



Newsletter: May 2018

Editor: P.J. Wall

Editorial:

Well, here we are near the end of another year for Wild Salmon Unlimited (WSU). An interesting one from many respects but certainly a challenging one for Atlantic salmon. Last year, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), announced they would bring Atlantic Salmon numbers back to 1975 levels, however, there was no follow-up announcement as to how it will be done. Many organizations, like ourselves, are working hard on enhancement and conservation yet the numbers of Atlantic salmon are declining rapidly, for many reasons. A look at the statistics in Newfoundland and Labrador for last year are frightening. Although the numbers vary from system to system returns are down significantly from the previous 5-year average.

Although, the word “hatchery” is becoming a bad one in many circles it puzzles many that if we don’t use them to get the numbers back to where the promise was made, then, how will it be done? For years, non-government conservation organizations have toiled and spent untold dollars on enhancement and conservation. Both necessary activities even when salmon numbers are healthy. Something else must change and fast. Perhaps the biggest reform must be that our Federal government step up to the plate and deliver the funding necessary to bring “their” promise to fruition. That will reduce their reliance on NGOs, who struggle, to save what’s left. Otherwise, we will be left to visit museums to watch Atlantic salmon, that “may” have genetic integrity, swim in aquariums.

News:

Ministerial letter:

Early in 2017 WSU wrote a letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Appendix "A") requesting a joint meeting to discuss our approach to enhancing wild Atlantic salmon. Several weeks later we received a response from an assistant, via e-mail, that the minister was too busy to meet. No surprise there, however, no arrangements were attempted by his office to offer other avenues. Neither of the two Cape Breton MPs, Roger Cuzner or Mark Eyking, acknowledged receipt of his copy. Provincial Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Keith Colwell, did acknowledge receipt of his.

Inverness South Angler's Association (ISAA):

Our ISAA affiliate representative, Geoff Nishi, reports that in 2017 considerable progress was made with structures and debris removal on the Graham's river and brood stock collection was successful on both the Graham's and Mabou rivers. Parr counts on the Graham's river were encouraging. WSU has provided financial assistance to the ISAA to help it achieve its goals.

This year instream work has begun and will continue for 18 weeks. The first 5 weeks will be spent assessing and remediating debris jams and winter damage in the Broad Cove, Mabou, Mill and NE Mabou rivers. The remaining 13 weeks will be spent on the Graham's completing a 3-year habitat restoration plan. Geoff is now negotiating with Inland Fisheries and the DFO to do an annual salmon stock assessment to enable ISAA to evaluate the success of their work over time.

ISAA's annual fishing derby will take place on Saturday June 9th, 2018. Geoff encourages everyone to attend especially WSU board members. He has asked them to donate flies for the event to be presented, hopefully, by a board member to the winners of the various categories. Several WSU board members have indicated their desire to supply flies for the event and we thank them sincerely.

[Richmond County Wildlife Association \(RCWA\):](#)

Cliff Boudreau, our director and representative from the RCWA, reports that, as of this writing, the DFO has still not reported fully on the analytic study carried out on the Grand river that was financially supported by WSU. Alex Levy, the lead DFO scientist responsible was questioned, in person, as to why the results weren't forthcoming. With a shrug of his shoulders he indicated there was no funding. RCWA and WSU are disappointed with that news and the seemingly lack of activity on the part of DFO toward enhancement on the Grand river. Now it appears that the DFO's policy going forward will be preservation. This probably justifies the hundreds of thousands of dollars it recently spent on a new fish ladder. Perhaps that's uncommunicated speculation that there is still salmon left in the system to preserve.

[North Aspy and Grand Rivers:](#)

Director Chuck Thompson had discussions with representatives from First Nations (UNIR), DFO and Parks Canada regarding possible initiatives on the North Aspy and Grand rivers with a goal toward enhancement if feasible. This undertaking was ongoing at the time of this writing.

[St. Mary's River AGM/visit:](#)

Your scribe and director Chuck Thompson were invited and attended the St. Mary's River Association's annual general meeting on May 27th, 2018. This group has done wonders over the last few years in many areas. On the salmon enhancement front, they are collecting kelts, reconditioning them, and collecting eggs that are raised to the fry stage in hatcheries and released to the river. Over the last three years they have released in the vicinity of two hundred and fifty thousand fry. As well, they have a successful sea trout enhancement program in place that saw 21 thousand young trout released. With respect to their salmon enhancement program DFO will only allow them a permit to proceed on a yearly basis. The president, Scott Beaver, indicated to this scribe that this makes planning for the future difficult. They would like to have a 5-year permit.

