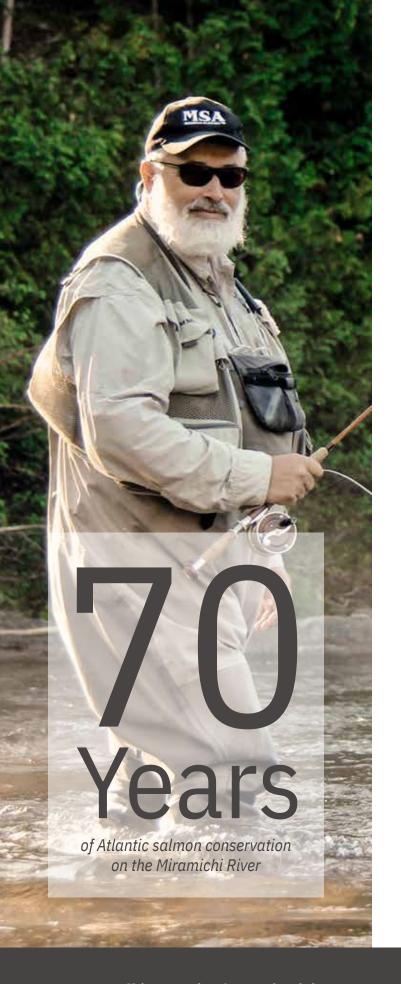
ANNUAL REPORT 2023



MIRAMICHI SALMON ASSOCIATION INC.





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The Miramichi Salmon Association (MSA) 2023 Annual Report showcases our work over the last year. In 2023, the Miramichi Salmon Association celebrated a remarkable milestone - our 70th anniversary. Enclosed in this report you will find summaries outlining our 2023 field work, hatchery operations, events, communication projects, and financial activities. Thank you for taking the time to review this document. We hope you will help us in our continued fight to conserve Atlantic salmon on the Miramichi River.

Message from the MSA Chair

As I look back on 2023, I am proud of the work we have done and the progress we made as an organization. We had a highly successful fundraising year and put on some fabulous dinners, events, and auctions, and had the opportunity to honour a number of great people and MSA supporters. I also want to recognize the loss of three great MSA Directors this past year in David Oxley (Honourary) and Peter Howell (MSA US), and Whitney Beals (MSA US), whose efforts will not be forgotten.

Our new Advocacy Committee has enabled us to build a more sustainable advocacy effort as we have re-engaged with a number of important conservation partners including but not limited to the Miramichi Watershed Management Committee (MWMC), Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), Government of New Brunswick (GNB), Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and First Nations. I truly feel this is a critical effort that we need to continue. If we are going to be successful, we need to do a better job working more closely with all these groups and have a stronger collaborative voice versus a fragmented approach that clearly is not producing the results we need. I am very encouraged by the way everyone has come together. Planning for the second Plamu First conference started in late 2023 and is a great example of this type of effort and we are hopeful it will lead the way towards a collaborative action plan to save our beloved Atlantic salmon.

I also want to recognize the great team we have from our board members to committee chairs to the wonderful staff we have at the MSA. With the departure of our President in mid-2023, staff at the MSA office and hatchery, as well as Butch Dalton, our Interim President, have really stepped up to keep things running smoothly and getting the work done. Thank you to everyone who has been involved over the past year. In keeping with our staff and facilities, we are encouraged about the initial meetings we had with the Province of New Brunswick and others as we look for ways to sustain our hatchery. This is such an important asset for us and the Miramichi watershed and we want to see this facility prosper for another 150 years!

Lastly, I want to emphasize the importance of ecosystem balance and the specific effort and strategy we have in place to lobby DFO in reducing the striped bass population. This is our most important task and it is clear the impact this overpopulation is having on salmon returns as well as other fish species. It is the number one issue we are discussing with our conservation partners and government and our top priority from an advocacy standpoint. We reached out to all our directors, members, and supporters to participate in a letter-writing initiative addressed to the Minister of Fisheries, the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, so thank you to those who participated, we appreciate your support! Together we can make a difference.

INTRODUCTION

Message from the MSA US Chair

The year 2023 was a very difficult one for salmon throughout Canada. Runs were down on most Gaspé Rivers and many Newfoundland rivers saw their lowest returns in memory. The sea conditions that caused these poor salmon returns were exacerbated in the Miramichi by the continuing, excessive predation of outgoing smolts by striped bass.

That is not to say that the year did not have its bright spots. Despite high water, there were days in June and early July when we had good numbers of salmon showing in the Blackville area. The runs into the lower Cains were also quite good, and with the highly unusual water heights that we experienced off-and-on all summer, salmon were caught all the way to the headwaters much earlier than normal. In the end, while the overall run was down, there seemed to be reasonable numbers of salmon on the spawning grounds. As always, we cannot wait for spring and the beginning of the 2024 salmon season.

MSA US board members now have a solid presence on all the MSA committees, and work with their Canadian counterparts to provide not only hands-on conservation programs, but also advocacy efforts to influence government policies that affect the Miramichi watershed and its salmon. One of the biggest benefits the US organization can offer is fundraising, both in terms of current conservation work and the creation of a long-term endowment that will help fund the MSA's work in the future. I am proud to say that we are doing well in that regard with giving by our members throughout the year and especially surrounding our Winter Event currently being held in Falmouth, Maine.

