



February 25, 2023

Mr. Martin Wightman  
Brunswick News Senior Comment Editor  
Via e-mail: [tjletters@brunswicknews.com](mailto:tjletters@brunswicknews.com)

Dear Sir:

**RE: Comment on Feb. 26 McNally Article “Camps, guides want river salmon quota raised”**

This letter provides the NB Salmon Council's (NBSC's) support to our affiliate, the Restigouche River Camp Owners' Association, in their request to have the daily catch-and-release (C&R) limit for salmon restored to four from two. It is not only the guides and camp businesses of northern New Brunswick that want the C&R limit for Atlantic salmon to be reverted to the number allowed prior to 2020. The ordinary citizen members of the 22 organizations that the NBSC represents want this reversal as well.

The article asserts that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) undertook consultations prior to the implementation of the change in catch-and-release regulations. It is unclear to us with whom such consultations were made in 2020. The NBSC was certainly not consulted. There was no mention of decreased retention limits at the Eastern NB Coastal and Inland Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting which was held a short time before these regulatory changes were made. In fact, none of the conservation, recreational fishing, or outfitter representatives at that meeting were aware of the change until it was published in the regulatory amendments.

As noted by Mr. Bird in the McNally article, the economic implications of this change are significant. Affecting commercial activities, employment, property values (tax base), etc., they are no doubt at top of mind for those impacted. However, it is the implications that this decision has on Atlantic salmon conservation that are of concern to the New Brunswick Salmon Council.

Anglers play an invaluable role in the protection and conservation of Atlantic salmon and their habitats. At the recent 2023 Eastern NB Coastal and Inland Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting, DFO enforcement staff stated that most of the intelligence and incident reporting about salmon Fisheries Act violations came from tips provided by anglers. Why would DFO want to discourage their best eyes-and-ears agents from being on the water?

Furthermore, through their license fees, direct and indirect financial contributions, and volunteer efforts, anglers are the single most important source of resources expended in support of Atlantic salmon conservation activities. Diminishing the size and participation of the angling community will have/is having a concomitant reduction in those activities.

Anglers have been strong champions of measures that reduce their potential impact on the salmon resource. They have been proponents of, and quick to adopt measures such as barbless hooks, knotless mesh landing nets, and handling techniques that minimize harm to angled fish. In the McNally article the DFO representative refers to temperature effects. The angling community has been instrumental in the



development and implementation of the warmwater protocol which is in place on scheduled NB salmon rivers. This protocol restricts angling when water temperatures reach and maintain a certain threshold. Again, according to information from the recent NB Coastal and Inland Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting, this protocol has been very successful in reducing incidental mortality among angled salmon.

In terms of angling mortality, we challenge the science and methods used by DFO in asserting that angling represents a significant conservation effect. DFO assumes that 3 to 5% of salmon landed subsequently die as a result of hooking, playing, landing, and releasing a salmon or grilse. Aside from the fact that many of these angled fish are grilse which have a minimal input into egg deposition and the achievement of spawning targets for salmon populations, the results of DFO's own recent studies indicate angling has minimal effects on salmon angled in normal water temperature conditions. The increased mortality that occurs during warm water periods is avoided due to the implementation of the previously mentioned warm water protocol.

DFO refers to the decline in salmon populations. This phenomenon is, unfortunately, not restricted to New Brunswick's scheduled rivers yet DFO's management approach and the measures which have been taken have not been consistent across the extent of the rivers affected. The catch and release restrictions imposed for New Brunswick rivers have not been implemented for similarly affected rivers in other provinces.

In summation, it is our contention that DFO's restrictions on New Brunswick's recreational salmon fishing have little-to-no conservation benefit. To the contrary, they are having a detrimental effect on salmon conservation by reducing the number of anglers engaged in both the recreational salmon fishery and salmon conservation and protection. They are decreasing public concern for our Atlantic salmon resource. In doing so they are also jeopardizing the role that Atlantic salmon play in the cultural and economic heritage of Atlantic Canadians.

DFO should re-instate a C&R limit of four salmon and/or grilse per day for New Brunswick rivers and promote the expansion of the recreational Atlantic salmon angling community. It should then turn its attention to dealing with more important Atlantic salmon conservation issues such as the impact of burgeoning striped bass populations and the spread and control of invasive smallmouth bass – but that's another story.

Yours truly,

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Kevin Davidson, President NBSC