of eroding bank. An additional 3 culverts were assessed for their restoration potential by visiting experts in culvert mitigation but only one was deemed fixable and had a specific restoration strategy developed. It is estimated that the culvert remediation restored access to just under 28km of habitat. A total of 9 different organizations (including SMRA and ASCF) contributed to the project that involved 29 volunteers committing about 525 hours of their time.

This project encountered several difficulties in its development and deployment. It was decided to try and increase the project size and scope significantly in late spring through an application to DFO's Recreation Fisheries Cooperative Partnership Program (RFCPP). This expansion increased the number of partners, increased the budget to allow for cost uncertainties associated with a first time build, doubled the number of culverts that were to be mitigated, included the assessment of two oth-

er culverts, and included both fish and ecological monitoring to better evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the culvert mitigations on the ecosystem. These expansions are additions that were designed to complement the original proposal to ASCF and strength it. These additions did not result in changes to original ASCF budget or performance measures but increased the likelihood of success and the amount of habitat being made accessible, while giving more credence to the project and the novel techniques it employed as a valid restoration tool, all while relatively decreasing the proportional contribution by ASCF to the cost of the overall project.

Despite the problems and delays encountered with the project, it was successfully as the outcomes and performance measures were eventually met and in many cases exceeded. In the end more habitat was created and the amount of accessible habitat was vastly increased. Follow up monitoring by DFO and St. FX will determine the ultimate success (the degree to which salmon will utilize this new habitat) but we feel positive about the project and are optimistic that it has made a significant improvement in the St. Mary's River.

Editors Note:

The SMRA would like to thank Kris and his team for their hard work completing this project. The weather doesn't always co-operate when we need to be on the river doing this kind of work, as we all know.

Performance measure	Results
<u>Obj 1: MacQuarrie's Brook</u> Amount of restored access (km and m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of structures installed Number of volunteers and their hours	Restored access to 8.85km (~17,700 m <sup>2</sup> ) of MacQuarrie's Brook Installed 3 structures (2 baffles and 1 novel fish way) 13 volunteers for a total of 62 volunteer hours
<u>Obj 2: MacLeod's Lake Tributary</u> Amount of restored access (km and m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of structures installed Number of volunteers and their hours	Restored access to 3.3km (~5,450 m <sup>2</sup> ) of tributary to McLeod's Lake Installed 4 structures (3 baffles and 1 novel fishway) 25 volunteers for a total of 237 volunteer hours
<u>Obj 3: East River near MacKeen's farm</u> Riparian habitat restored (m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of volunteers and their hours	100m <sup>2</sup> of eroding bank was stabilized 4 volunteers for a total of 10 volunteer hours
<u>Indian Man Pool Tributary</u> Amount of restored access (km and m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of structures installed Number of volunteers and their hours	Restored access to 2.6km (~3,900 m <sup>2</sup> ) of tributary near Indian Man Pool Installed 2 structures (1 baffle and 1 novel fish way) 12 volunteers for a total of 72 volunteer hours
Hattie Brook Amount of restored access (km and m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of structures installed Number of volunteers and their hours	Restored access to 10km (~25,000 m <sup>2</sup> ) of Hattie Brook for juvenile fish Installed 1 structure (Rock weir downstream to backwater culvert) 10 volunteers for a total of 32 volunteer hours
Bryden Brook Amount of restored access (km and m <sup>2</sup> ) Number of structures installed Number of volunteers and their hours	Restored access to 3.2km (~4,800 m <sup>2</sup> ) of Bryden Brook Installed 1 structure (1 baffle) 9 volunteers for a total of 28 volunteer hours
Number of volunteers and their hours	9 volunteers for a total of 84 volunteer hours on assessing and planning the three other systems



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