Percy Nobbs, one of the founders of Atlantic salmon conservation in Canada once wrote that the spawning gravel of the Miramichi was for all practical purposes unlimited, and that in that regard it stood above all other Canadian salmon rivers. Other biologists have remarked that the Miramichi has the finest Atlantic salmon habitat in the world. I have fished for salmon in Russia, the UK, Iceland, and all the Canadian provinces that hold this fish. There are many great salmon rivers on both sides of the Atlantic, but all things considered, the Miramichi is at or near the very top of the list. Its protection deserves all our best efforts.

Brad Burns, MSA US Chair



President's Report

In 2023, the MSA seamlessly transitioned back to hosting a full slate of in-person engagement events and dinners, where our members and supporters welcomed the opportunity to gather and socialize in support of salmon conservation once again. Our exceptional performance in this realm serves as a testament to our collective efforts, exceeding our initial expectations. With the steadfast dedication of our dinner committees, we aim to sustain this positive momentum throughout 2024.

Continuing our mission, the MSA persistently urges the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to address the escalating striped bass population in the Miramichi estuary. Recent collaborative research has revealed a stark reality: less than 5% of smolt migrating to sea survive the perilous journey through the estuary. This untenable situation demands action, and we are committed to advocating for solutions alongside our esteemed conservation partners: Anqotum Resource Management, the New Brunswick Salmon Council, the University of New Brunswick, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and the Miramichi

Watershed Management Committee.

As we embark on the journey into 2024, we have reason for optimism. We await the unveiling of the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy and anticipate associated funding to bolster Atlantic salmon initiatives, akin to the support allocated for Pacific salmon. Additionally, we continue to urge DFO to implement a definitive stocking policy, which will enhance the use and efficacy of our hatchery facility.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated directors, members, and supporters. Your unwavering commitment and assistance are integral to our yearly accomplishments. Whether attending fundraising dinners, volunteering your time, or contributing to our conservation endeavors in the field, your steadfast support is deeply valued.

Butch Dalton, MSA Interim President



MSA 70TH ANNIVERSARY

COMMEMORATIVE FLY DESIGN
HOOK: #4-#10 Mustad SL73UBLN-36890
TAG: #12 Uni Flat Silver Tinsel
BUTT: #14 Vemiard Glo-Brite Floss
TAIL: Blue Hackle Fibres
RIBS: Small Silver Uni-French Oval Tinsel
BODY: Blue Diamond Braid Tinsel
COLLAR: Palmered Blue Hackle
WINGS: Gray Fox
HEAD: Black 8/0 Uni-Thread

MIRAMICHI SI PLATINUM SI

Designed by Ian Cavanaugh

Rocky Brook Fly Shop

CONSERVATION

Field Programs

Smolt Estimates

During the spring run, the Miramichi Salmon Association conducts smolt population estimates on the Miramichi River. This valuable information helps conservation groups and regulators make important decisions about the management of the Miramichi watershed.

Our annual smolt estimate is conducted using a mark-recapture system. For the last several years, the MSA has assembled two rotary screw traps on the Northwest Miramichi River and one on the Dungarvon River. Applying a 10% mortality rate to our population estimate (using the Bayesian method), it was estimated that 10,840 (95% CI 9,370 - 12,820) smolts migrated from the Northwest River in the spring of 2023. To compare, the 2022 smolt estimate on the Northwest Miramichi was 42,300 (95% CI 36,200 -

39,000). The Dungarvon estimate for 2023 was 9,251 (95% CI 7,391 - 12,320) smolts. To compare, the Dungarvon estimate for 2022 was 7,255 (95% CI 5,650 - 9,475) smolts.

Salmon Protection Barriers

The MSA continued to operate the salmon protection barriers in 2023, located on the Northwest Miramichi River and the Dungarvon River. These barriers protect adult salmon making their way upriver to spawn and the data collected from them is shared with the government and the public. Thank you to our two foreman, Ed Stewart and Paul Norrad, and their teams for their dedicated and hard work ensuring these barriers are run successfully. We continue to work with the NB Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development to keep the barriers operational.



Cold Water Restoration

Cold water brooks provide critically important habitat for salmon, especially during warm water events. The MSA and other conservation groups work to restore and enhance cold water habitat. Over the last decade, the MSA has led cold water restoration projects at 11 different pools on the Miramichi River.

Each year, the MSA field team revisits all former cold water habitat restoration sites to assess if restorations are still functioning and to conduct necessary maintenance work. Work conducted at these sites in 2023 included removing overgrowth and debris and taking temperature readings. Recorded temperature differences between cold water pools and the main river were significant, between 1.6°C and 7.7°C. Snorkel surveys were also conducted at Indiantown Brook, Burntland Brook, and Black Brook. Fish were found to be present at all 11 sites.

The MSA is continuing to work on a novel cold water restoration program in partnership with Dr. Antóin O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan EcoHydraulics. The aim of this project is to strategically enhance cold water habitats using novel tactics. The project selects sites where restoration will be most impactful for Atlantic salmon. In 2023, Dr. O'Sullivan's team conducted research for future restoration sites. The next cold water pool restoration will take place in 2024. This project has been funded in large part by the Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk with in-kind support from the University of New Brunswick.

Juvenile Assessment

The MSA conducts an electrofishing program to assess the distribution of juvenile Atlantic salmon in the Miramichi River. This program's purpose is to scout future stocking sites and evaluate the success of fry stocking and beaver dam management efforts.

