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From mid July to mid August, 2011 the Medway River was closed to all fishing from Ponhook Lake down to the 103 highway bridge. The reason Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) made this decision was that individuals were fishing salmon under the guise of trout fishing. The Lake Pool in Greenfield was closed earlier for the same reason. Other rivers in the Southern Uplands, including the LaHave and St. Mary's, were also closed and for longer periods of time.

The irony for the closure of the Medway, is that, DFO science constantly tells us that there are no salmon in the river!

This is not the first year that illegal salmon fishing has been a problem in Nova Scotia and it won't be the last. The issue giving rise to the illegal activity is the lack of opportunities to fish salmon on the mainland of the province. In the past, several rivers in the Southern Uplands (Canso to Digby) were open to a Hook & Release season of approximately six weeks. This has been eliminated the past couple of years and with it came the rise in illegal fishing complaints and ultimately the closure.

The solution is not to open every river to a Hook & Release season, however, it's time for DFO science to work with the river groups to bring the Wild Atlantic Salmon stock back to escapement levels to allow a return of Hook & Release fishing opportunities. According to DFO stocking is taboo and, in addition, other federal monies are unavailable for other river enhancements. The cutback in the federal budget of \$55 million over the next 3 years, and the loss of science positions, will do nothing to improve the situation.

Will MP's MacKay, Keddy and Kerr step up to the plate for Wild Atlantic Salmon in the Southern Uplands of Nova Scotia or continue to watch from the sidelines? I suppose if a salmon looked like a hockey puck even the Prime Minister would get on board. The time to act is now!

Presidents Report

Farmed vs Wild Atlantic Salmon has dominated the agenda in the area from St. Mary's Bay to Port Medway the spring and summer of 2011.

First, was the approval, by the regulatory bodies of the various government departments, to an application by Cooke Aquaculture for two open pen net cages in St. Mary's Bay that will hold approximately two million salmon. These cages will be placed in prime lobster fishing territory and, in fact, will displace some lobster fishers. Despite opposition from many areas Mr. Belliveau, Minister of Fisheries put the stamp of approval on the application. The matter is now before the courts.

Second was an application by Cooke to add an additional three open pen cages for salmon in the Outer Shelburne Harbour, Jordan Bay and West Green Harbour. The application has drawn loud protest from the community. However Mr. Belliveau, who appears joined at the hip with Cooke Aquaculture, has dismissed any science arguments and is more than willing to approve the three new sites.

The third was the transfer of the Ocean Farms Rainbow Trout operation in Liverpool Bay, just off Coffin Island, to Cooke Aquaculture to raise 700,000 salmon. This was done without the knowledge of the local community and/or fishing organizations. The salmon smolt for this operation came from Antigonish County and St. Stephen, N.B. The salmon eggs, in both cases, are from of Saint John, N.B. River stock. As far as genetics go they might as well have come from Norway or Russia!

The "carrot" dangled by the Minister of Fisheries is the possibility that Cooke Aquaculture might build a processing plant in South West Nova Scotia. This would be part of a planned expenditure of 150 million over 5 years and upwards of 400 jobs. However, this is contingent on Cooke getting all of its leases approved in advance without any written guarantee to build a plant. As well, how many tax payers dollars will be needed for Cooke to proceed? My guess, if we look at other investments in the province the majority of dollars will have to come from the government.

One must remember that this same government refused to invest 7 million dollars for the Yarmouth Ferry which resulted in the direct loss of over 200 direct good paying jobs and the loss of a thousand indirect jobs in the tourist industry. Cooke jobs pay just above minimum wage so does an investment of 50 to 100 million tax payers dollars make sense for 300 minimum wage jobs?

If Mr. Belliveau and the Dexter government are going to shell out millions of dollars to Cooke to expand fin fish aquaculture in Nova Scotia, and a processing plant in Shelburne County, I trust that closed contained sites will be the order of the day. These contained sites could be built adjacent to the proposed processing plant to protect the environment and eliminate escapes. This way our tax dollars will be put to good use in construction jobs, as well, jobs in the fish processing plant.

Your in Conservation
Darrell Tingley

Fish Ladder Woes

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Repairs to the Harmony Dam Fish Ladder at McGowan Lake took place this spring. However, the issue of water flow is not resolved at this time. Nova Scotia Power repaired the ladder as shown in the following photo:



The situation at the Harmony Lake Fish Ladder has been a matter of concern for years. Migrating fish have been unable to reach the Lake and many have died in the process. The state of the dam and a fish killed in passage follow:



DFO who has a responsibility to ensure unobstructed fish passage in accordance with the Fisheries Act have boarded off the dam and are relying on Inland Fisheries to move trapped fish from the holding area to Harmony Lake on a weekly basis. This could be a result of budget cuts by the Federal Government. Whatever, the problem this situation should be given a priority by MP Keddy and Fisheries Minister Keith Ashfield.

The real crime here is that Harmony Lake has a pH in excess of 6, one of the few lakes in Queens County with sweet water, and should be taken advantage off by DFO. What an opportunity to enhance the wild salmon population of the Medway River/Watershed.

The Queens County Fish & Game Association have been attempting to have a permanent solution to the Harmony Fish Ladder for over 5 years. Trusting before the end of this decade the federal government and DFO can find the time and resources to get the job done!

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Fish Friends/Medway Stock

A meeting was held June 28, 2011 between DFO Science and the Queens County Fish & Game Association and the Medway River Salmon Association.

The meeting had the dual purpose of discussing the request of MRSA to use eggs from wild salmon stock for the Fish Friends Program at the Caledonia, Greenfield and Mill Village Schools in 2012, as well as, the future of captive stock at the Mersey Biodiversity Facility.

In respect to the eggs for Fish Friends program it was agreed to breed 3 male/ 3 female from the 240 hatchery stock at the Mersey Facility. 1,000 of the eggs will be used for the 3 schools in the program. The remaining eggs will be hatched at the Mersey Facility and released as one year old smolt (2013) in the Medway River at a site to be determined. Discussion took place about a release above McGowan Lake.

The news of 240 “captive stock” came as a surprise as this information was kept under wraps by DFO. The salmon were part of an experiment by DFO to see if the Mersey Facility was capable of rearing eggs to adults. Currently all adult rearing for the area is done at the Coldbrook Facility. The experiment used eggs from a breeding of several salmon from the 2008 gene-bank program.

Mature salmon from the group of 240 will be released into the Medway this fall and the immature will be released in the fall of 2012. It is anticipated that over 50% will be mature this fall. The parties requested that a breeding for the Fish Friends Program take

place in 2012 from those fish that are immature this year. DFO Science has agreed. The site(s) for release of the mature salmon was above McGowan Lake as suggested by DFO Science. This will be re-visited by the parties before the release date.



A blast from the past!



Tug of Boot!

Membership

If you wish to become a member of the Medway River Salmon Association, please forward your membership fee of \$10.00 to:

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P.O. Box 93
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Visit our website at:

<http://medwayriversalmonassociation.org/>