They are a river association, as opposed to a salmon association and, although angling is perhaps the principal component of their mandate, they have developed a broader view of what the community would like. Hence, they have established and are promoting other outdoor activities. Paddle boarding, wilderness hiking and birding to name a few. They've established a birding club, have planted vegetation to attract butterflies and hold information sessions featuring naturalists, birding and butterfly expert speakers.

I can't speak for my colleague; however, I came away from the session with a sense that this group has community buy-in and will succeed in making St. Mary's a better place that encompasses the many aspects of outdoor life in a rural community.

Research Project:

A research project titled: "Atlantic Salmon Stock Enhancement Approaches and Efficacy," funded by WSU and MITACS, is slated to begin by late May or early June 2018. Mitacs is a non-profit, national research organization that manages and funds research and training programs for undergraduate, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in partnership with universities, industry and the Canadian government.

The research will trace the historical, political and scientific milestones in the evolution of the approaches used. The outline for the project will involve the following four steps:

1. Literature searches.
2. Identification and mapping of approaches.
3. A description of the underlying historical, political and scientific context accompanying the approaches identified in (2) above.
4. Conduction of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats) analysis to identify the relative efficacy of the different approaches for salmon conservation in the Cape Breton context.

The research will be conducted by Seth Jenks, a student pursuing a master's degree in marine management. He will be supervised by professors, Jim Dustin and Megan Bailey from Dalhousie University. Geoff Nishi will be the lead for WSU.

Funding:

Thanks to the efforts of Lowell Weir, our fundraising chair, Joel Robison our treasurer and Bob Shortt, our past-president, our coffers are relatively healthy.

Thank you:

All of us at WSU thank our sponsors, donors and affiliates who have made the work we do possible.

Without our members support it would be difficult to achieve our goals so a big thank you to all.

Finally, sincere thanks go to our hard-working board of directors who've had many challenges to address over the past year. They've overcome most and continue to work on others.

**DON'T FORGET OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AT 2 PM ON JUNE
23, 2018 IN ST. PATRICK'S PARISH HALL 6641 CABOT TRAIL, NE. MARGAREE**

Administration:

Executive:

President: Pat Wall

Vice-President: Lowell Weir

Secretary: Peter Hill

Treasurer/Membership: Joel Robinson

Directors:

Bob Shortt: Past President

Lowell Weir: Vice President/Fundraising chair

Peter Hill: Secretary

Leonard Forsyth: Scientific chair

Harry Vickers

Chuck Thompson

Ken Smith

Clifford Boudreau

John Stinson

APPENDIX "A"

Ministerial letter.

April 6th, 2107

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc

Minister of Fisheries, Oceans & Canadian Coast Guard

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

K1A OA6

Dear Honourable Minister:

On a quiet morning in 2016, while angling for wild Atlantic Salmon on a Nova Scotia river, I overheard a conversation between a grandfather and his young grandson. It went like this. "Pop, how come you just let go the only salmon we caught this morning when grand-ma would have cooked it for supper?" "Boy", Pop replied, "I didn't want to but it's the law." "Why Pop?", asked the young boy. "Because", said Pop, "the salmon are almost all gone." "What happens then?" asked the boy. "God knows" said Pop. He continued. "We, and I mean all of us, have to talk to our Governments and get them to do something." "Like what?" asked the boy.

Mr. Minister, the boy's last question is part of the reason I'm writing to you on behalf of an organization called: The Society for the Enhancement of Wild Atlantic Salmon Stocks, also known as, "Wild Salmon Unlimited (WSU). Primarily a fundraising group, our mandate is to fund the restoration of wild Atlantic salmon to their native rivers. A goal that dove-tails well with a recent funding announcement from your department wherein Atlantic Salmon were

highlighted with an objective of returning their numbers to 1975 levels. A formidable but welcome objective that I'm sure every Atlantic Canadian appreciates. WSU commends you for taking that major step, one where we can certainly contribute. Just four years old our group, without government funding, has provided considerable monetary assistance to two Cape Breton organizations allowing them to enhance Atlantic Salmon rivers in their jurisdictions.