This year proved difficult for conducting juvenile assessment due to high water and excessive rain, which meant an increased risk of being shocked while electrofishing. Despite a late start to the program, MSA biologist Lyndsay Jay-Keating and her field crew were able to collect presence-absence data for 28 priority sites.

The MSA also assisted the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Science Branch with their electrofishing program throughout September. DFO conducts surveys to monitor sites as part of a long-term assessment of juvenile salmon populations in the river. Together, the MSA and DFO were able to electrofish an additional 28 sites.

The results from the 56 sites assessed by the MSA and DFO in 2023 continue to underscore the critical impact of our programs, particularly fry stocking, on juvenile salmon numbers in various Miramichi tributaries. Stocked areas from 2023 showed an abundance of fry when they were surveyed weeks later, compared to 2022 and 2021. Some new sites surveyed as potential stocking locations exhibited low fry and parr numbers, suggesting stocking efforts could be increased in these areas.

2023 Cold Water Pool Maintenance				
Restoration Site	Restoration Year	2023 Stream Obstructions		
Donnelly Brook	2014	7		
Doak Brook	2015	4		
Indiantown Brook	2015	0		
Otter Brook	2015	9		
Pat's Brook	2015	8		
Parks Brook	2016	2		
Hudson Brook	2017	0		
Salmon Brook	2017	0		
Burntland Brook	2018	0		
Government Pool	2019	0		
Black Brook	2022	0		

Broodstock Collection and Spawning

The MSA has been collecting adult broodstock from the Miramichi River for decades to enhance juvenile production in targeted areas that are under-utilized or inaccessible to wild spawning adults. In 2023, broodstock were exclusively gathered from the Southwest Miramichi River. Unfortunately, our traditional Cains River broodstock collection, supported by anglers, could not yield sufficient adults for this year's program. The Southwest Miramichi River supplied 10 females and 5 males, collected at the Juniper bridge with the assistance of New Brunswick Community College students on October 5th. These adults were released after spawning.

Approximately 50,000 first-feeding fry from this program will be stocked into their natal streams in spring/early summer 2024. We had several volunteers assist with our Broodstock Collection and Spawning program in 2023, and we thank those individuals for supporting this critical conservation program.

Once again, the MSA facilitated spawning for Parks Canada and Friends of the Kouchibouguacis and is assisting Pabineau First Nation with over-winter egg incubation at the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre. All salmon produced in collaboration with other conservation groups are stocked into their natal waters.



Fry Stocking

In June 2023, the MSA was able to stock 35,000 salmon fry along the Cains River tributaries and 55,000 salmon fry around the Juniper area along the Southwest Miramichi River. These fry were the result of annual broodstock collections in Autumn 2022. Adult fish were brought to the Miramichi Salmon Conser-

vation Centre (MSCC), spawned, and then released, and the eggs were incubated over the winter for release as fry into their natal waters the following spring. We were grateful to have support from three seperate groups of volunteers in 2023. Without the help of dedicated volunteers, many of our conservation programs would not be possible.



Spawning Obstruction Management

Beaver dams are recognized as barriers to adult Atlantic salmon migrating upstream to spawn, hindering access to habitat in the upper reaches of brooks and streams. Improving access to upstream habitat in specific streams could positively impact egg survival and juvenile production.

Beavers can repair active dams within a 24-hour period, which means the breaching of dams must be correctly timed with the upstream migrations of the salmon. The beginning of the season saw high water levels due to rain, offering advantages to salmon that need to swim or jump over in-stream obstructions. As water levels receded later in the season, the MSA field crew was able to successfully notch 48 dams.

Beaver Dam Flow Devices

On November 6th, the MSA installed a beaver dam flow device at a beaver dam on Stewart Brook on the Northwest Miramichi. The site was selected based on considerations for safety, stability, and proximity to the MSCC. This was the third device installed by the MSA to optimize fish movement for spawning while minimizing disturbance to beaver colonies.

The MSA field team conducted juvenile assessments pre-installation in 2023, and plan to conduct a post-installation assessment in 2024. Underwater cameras were installed and angled at the entrance and exit of the flow device and showed the adult salmon successfully using the device.

2023	Dam	Management

Location	Dams Breached
Cains River	1
Brandy Brook	3
Ten Mile Brook	3
Muzeroll Brook	4
Six Mile Brook	2
Middle Sabbies Brook	2
Betts Mills Brook	3
Doak Brook	8
Meadow Brook	2
Ledbetters Brook	1
Salmon Brook	8
Upper Sabbies Brook	1
Elliott Brook	1
Little Teague Brook	2
Near Big Hole Lake	3
Little Southwest River	1
Jacks Lake	1
Tuadook River	1
Big Sevogle River	1

Hatchery Operations

Day-to-Day Operations

The Miramichi Fish Hatchery, located at the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre in South Esk just outside Miramichi, consists of five fish-rearing buildings and several storage buildings. Also located at the Centre is the Miramichi Salmon Association main office that supports our staff, along with a fully-furnished apartment to house students and researchers involved with salmon work on the Miramichi River.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Conservation and Protection also rents a portion of the head office building for their South Esk home base.

Daily routine care of the salmon at our facility involves feeding and observing fish behaviour, water quality monitoring, anti-fungal treatments, cleaning, maintenance work, and

data collection. We have various life stages of Atlantic salmon at our facility throughout the year and each requires specialized care to be kept safe and healthy. We have a wonderful team here at the Miramichi Fish Hatchery, working hard every day to ensure the needs of the fish are met!

