

North American Commission

NAC(05)6

Review of Atlantic Salmon Management Measures for 2005

(Tabled by Canada)

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Introduction

The outlook for Atlantic salmon stocks continues to be generally poor throughout Atlantic Canada. There are few areas where returns and spawners are consistently above conservation requirements, other areas where returns are adequate (or close to being so) for conservation, and many areas where there are serious concerns for conservation of the stocks. Low returns are associated with low marine survival.

Aboriginal Food Fisheries

Aboriginal food fisheries for Atlantic salmon take place throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Aboriginal fisheries for food, social and ceremonial purposes are permitted after conservation requirements have been addressed, and take precedence over recreational fishing.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans seeks to develop food fishery licences with Aboriginal groups that identify allocations, monitoring system requirements (guardians/logbooks, etc.) and in some areas, scientific projects such as tagging or gear trials (such as the use of trapnets instead of gillnets) where practical.

In the Gulf Region, Aboriginal fisheries in 2004 occurred in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence rivers generally in accordance with agreements and communal fishing licences. The quota was negotiated at 2,801 - MSW and 13,212 - 1SW. It is expected that the agreements will be negotiated at approximately the same levels for 2005.

In Labrador, quota management and the harvest of multi-sea-winter fish are the primary management considerations for the food, social and ceremonial (FSC) salmon fisheries in 2005. In 2004, FSC fisheries resulted in the harvest of approximately 30t of salmon compared to combined quotas of 23.5t.

Quotas – Labrador Food Fisheries

In 2005, the following quotas will apply:

Labrador Inuit Association	10t	(10t in 2004; catch of 16t)
Labrador Métis Nation	10t	(10t in 2004; catch of 11.4t)
Innu Nation	3.5t	(3.5t in 2004; catch of 1.4t)

Labrador Inuit Association (LIA)

To help ensure that the LIA quota is not exceeded in 2005, the number of tags per fisher will be reduced from ten to seven. There will be restrictions on alternate designations that were not in place in 2004.

Labrador Métis Nation (LMN)

There will be a reduction in fishing effort in 2005, which will be achieved through restrictions on the length of the fishing season for individual designates. Designates will be permitted to fish for a maximum of two weeks within a six-week salmon season for the entire area. This was one of the recommendations proposed by the stakeholder groups during the consultations and supported by scientific advice as a measure that should have more impact on the retention of 2SW salmon than a one-week delay in the season opening.

Resident Food Fishery

The resident food fishery is not a directed salmon fishery, but allows the by-catch of four salmon in the directed trout and char fishery. For 2005, DFO will maintain the cap on the number of resident food licences for Lake Melville. In all other areas of SFA 2, no additional trout and char food licences will be issued.

Overall, the management measures for the Labrador food fisheries will help address the conservation concerns with respect to the catch of 2SW salmon and the quota over-runs in the 2004 food fishery.

Commercial Fishery

There are no commercial fisheries for Atlantic salmon on Canada's east coast. The last commercial fishery, a small fishery on Quebec's Lower North Shore, concluded in 1999.

Recreational Fishery

Newfoundland and Labrador

The current 2002-2006 Salmon Management Plan remains unchanged for 2005, with the exception of areas where community conservation initiatives have been introduced. The major elements of the multi-year plan include a River Classification and Adaptive Management strategy.

Community conservation initiatives have been established for seven rivers in Bay St. George, Northwest River (Port Blanford), Terra Nova and the Exploits River. These rivers have seen increased salmon runs in the past several years mainly due to community involvement through stewardship and public awareness campaigns. These initiatives have been successful in rebuilding salmon stocks.

Other key management measures include the mandatory use of barbless hooks on all scheduled rivers, river closures based on Environmental Protocols (low water levels or high water temperatures) as well as selected river closures for the entire season for conservation reasons.

Management measures implemented for the past three years in Southern Labrador for the conservation of 2SW salmon in the recreational fishery will continue in 2005. These measures include a classification system for rivers impacted by the construction of the TransLabrador Highway (designated Class III with 2 grilse seasonal limit, and no retention of

large salmon). For all other rivers in Zones 1 and 2 the bag limit continues to be three grilse and one large salmon.

Recreational catches for Labrador increased from 8,584 in 2003 to 10,258 in 2004, while recreational catches for Insular Newfoundland declined from 41,320 in 2003 to 36,676 in 2004.

Salmon monitoring will continue in Labrador for 2005 with assessment facilities at Sand Hill River; Southwest Brook and Muddy Bay Brook in Zone 2 and English River in Zone 1.

Maritimes Region

The Maritimes Region consists of five Salmon Fishing Areas (19, 20, 21, 22 and 23). In 2004, only two monitored salmon rivers in the Region achieved spawning requirements. Rivers in two of these Areas (20 and 21) are negatively impacted by acid rain and are generally of low productivity. Given the stock status and the forecast for similar returns in 2005 management options are limited. Complete closures will be applied to most rivers in the Region with some limited hook and release angling opportunities and aboriginal harvests limited essentially to hatchery-origin fish. Angling licence sales have declined in Nova Scotia by 74% within the past decade.

Area 19 will open for hook and release only. In Areas 20 and 21, seven rivers will open to hook and release, and food fisheries on five those rivers will be permitted for fin-clipped hatchery grilse. This limited access in Areas 20 and 21 is not expected to contribute to any further decline in the stocks.

Rivers in the Inner Bay of Fundy portion of Areas 22 and 23 remain closed to salmon fishing (since 1990) and salmon stocks in this area were assessed as “endangered” by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada in 2001. They are now listed as “endangered” under Canada’s *Species at Risk Act* which means that no fishing or other harmful activity can be directed at these salmon. A live-gene bank program for Inner Bay of Fundy salmon stocks was initiated in 1998 and recovery actions continue for these stocks.

