



Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation Salmonid Council of Newfoundland & Labrador Provincial Symposium

The path to a healthy and sustainable wild Atlantic salmon population in Atlantic Canada and Québec



Summary Outcomes from the September 30th and October 1st Symposium
Grand Falls – Windsor, Newfoundland and Labrador



Climate change, volunteer development and partnerships dominate discussion at the inaugural provincial symposium in Newfoundland and Labrador

The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation (ASCF) in partnership with the Salmonid Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (SCNL) launched the first of five provincial symposiums with a diverse and enthusiastic group of community, research, government, conservation, and watershed management stakeholders in Grand Falls - Windsor, NL on September 30th and October 1st.

The symposium reinforced the increasing threats that climate change presents for wild Atlantic salmon, as well as the critical need for additional resources and enhanced partnerships and stewardship efforts at the watershed level.

Day 1

Charline McCoy, Executive Director of the ASCF, and Leo White, President of the Salmonid Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, launched the inaugural symposium with a focus on partnerships, collaboration and the need for integrated conservation planning. The Salmonid Council was introduced as a “*group of groups*” focused on the need for integrated management plans, habitat protection and effective conservation enforcement. Welcome remarks were also provided by the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor. Amy Coady, President of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, introduced her organization as a sustainability partner and reinforced the increasingly important role that the 275 incorporated municipalities across Newfoundland and Labrador play in preserving wetlands, protected conservation areas and salmon rivers throughout the province.

Jim Burton, an outfitter, successful entrepreneur and long-serving ASCF volunteer and Member of the Foundation’s Investment Committee, delivered an impassioned keynote address focused on the critically important contribution that wild Atlantic salmon conservation and recreational fishing plays in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. He reinforced the need for partnerships, information sharing and sustainable funding at the watershed level, and the need to “*be in it for the long haul*”.

Stephen Chase, retiring Executive Director of the ASCF, provided an overview of the role, function and 15-year legacy of the Foundation and the administration of its trust fund (now valued at \$42 million) on behalf of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Government



of Canada. Applied science and capacity building at the watershed level remain key priorities.

Day one also included a series of watershed conservation and restoration case studies, including the Terra Nova River (Freshwater/Alexander Bay Ecosystem Corporation - FABEC), the Rattling Brook Restoration Project (Norris Arm & Area Economic Development Committee), and Indian Bay River (Indian Bay Ecosystem Corporation - IBEC).

The three case studies and speakers collectively reinforced the role of science, human intervention, and engineered water flow solutions in restoring watersheds and addressing the escalating challenges presented by climate change. Culvert design, human recreational impacts and enforcement were also identified as key sustainability issues.

Day 1 finished off by a guided tour of the Salmonid Interpretation Centre on the Exploits River, hosted by The Environmental Resources Management Association (ERMA), followed by a networking reception.

The Environmental Resources Management Association (ERMA) hosted a site visit to the Salmonid Interpretation Centre



Day 2

Day 2 of the symposium included a presentation by Curtis Pennell, Habitat Research Technician with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, who discussed the application of radio telemetry, remote monitoring, DNA tracking and real-time data monitoring in conserving wild Atlantic salmon in Newfoundland and Labrador. He also discussed the critically important role of working with, listening to, and learning from anglers as part of effective catch and release programs.

Fred Parsons, a long-time ASCF volunteer, provincial Advisory Committee Chair, and passionate voice and advocate for salmon conservation in Newfoundland and Labrador, did a great job moderating two panel sessions focused on “*Conservation Planning – Addressing NL Issues*” and “*The Way Forward – Partnership Priorities and Planning*”. The panel sessions included broad-based government, non-governmental, research and community representation, including the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF).



Key themes that emerged from the Day 2 panel sessions include:

- **Climate Change:** The impacts of climate change, including water flow and temperature, are having a significant and increasingly severe impact on the province’s salmon rivers, requiring proactive planning and watershed interventions.
- **Applied Science:** Data and applied science is being increasingly used to effectively track and monitor the health of individual Atlantic salmon watersheds. There is a need to share scientific best practices between watershed conservation groups.
- **Partnerships:** Atlantic salmon habitat conservation requires innovative public sector, non-governmental and community partnerships. The symposium reinforced the need for collaborative and fully aligned watershed and salmon conservation efforts.
- **Volunteer Development:** There is an urgent need for additional resources at the watershed level, including funding, stewardship support and volunteer development efforts.

The impacts of climate change was a common theme at the Newfoundland and Labrador Symposium



The opportunity to engage both secondary and post-secondary students (our next generation of conservation leaders) was a key discussion theme at the symposium.

- **Information Sharing:** The success of individual watershed conservation projects needs to be shared with host communities, as well as the critically important role of enforcement in preserving wild Atlantic salmon stocks. Public education and engagement were discussed as the foundation for successful enforcement efforts, particularly in a province with vast crown land holdings.