The facility has hatchery staff on-site 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and someone on-call 24/7 for any emergencies after hours. Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, snowstorms, and high winds can knock out power and we have two large industrial generators and two small portable generators to keep water and oxygen flowing for the fish. The hatchery has a lot of equipment to maintain - pumps, towers, filters, piping and valves, hoses, manifolds and flow meters, and multiple alarms set up throughout the facility to monitor oxygen and water levels. When a problem occurs, staff are notified right away and respond no matter the time of day.

Research Programs

The MSCC is a hub for scientists to conduct important research on Atlantic salmon in the Miramichi River. The Miramichi Fish Hatchery is a unique tool that allows fish biologists and aquatic scientists to conduct ground-breaking research projects.

Alex Morgan, a master's student under Dr. Antóin O'Sullivan at the University of New Brunswick, used resources at our facility to conduct a pilot project in the fall of 2023. He is studying how aerial hyperspectral imagery can be used to detect and identify fish. The hyperspectral imager Alex uses captures hundreds of distinct colors of visible light in a single pixel, compiling a large volume of information pertaining to the light reflected from the fish. The design of the pilot project simulates how a drone can use a hyperspectral imager to detect fish in natural waterways. The images captured by Alex will be analyzed

by comparing the intensity of the different specific colors of light between the varied species and age classes of fish to seek usable trends in the data. The goal of the project is to investigate whether hyperspectral imaging can be used as a method of counting fish by species non-invasively.

Also in 2023, the hatchery continued to support the novel Dungarvon fry

stocking program by collecting and growing smolts up to mature adults, spawning the adults, and releasing the subsequent fry back in the Dungarvon River. 2023 was the first year fry were released for this program, and stocking will continue through 2027. Dr. Tommi Linnansaari at the University of New Brunswick leads this program.

hub for scientists to carry out important research on Atlantic salmon in the Miramichi River."

"The MSCC is a

Hatchery Tours

In celebration of the 150 years of continuous operation, the MSA reopened the Miramichi Fish Hatchery to public tours in 2023. Tours ran six times per week between June and August, with visitors from close to home and as far as Mexico! We were excited to be able to share the facility's rich history and our important work with everyone who visited.

The MSA would like to extend a special thank you to the NB Regional Development Corporation and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency who helped fund necessary renovations to the Miramichi Fish Hatchery between 2022-23 through the Tourism Relief Fund. These renovations included biosecurity and infrastructure upgrades, ensuring not only the safety of our visitors but also contributing to the well-being of the salmon so that we could reopen for public tours with confidence. Celebrating 150 years in 2023, the Miramichi Fish Hatchery continues to be a critical conservation tool for the Miramichi River through stocking and research.



Celebrating 150 Years

The Miramichi Fish Hatchery located at the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre (MSCC) has the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating fish hatchery in Canada. It was constructed in 1873 by the federal government on Stewart Brook, a tributary of the Northwest Miramichi River, located in South Esk. New Brunswick.

The Miramichi Fish Hatchery was established to address a decline in salmon stocks due to loss of habitat by dam construction for log drives and an intense commercial fishery. The facility's aim was to improve the survival rate of salmon from egg fertilization to first-feeding fry, a critical period during the salmon life cycle.

During its early years, the hatchery would purchase live adult Atlantic salmon from commercial trap net fisherman to use as broodstock for spawning and fry stocking. These trap nets were located near the mouth of the fish hatchery brook, in the estuary, or above the head of tide. Fish were trapped live and placed in wooden crates, where they would be towed to the hatchery holding pond.

Transportation was one of the limiting factors in the operation of a fish hatchery in the 1800s. Without motorized vehicles, fish had to be transported in tanks of water by horse and wagon, boat, or train. Being accessible by road and water, and within proximity of the Derby Junction railway, meant the Miramichi Fish Hatchery was ideally located to distribute fry to various sidings along the Southwest Miramichi River.

Celebrating 150 years in 2023, the Miramichi Fish Hatchery continues to be a critical conservation tool for the Miramichi River through stocking and research.





River Management

Warm Water Protocol

The DFO-led Warm Water Protocol Committee met throughout the 2023 angling season to consider protocol guidelines for closing and reopening important cold water pools during the angling season. The Miramichi Salmon Association continued to participate in committee meetings to give input on behalf of stakeholders to help guide decisions about protocols.

The 2023 angling season was unique in that although water temperatures above 20°C had been noted, the near-daily rainfall and high-water levels have kept the river high and fast, and reduced stress on thermoregulating Atlantic salmon. Other factors besides temperature, such as water level, weather forecast, and fish behaviour have played significant roles in Warm Water Protocol Committee discussions this year. In addition to strange weather patterns throughout the season, 2023 was challenging for accessing data, with water data only being shared publicly by Environment and Climate Change Canada toward the end of the season.

Recreational Fisheries

The MSA sits on the Eastern New Brunswick Coastal and Inland Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee. The committee is led by DFO and provides an opportunity for NGOs like the MSA to offer feedback on management and regulations for recreational fisheries. The committee met in January of 2023. Some of the major agenda items that the MSA continued to push for were river management that reflects scientific evidence, ecosystem balance, more enforcement against poaching, and the return to four fish per day for catch and release. The MSA's position on these topics is consistent with that of other conservation groups.