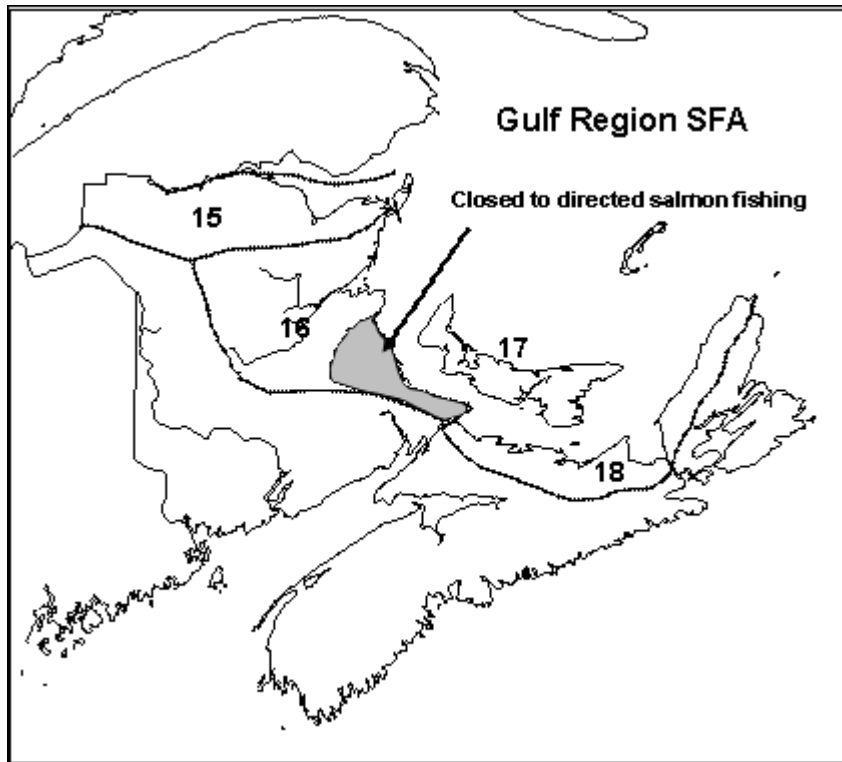
Gulf Region

The Gulf Region consists of four Salmon Fishing Areas (15, 16, 17 and 18). Overall, small salmon abundance in 2004 was higher than in 2003 and large salmon abundance was similar to or above the previous year values. Juvenile production in monitored rivers remains high with annual variations reflecting, in part, variations in egg depositions. Wild smolt production from the three largest rivers in Gulf Region was estimated in 2004 at about 2.1 million smolts compared with 1.4 million in 2003. These rivers collectively represent almost 80% of the salmon-producing area of the Gulf Region. All commercial fisheries for Atlantic salmon remain closed.

Atlantic salmon were harvested by two user groups in 2004: Aboriginal peoples and recreational fishers. Aboriginal peoples were given first access to salmon (after conservation requirements) based on communal needs for food, social and ceremonial purposes.

All angling fisheries for large salmon are mandatory catch and release fisheries. Retention angling fisheries for small salmon (grilse) during 2004 was allowed in most rivers of the

southern Gulf of St. Lawrence with the exception of a southeast corner of SFA 16 which remained closed to all directed salmon fisheries.



The daily grilse retention limit in the Miramichi River (SFA 16), Prince Edward Island (SFA 17) and the Nepisiguit River in SFA 15 is one fish. In the Restigouche River system (SFA 15), and Gulf Nova Scotia, Margaree River system (SFA 18), the daily retention limit of grilse is two fish. The maximum daily catch-and-release limit is four fish of any size for SFA 15, 16, 18 and two fish for SFA 17. The season bag limits in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (SFA 15, 16 & 18) is 8 grilse and 7 grilse in PEI (SFA 17) remains unchanged from previous years.

As in the past the angling seasons vary on a river-by-river management scheme for 2005. In essence it includes various periods starting with a spring April 15 (Black salmon) fishery in the Miramichi and Restigouche Rivers systems to a general summer (bright salmon) fishery on all the salmon rivers. Some late-run rivers are open until late fall.

In summary, the 2005 management measures for SFA 15, 16, 17 and 18 will remain the same, with the exceptions of the Tabusintac River where the daily bag limit has been reduced to one grilse consistent with the Miramichi watershed requirements, and on the main Southwest Miramichi where the expected socio-economic benefits of a season extension in 2004 did not materialize and the season has returned to April 15 to October 15.

Quebec

Quebec has developed a multi-year salmon strategy which establishes conservation limits and management targets for each river. Where the conservation limit is not met, catch and release fishing only is permitted for large salmon and to some extent for grilse, if the latter contribute more than 10% to the egg deposition to reach to conservation limit for each river. The fishing

of MSW salmon is permitted, with restrictions, on rivers where the conservation limit is exceeded.

Since 1984 the reporting of catches is mandatory in Quebec. Since 2003, an on-line catch reporting system has been implemented on some rivers to provide timely information on catches (date, length, weight, location). Managers will be able to make better management decisions more quickly with this information.

Stocks improved on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence, and many of the rivers are well above their conservation limits in this region. Stocks on the Upper and Mid North Shore are stable but the level of the stocks is still of concern. River survival is being maintained, but at-sea survival seems to have improved slightly. With the stronger grilse run of 2004, it is expected that there will be a good run of MSW salmon in 2005.