While the consensus at the symposium was that Newfoundland and Labrador’s salmon rivers are generally healthier today relative to two decades ago, the path forward presents unprecedented challenges. Much uncertainty also exists with respect to at-sea survival rate and near-shore marine impacts, including the expansion of farmed salmon and commercial aquaculture sites.



Key Post-Symposium Action Items

Five key action items were identified by ASCF staff as a direct outcome from the Newfoundland and Labrador symposium:

1. The opportunity exists to organize future (recurring) provincial symposiums to facilitate the establishment of sustainable conservation partnerships and the sharing of best practices. Alignment of conservation efforts remains an on-going priority in Newfoundland and Labrador, including the concept of an annual Atlantic salmon strategic planning session. The need to break down federal and provincial government silos was identified as a priority during the symposium, as well as communications, problem solving and volunteer development.
2. The symposium identified the urgent need for both project funding and multi-year core funding to support salmon conservation efforts across Newfoundland and Labrador. Discussions will continue with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Government of Canada) to double the size of the Foundation's trust fund, ensuring more sustainable watershed conservation funding in all five Eastern Canadian provinces. An inventory will also be prepared of existing and potential complementary or matching funding sources.
3. The ASCF will also work with government and non-governmental wild Atlantic salmon conservation stakeholders to identify a support mechanism for watershed conservation groups in preparing, writing, and administering funding proposals, which has been identified as an on-going challenge. Ideas include academic institutions and senior level or graduate students (universities and community colleges), government agencies, municipalities and the creation of a volunteer pool or network of experienced funding mentors.

The impacts of climate change was a common theme at the Newfoundland and Labrador Symposium





4. The role of municipalities in supporting salmon conservation was a key theme at the symposium – the ASCF will engage Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to identify future conservation and sustainability partnership opportunities, particularly with respect to education, awareness, and volunteer development opportunities at the community level.
5. The ASCF remains committed to supporting applied science best practices and the introduction of new tools and technologies to support watershed conservation efforts throughout Eastern Canada. The ASCF will work with its provincial committee in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Scientific Advisory Committee to facilitate and encourage communication, alignment and the sharing of conservation and scientific best practices between the federal and provincial Governments (a key takeaway theme identified at the symposium).

“The ASCF is dedicated to putting even more funding into the hands of community groups, indigenous organizations, researchers and others to help them carry-out wild Atlantic salmon conservation activity at the watershed level”

Robert Bishop, Vice-Chairman and Vice-President of the ASCF and a participant in the Grand Falls – Windsor symposium



Attachment A: ASCF Background

The ASCF, founded in 2008, was established as an endowment fund by the Government of Canada to create lasting financial support for Atlantic salmon conservation projects. Since its inception, it has granted more than \$12.5M to 763 projects, including applied scientific research grants and Indigenous-led projects. The outcomes of this work speak for themselves with more than 100 km² of Atlantic salmon habitat opened or improved.

The ASCF Board of Directors also approved a renewed strategic plan in the spring of 2022 focused on transformational growth. The plan will guide the Foundation's direction and priorities for the five-year period extending from mid-2022 to 2027, including the goal to double the size of the ASCF's trust fund and the funds it distributes on an annual basis in support of Atlantic salmon conservation efforts in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Québec.

Sixty volunteers representing government, research, academic and several non-governmental organizations from five provinces support the work of the Foundation and are contributing their time and efforts in organizing the five provincial symposiums. The next symposium will be held on October 17th in Charlottetown, PEI.

The ASCF's Vision, Values and Mission are well positioned for transformational growth:

Vision:

To contribute to the attainment of healthy and sustainable wild Atlantic salmon in Atlantic Canada and in Québec

Values:

Inclusiveness and Partnerships, Volunteerism, Balance and Integrity

Mission:

To promote enhanced community partnerships in the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and its habitat in Atlantic Canada and Québec



Attachment B: ASCF Outcomes

The ASCF has delivered over **\$12.5 Million** in funds to **734** Projects since **2008**. Through effective governance, the original **\$30 million** trust fund has also grown to over **\$41 million**.



- 113 million square meters of habitat access opened and 2.2 million square meters of improved habitat.
- 8,989 volunteers contributed 211,822 hours of effort.
- 155,241 individuals involved in education & awareness.
- \$1.5 million contributed to 80 Indigenous organization projects.
- \$2.5 million contributed to 75 applied scientific research grants, aimed at improving the effectiveness of Atlantic salmon conservation efforts.
- 2,958 jobs sustained, mostly in rural areas - ASCF funded projects help sustain an eco-tourism industry worth several hundred million dollars annually in 5 provinces.
- ASCF funds have leveraged more than \$62.3 million in overall project valuation from other sources for an impressive leveraging ratio of 5:1.

Geographic distribution of ASCF funds since 2008:

- New Brunswick: **\$3.06 million**
- Newfoundland & Labrador: **\$3.07 million**
- Nova Scotia: **\$1.33 million**
- Prince Edward Island: **\$1.24 million**
- Quebec: **\$2.34 million**
- Scientific Advisory Committee: **\$1.47 million**