The Miramichi Salmon Association is particularly

concerned with the need for a multi-species management approach for striped bass and Atlantic salmon. The Miramichi Salmon Association is pleased to see the striped bass population recovering and thriving, but we are concerned about overall ecosystem balance. Despite consistent recommendations, regulations are slow to change for both Atlantic salmon and striped bass. Along with Atlantic salmon, gaspereau, mackerel, smelt, and herring populations are suffering because of the exploding striped bass population.

Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy

In 2023, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada released "What We Heard: Engaging on a strategy to restore and rebuild Atlantic salmon". This publication was a response to feedback collected while developing the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy and presented findings from the Let's Talk Atlantic Salmon survey conducted in 2022.

Also included in the publication was a message from the new Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard - the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier:

"Recognizing the many perspectives on the conservation of Atlantic salmon, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) took time to engage with Canadians and seek their thoughts on how best to achieve our goal of maintaining and restoring healthy populations," said Minister Lebouthillier. "Almost 500 individuals and groups have contributed to this process, submitting their comments and participating in bilateral and group discussions."

DFO plans to release the first draft of the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy in 2024.

On July 26th, 2023, the Honourable Diane Lebouthillier was sworn in as the new Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. She was one of several ministers to assume a new position in the cabinet. Minister Lebouthillier, a Liberal MP for the Quebec riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, has experience with fisheries, and has spent time living in New Brunswick. With her background, the Miramichi Salmon Association is hopeful that Minister Lebouthillier will be able to address concerns for recreational fisheries at the watershed level.

Education

Science Day

The MSA collaborated with the Miramichi Watershed Management Committee to host our annual "Science Day" on April 18th at the Fredericton Inn, generously sponsored by INTERFOR. The theme for 2023 was "Working Together for the Miramichi: Fostering Collaboration and Partnerships for Ecological Conservation." The event included presentations from various organizations, including the University of New Brunswick, the Canadian Rivers Institute, and Angotum Resource Management, among others. Attendees had an opportunity for discussion and questions about the scientific work and research applicable to the Miramichi River. This event was well-attended, providing a valuable opportunity to learn from experts, share knowledge, and promote collaboration for the betterment of Atlantic salmon.

Jack T.H. Fenety Conservation Scholarship

The Jack T.H. Fenety Conservation Scholarship is awarded annually to a graduate student who is conducting meaningful research about wild Atlantic salmon that will have relevance for the Miramichi watershed.

The 2023 recipient of the Jack T.H. Fenety Scholarship was Elise Collet, who is studying at the University of New Brunswick. This was Elise's second year being awarded this funding. Her work on thermal river regimes and how salmon thermoregulate will help guide river management during warm water events.

Brian D. Moore Legacy Fund

The Brian D. Moore Legacy Fund is an endowment fund established to encourage the next generation of conservationists. The fund offers annual support for a project to be conducted by a Miramichi Salmon Association summer student.

In April, the MSA announced Cole Johnson as the 2023 Brian D. Moore Legacy Fund recipient. Cole's project under the Brian D. Moore Legacy Fund included producing videos for enhanced communication and education about the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre, which celebrated its 150th year of operation in 2023.

MSA Wild Salmon Grant

The MSA Wild Salmon Grant was established in 2023, in partnership with St. Thomas University. Generously funded by J.W. Bud Bird, this \$105,000 endowment will support an annual grant of \$5000 to an Indigenous undergraduate student.

"During his career, Bud Bird has been an entrepreneur, elected representative, and conservationist, and is respected for his dedication to his province. His gift to STU will create new opportunities for our Indigenous students to complement their class learning with experiential learning and public engagement. Bud Bird has been a long-time supporter of STU, and we are pleased to work with him to benefit students," said Dr. Kim Fenwick, Acting President and Vice-Chancellor of St. Thomas University.

This opportunity targets students in their second, third, or fourth year of study, encouraging them to integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge into their academic work, especially concerning river and natural space conservation. Projects may involve collecting elder stories, focusing on the Wabanaki language, creating various forms of art, or engaging in research-creation. The MSA would like to thank Mr. Bird for providing the necessary funding to initiate this important scholarship.



Art and Writing Contest

For over 50 years, a focused part of MSA education has been engaging the future generation of conservationists through school art and writing programs that promote river and salmon conservation and advocacy. The MSA would like to thank all schools who participated in our 2023 Bruno Bobak Memorial Art Contest and our writing and printing contests. Grade six student Tori Vassallo from Max Aiken Academy was selected as our overall winner and awarded a framed Kim Stubbs art print.

First Cast

The MSA's 11th Annual First Cast took place over the weekend of June 24th and 25th, coordinated by MSA Director Paul Valeri. This two-day educational program teaches children and adults the joys of fly fishing. The first day included classroom instruction, graciously hosted at the Atlantic Salmon Museum, followed by a day of fishing in Blackville. Thank you to all the MSA volunteers who came together to make this year's First Cast both fun and enriching.

PowerPlay Young Entrepreneurs

PowerPlay Young Entrepreneurs is a school-based program that equips students with the skills and resources they need to develop products and build their own businesses. In 2023, the Miramichi Salmon Association partnered with PowerPlay Young Entrepreneurs to teach kids from local schools about not-for-profits and community engagement. Students from Blackville School and Gretna Green School designed MSA-branded products for our promotion and fundraising needs.

