

Council

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Statement by Coomhola Salmon Trust Limited

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SALMON RESOURCE

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As developers of the *StreamScapes Salmon Education Programme* in Ireland, we would like to take up the theme of Public Awareness within the context of the “Next Steps” process.

Acknowledging the private and public initiatives in this area in Canada and the USA, UK and Scotland, Scandanavia and elsewhere, perhaps it is time for NASCO to unify these efforts and, in so doing further its solemn objective of conserving the Atlantic Salmon as well as building its own profile in support of this objective.

Let us be clear: *unconscious human populations and salmon do not co-exist for long*, and it is this situation which we must address. There remains an enormous gulf between the rarified air (in here) in which the finest minds of Atlantic Salmon biology exist and, (out there), the man-in-the-street and what he does on a daily basis to degrade salmon habitat.

This was brought home to me graphically in Mondariz, when during a break in proceedings, I strolled down beside the beautiful stream adjacent to the hotel, only to find a driver washing his lorry on a bridge, hosing a nutritious and toxic scum into the stream which we would be stocking with parr later that day!

Yes, there is a really urgent need for outreach education, the aim of which must be to equip all citizenry with best-practice principles in pursuit of livelihood, recreation, and domestic management.

Why would people want to take part in this effort? I reject the notion that salmon are difficult to save, compared with cuddly pandas. For centuries, if not millennia, various nations have been enthralled by “The Salmon of Knowledge”, “Lorelei”, and Native American salmon myths. These symbols must be retrieved and utilized to capture imagination and instill awareness.

Awareness leads to pride, pride leads to action. On both sides of the Atlantic we have witnessed what a difference a small critical mass of salmon stewards can make in a given catchment.

Beyond this, let us not rule out larger scale pageant, or theatre, to bring home NASCO’s message to the widest audience. Take the monumental Rhine salmon restoration efforts: who knows about this environmental heroism outside of our own circle? Why not commission a large scale production which celebrates this, such as a flotilla, or People’s Navy, escorting the salmon up the Rhine on an annual basis? Big, visual stuff, which SKY and CNN would eat up, spreading the importance of salmon to all of our populations. Large and small measures along these lines would achieve the twin aims of building up the wonders and plight of the Atlantic salmon as well as creating a better profile for NASCO.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that NASCO salute the efforts of the EU Water Framework Directive, and to request Europe in this context to redefine the “good status” for waters, (the stated 2015 objective), as “salmonid status”.

I wish to acknowledge the occasional support of the Irish Marine Institute and Central Fisheries Board in the development of the StreamScapes salmon education philosophy, and add that StreamScapes would welcome the opportunity to work more closely with NASCO in developing a public awareness initiative.