With this new Atlantic Salmon initiative, pending, the executive of WSU would appreciate an opportunity to meet, at your convenience, and present our position to government. It will, in our humble opinion, benefit the intricate planning process for this important new beginning. Since WSU raises its money from the private sector, we will not be soliciting monetary support from government. Our positive experience working with officials within your Department, with other government agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations, should be an asset. We look forward to providing our input and discussing how we can best fit in the overall plan.

No doubt, together, we can answer, "Like what?"

Sincerely,

P.J.Wall: President

Cc: Honourable Roger Cuzner

Honourable Mark Eyking

Honourable Keith Colwell

Appendix "B"

2017 AGM Minutes:

WILD SALMON UNLIMITED

4TH annual AGM Minutes

Saturday June 24th, 2017

St. Patrick's Parish Hall, NE Margaree

INTRODUCTION

Pat opened the meeting with a period of silence for members who are no longer with us. Pat introduced persons attending from the Cape Breton Anglers Association, the South Inverness Anglers Association, the MSA and the Richmond County Wildlife Association.

In his opening remarks Pat noted that the outlook for Atlantic salmon is very poor. The numbers of returns have declined sharply. DFO and the federal government have not recognized its responsibility to conserve Atlantic salmon. Despite supporting hatcheries and stocking in other parts of the country support for stocking in NS is difficult if not nearly impossible to obtain. The writing is on the wall for Atlantic salmon and everybody has a responsibility to try to change the discussion and raise awareness about the problem.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM

That the minutes of the June 18, 2016 AGM be approved.

Moved Harry Vickers Seconded Peter Hill CARRIED

REPORT ON GRAND RIVER

Clifford updated the meeting on the electro-fishing results that he had just obtained. Four rivers in Area 19 were tested at a number of sample sites. The results were very disappointing. The number of parr and other fish was extremely low. It appears that, compared to historic numbers, 96% of the Grand River run has disappeared. It is not clear what the next steps might be given the attitude of D F O to stocking.

REPORT ON GRAHAMS RIVER

Geoff updated the meeting on the extensive work completed last year and the ambitious plans for habitat work this year including work on a culvert. Grahams River will be used as a baseline given its water purity and amount of insect life. The intent is to electro-fish at sample sites. A key aspect will be the attempt again this year to work with Inland Fisheries to enhance the river,

FUNDRAISING

Lowell provided an update. WSU will continue to seek funding from additional banks. Also, the focus will be on trying to enlist support from local companies. Support will be easier to obtain once WSU can point to one or more successful projects,

SCIENCE REPORT

Leonard said he had nothing to add beyond that provided by Clifford. However, he noted that Atlantic salmon numbers are declining and yet there is a terrible lack of assessment work done by D F O .

FINANCIAL REPORT

Joel outlined the 2016 financial report. Copies were distributed to those present. They had also been circulated in the June newsletter,

A motion to accept the 2016 Treasurer's report was presented.

Moved Lowell Seconded John CARRIED.

Joel asked if any members wished to be part of the audit committee. In the absence of any nominations the two board members who carry out this role, Leonard and John, will continue.

Joel noted that WSU had requested \$50,000 in 2017 for projects from the anonymous funder who supported work last year. An initial \$25,000 has been granted which will be directed to the Grahams River work. There is a reasonable expectation that the further \$25,000 will be granted later in the year. \$25,000 has been redirected to Grahams River from the Grand River project. The funding will be repaid once the additional funding is available and after an assessment of the Grand river project.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

John outlined the requirements in the by laws covering members of the board.

The directors voted in last year for a two-year term were: Cliff Boudreau, Bob Short, Charles Thompson and Ken Smith. Also, Geoff Nishi was nominated to the board,

Nominations for this year are as follows: Leonard Forsyth Peter Hill Geoff Nishi Joel Robinson John Stinson Lowell Weir and Patrick Wall.
No nominations were made from the floor,

A motion that the report of the nominating committee be accepted

Moved Greg Lovely Seconded Clifford Boudreau CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS

Greg Lovely (MSA) outlined the concerns being raised by the proposed extensive clear cutting at the headwaters on the Margaree. D N R will be accepting comments until June 30 . It was agreed that WSU will work with MSA on this issue.

Pat noted, supported by Harry, that it was critical that the attitude of DFO be changed and that the federal government live up to its responsibilities for conserving salmon.

The meeting adjourned at 3.05 after a draw had been made for the door prizes.