Along with sourcing merchandise from young entrepreneurs, the Miramichi Salmon Association can connect with youth about our mission, work, and the importance of conservation. On April 19th, the MSA participated in an engagement event hosted by Powerplay Young Entrepreneurs in Fredericton. Just short of 200 people attended this event, including students and educators, giving the MSA a unique opportunity to engage with schools.

We continuously seek innovative ways to involve young people. Our collaboration with Powerplay Young Entrepreneurs is part of our commitment to educating the next generation about the importance of salmon conservation.



Student Outreach

The Miramichi Salmon Association embraces every opportunity to educate the next generation of conservationists. MSA's knowledgeable staff collaborates with schools across the province, facilitating environmental science and river conservation education. In May and early June, the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre opened its doors to elementary and middle school students for the Fish Friends program, offering tours of the Miramichi Fish Hatchery. Other student outreach initiatives from 2023 included participating in STEM Fest 2023 at James M. Hill High School on March 25th; hosting Mount Allison professor Dr. Josh Kurek's GENS4401: Biomonitoring class on August 24th; inviting Sara Lloyd's environmental science class from New Brunswick Community College to join our field team with seining broodstock salmon in Juniper on October 5th; and hosting students from Blackville High School on October 19th to demonstrate salmon spawning.



ADVOCACY

Communications



The Leaper

The Leaper is the MSA's monthly newsletter and acts as a valuable resource for our members and supporters. In addition to a monthly update from the MSA President, it provides insights into our conservation efforts, details about upcoming events, important notices about the river, and press releases. Highlights from our 2023 run included river reports from MSA US Chair Brad Burns and informative videos on our conservation projects from our 2023 Brian D. Moore Legacy Fund recipient Cole Johnson.

Calendar

Our 2023 MSA calendar was circulated to 900 members and supporters as part of our end-of-season campaign. This year's calendar highlighted the photography of the late Brian Smith (1949-2023). Brian Smith was an award-winning Fredericton-based photographer, graphic designer, and long-time supporter of the Miramichi Salmon Association. In honour of Brian's enduring community spirit and commitment to the Miramichi watershed, we were proud to present a collection of his photographs showcasing the beauty of the Miramichi watershed.

Photo Contest

The MSA Brian Smith Memorial Photo Contest is an opportunity for amateur photographers to show off their best shots of the Miramichi River and its surroundings. This is an annual event that runs from April 15th until October 15th and contest categories include Miramichi People, Angling, Miramichi Scenes, and Kids. We would like to congratulate our 2023 MSA Photo Contest Winners: Ellen Tramley Sey-

mour (1st Place), Troy Adams (2nd Place), Tom Walker (3rd Place), and Shelley Harris-Weir (4th Place). Thank you to Bates Custom Laminating and Framing for generously sponsoring our 2023 prize package.

Miramichi River Stories

Miramichi River Stories is an ongoing video series that features iconic guides, sports, and MSA supporters speaking about their experiences on the Miramichi River. This project is led by MSA Communications Committee Chair Greg Sprague and committee member Dawson Hovey to preserve the heritage and culture of the Miramichi fly-fishing community. Episodes from 2023 featured interviews with Bill McKay, Wes McKay, Donnie Fraser, Renate Bullock, Keith Wilson, Manley Price, Mervin Green, and Larry Sweet.

Public Pools Project

The Miramichi Salmon Association recognizes the importance that public salmon pools and access plays in engaging our current supporters and encouraging newcomers to the sport of salmon fishing. In 2023, the MSA Communications Committee took steps to expand the MSA's list of public salmon pools, and to provide more pertinent details about those pools on our website, including interactive maps, information about parking and trails, pool conditions, and tackle recommendations.

The MSA Communications Committee's Public Pools Project is ongoing. The MSA Communications Committee is continuing to solicit details about known public pools. Anyone able to contribute to this project is encouraged to reach out to the MSA office.

Events

US Winter Event

The MSA kicked off the 2023 event calendar with the MSA US Winter Event on February 4th. The event was co-chaired and hosted by Brad Burns and David Fenderson and supported by a dedicated dinner committee. This was a hybrid event which allowed for virtual attendees to participate in the evening via a Zoom broadcast. The evening was filled with exciting fundraising activities, including a live auction led by auctioneer Gary Tanner, a silent auction, and a paddle raise. Attendees enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner and bid on a range of items, including fishing trips, fishing gear, artwork, and other items of interest.

Curling Bonspiel

In March, MSA Director Manley Price coordinated an engagement event at the Doaktown Arena – the MSA & Outfitters Curling Bonspiel. This was a throwback to an annual event held by the MSA pre-Covid. Teams of four got to participate in a fun evening with lots of door prizes. Attendees also had the opportunity to sign up for a 1-year complimentary MSA membership. Through this event we were able to raise awareness for salmon conservation and increase our membership.

Moncton Boat and Sportsmen Show

MSA staff attended the Moncton Boat and Sportsmen Show between March 24th and 26th to engage with members of the angling community. We had an eye-catching booth and were able to highlight the MSA's 70th anniversary with an informative display. The show was well attended and provided our team

with a wonderful opportunity to showcase all the important work that the MSA is doing.

Spring into the Season Fundraisers

The MSA's Spring into the Season Online Auction and Raffle ran throughout April. Thank you to all our supporters for making both the auction and raffle a success again this year. We would also like to give a special thank you to our auction sponsors, Heritage Management, Ashford Investments, Bingham Law, and Grant Thornton, as well as Grant Brenan and Rocky Bend Camp for donating our raffle fishing trip. Initially, the MSA transitioned to online auctions and raffles to fundraise during the pandemic but continued with these fundraising approaches due to their success in reaching a broader audience. We look forward to continuing our annual online auction and raffles into the future.

Miramichi "70 on 70" Dinner

On April 29th, the MSA held the "70 on 70" Dinner at the Rodd Miramichi. This event celebrated the MSA's 70th anniversary, and the 70th birthday and retirement of long-time MSA president Mark Hambrook. The event was a great tribute to Mark to show our appreciation for all his years of service at the MSA. Our 70th anniversary was a theme we returned to for all our fundraising dinners in 2023, and the "70 on 70" Dinner was a great kick-off to commemorate this important MSA milestone. We had several speakers offer their remarks and congratulations to Mark and the MSA, as well as a video tribute to Mark from his family. We thank everyone who came out to offer their support on this special evening.



Boiestown IceBreaker

On June 3rd, the MSA's IceBreaker dinner returned to the Central New Brunswick Woodmen's Museum. This event was held in conjunction with our Annual General Meeting, which took place earlier in the day at the Upper Miramichi Rural Community Centre. It was great to see such a huge turnout for both the meeting and dinner.

Once again, our IceBreaker was a sold-out event. This is one of our favourite annual events, offering great food and company while fundraising for Atlantic salmon conservation. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this event a resounding success, with special appreciation to our IceBreaker Event Chair Manley Price and MSA Director Grant Ross who worked together to make this dinner go off without a hitch.

Blackville Visitor's Day

To get the word out on the great work that our organization does, the MSA hosted an information session in conjunction with The Rural Community of Miramichi River Valley. On July 16th, MSA members and supporters gathered at the Municipal Park in Blackville for a barbeque, MSA update, and Q&A. Although the weather was uncooperative, we had a good turnout and were able to get some valuable feedback from our constituents. Thank you to everyone who attended and to Curtis Miramichi Outfitters for helping to coordinate this event.

Fredericton Dinner and Auction

The 26th Annual MSA Fredericton Dinner & Auction took place on October 3rd at the Fredericton Inn. This event was organized by the MSA Fredericton Dinner Committee, chaired by Tristan Hovey, and was a resounding success. Over 270 guests joined us to celebrate our dinner honourees, MSA Director Dan Cain and the Cain family, for their long-time dedication to the MSA, Atlantic salmon, and the Miramichi watershed.

The Fredericton dinner is always one of our biggest dinners of the year and this year did not disappoint. A highlight of the evening was the signature live auction, which included fishing trips to Millbrook Lodge, Sutter Salmon Club, and the renowned Rocky Brook Camp. Thanks to the MSA's generous supporters, this event netted over \$120,000 for conservation work on the Miramichi River. The MSA Fredericton Dinner Committee would like to extend a special thank you to all organizers, donors, and event attendees for making the evening such a success.





"...a special thank you to all organizers, donors, and event attendees..."



Saint John Autumn Dinner and Auction

The MSA Saint John Autumn Dinner & Auction took place at the Delta Brunswick Square in Saint John on October 25th. This was another amazing night and was expertly organized by the Saint John Dinner Committee under the guidance of Co-Chairs John C. Fitzpatrick and Gordon Mouland. The MSA was proud to honour world-renowned fly-tier Jerome Molloy for his steadfast support of the MSA and his contribution to the conservation community. The evening featured a lively cocktail hour and silent auction, a delicious buffet dinner, and a live auction which included some top-tier fishing trips. Thank you to ev-

eryone who participated for helping us raise important funds for Miramichi River salmon conservation.

Carleton County Christmas Auction

To end the year, once again the Carleton County Fundraising Committee hosted their annual MSA online Christmas auction. This online fundraiser has become a staple in our event calendar. We would like to thank our auction sponsors, McCain Fertilizer, Mountain View Packers, and McConnell Transport, along with all those who generously donated auction items. This auction is always a wonderful way to close out the year and we enjoy putting it on.



End of Season Ask

In early November, the Miramichi Salmon Association conducted its annual End of Season campaign. All current MSA members received an update letter from MSA Interim President, Butch Dalton, along with a complimentary 2024 MSA Calendar. This campaign is a major MSA fundraising initiative, encouraging our supporters to help us close out the year with a year-end donation. The MSA would like to thank everyone who answered our End of Season ask. Your vital support will help us continue critical conservation activities on the Miramichi River in 2024.

Planned Giving

At the Miramichi Salmon Association, we are doing important work that will benefit generations to come. Planned Giving is an ongoing fundraising campaign that allows MSA supporters to donate in a way that lets their legacy and passion for Atlantic salmon conservation live on. Those that include the Miramichi Salmon Association in their financial and estate planning become part of the MSA Trust. Planned gifts can be made to the MSA through will bequests, gifts of stocks or securities, insurance policies, assets, or charitable trusts and annuities.

Financial Update

MSA Finances

The MSA had a successful year of fundraising, bringing in \$401,347 through events and donations, almost doubling our original fundraising budget. The MSA received \$198,695 in government funding, which helps to cover conservation programs, student wages, and improvements to infrastructure. Of that amount, \$25,000 was accessed from the Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk for cold water work on the Miramichi River, and \$74,986 from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the NB Regional Development Corporation to make necessary repairs and upgrades to the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre, including repairs to the hatchery dam, and the purchase of Combi tanks and egg incubators. These renovations will allow us to continue our ongoing conservation and research work, and facilitated us reopening for hatchery tours in 2023.

The organization through which MSA manages the hatchery, Miramichi Fisheries Management, operates at an annual deficit. However, the MSA recognizes the importance of this facility as a conservation tool and continues to seek revenue-generating opportunities to sustain its operations.

The MSA financial statements were not audited ahead of this publication. The 2023 audit will be completed by Allen, Paquet & Arseneau, LLP. in accordance with Canadian accounting standards.

MSA US Finances

The MSA US financials are independent of the Mi-

ramichi Salmon Association, and the organization makes an annual transfer to the MSA which goes towards our conservation programs. The 2023 MSA US transfer was for \$104,428.42 CAD. These funds directly supported our 2023 field programs including smolt population estimates, fry stocking, cold water restoration, beaver dam notching, and juvenile population assessments through electrofishing.

The MSA US financial statements will be prepared and audited by Gary Plante, CPA.

2023 Consolidated Revenue			
Source	Amount		
Membership	\$7,860		
Fundraising/Donations	\$401,347		
Government Grants, etc.	\$156,241		
Hatchery Programs	\$42,038		
Barrier Contract	\$208,383		
Canada Nature Fund	\$25,002		
Rental Income	\$46,522		
Maintenance Income	\$5,000		
Gain on Disposal of Asset	\$2,400		
Director's Revenue	\$15,192		
MSA US Transfer	\$104,428		
Investment Transfer	\$74,282		

Investments

MSA Finances

The Miramichi Salmon Association works with the Mais Reynolds Financial Group on our Canadian investment portfolios. Mais Reynolds, and the larger CIBC Private Wealth group, balance our need to generate revenue to support our organization, and concern for the environment, climate change, and social justice.

A new Endowment fund of \$100,000 was opened in 2023: a generous contribution by J.W. Bud Bird to support the annual Wild Salmon Scholarship of \$5,000 to an Indigenous undergraduate student at

St. Thomas University.

The MSA acknowledges past capital contributions from Bud and Peggy Bird, Bruno Bobak, Samuel E. Burgess, Rex Freeze, Jacqueline Girouard, Kevin Harris, J.D. Irving, the John E. Irving family, the Kaley family, the Laurie Savage family, Denis and Cecile Losier, Doug and Gloria MacDonald, Ernie and Susanne McFadzen, Frank and Julie McKenna, the McQuaid family, Hon. Michael E. Meighen, the Norton family of Upper Oxbow, Punchy Walker, David and Elizabeth Wilson Family Foundation, Scotiabank, and TD Bank Community Relations.



Our History

On October 8th, 1953, a small group of conservation-minded pioneers, who shared a common love for the Miramichi, registered a new organization called the Miramichi Salmon Association, Inc. (MSA). The group, made up of anglers, guides, camp owners, commercial outfitters, and sporting good merchants, drafted a simple mission statement; "the propagation, protection, and perpetuation of the Atlantic salmon in the Miramichi River system". That fundamental goal still directs the programs and activities of the MSA today.

Through the persuasive voice of Jack Fenety, MSA President for 35 years, intense lobbying efforts were conducted to reduce bag limits on Atlantic salmon anglers, ban salmon angling from bridges, establish the mandatory use of flies only, create closed fishing zones to protect spawning salmon, and ban commercial fishing. The MSA sponsored the reconstruction of the federal salmon hatchery in the early 1980s, under the leadership of President Bud Bird, and took over operations in 1997.

MSA then hired full-time president Mark Hambrook to run the hatchery and start an aggressive campaign to halt the decline of salmon stocks by estimating smolt numbers migrating from the Miramichi River to the ocean, counting juvenile salmon in the river, and targeting low-density areas with salmon fry from the hatchery.

Now under the direction of our Interim President, Butch Dalton, the MSA continues to grow as a leading 'on-the-river' conservation organization, whose vision resonates with all its supporters; that our great river and the salmon can be cared for and enhanced so their natural health and abundance can be increased and perpetuated into the future.

Executive

MSA Officers

Butch Dalton, Interim President Joe Palmer, Chair Richard McGuigan, Vice Chair Bradford Burns, Vice Chair Debbie Norton, Past Chair Kenneth Kyle, Secretary-Treasurer Hugh Cameron, Legal Counsel

MSA US Officers

Bradford Burns, President David Fenderson, Vice President Gary Plante, Treasurer Nathaniel Huckle-Bauer, Legal Counsel

MSA Committee Chairs

Dan Cain, Advocacy Gordon Mouland, Land-use Greg Sprague, Communications Joe Palmer, Human Resources Kevin Harris, Strategic Planning Laura Gilks, Education Manley Price, Conservation Planning Rick Pryde, Finance Stan Knowles, Membership Stephen Tonning, Nominations Tristan Hovey, Development

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Holly Labadie, Hatchery Manager Dylan Hyland, Hatchery Technician Olabisi Onasanya, Hatchery Technician Mark Hambrook, Hatchery Specialist Gilles Chiasson, Maintenance Specialist

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MSA South Esk Office

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