

North American Commission

NAC(09)4

Review of Atlantic Salmon Management Measures for 2009

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Introduction

As we have heard, the outlook for Atlantic salmon stocks continues to be generally poor and Atlantic Canada is no exception. 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. The lack of understanding of the factors affecting salmon at sea is a serious concern and remains a significant problem that could potentially be an obstacle to rational management of the resource.

Management measures for Atlantic salmon are tailored to the needs of specific areas (rivers and watersheds) while striving for an overall precautionary approach.

Aboriginal Food Fisheries

Aboriginal food fisheries for Atlantic salmon take place throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec. These Aboriginal rights for food, social and ceremonial purposes are permitted after conservation requirements have been addressed, and the Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that these fisheries take precedence over all other fishing.

The Federal Government, through 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 scientific projects such as tagging or gear trials (such as the use of trapnets instead of gillnets), where practical.

Commercial Fishery

There are no longer any 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

There are 305 salmon rivers in Newfoundland and more than 90 in Labrador. 2009 is the third year of the multi-year (2007-2011) Atlantic salmon integrated fisheries management plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. Following discussions with the Salmonid Advisory Committee, a number of minor adjustments are being made to the IFMP this year. In particular:

- a permanent closure of a section of the Shoal Harbour River from the existing dam to 23 metres upstream to alleviate concerns of foul hooking of salmon resting in the pool;
- a reclassification of the Grey River from Class II (4-fish retention) to Class III (2-fish retention);
- a standard daily, seasonal and possession limit for all Bay St George Rivers will be instituted;
- the opening of all Rocky River to catch and release angling (previously only the portion of the river from the mouth of Back River downstream to a point 25 metres above the falls was open); and
- a retention fishery for the main stem of the mid-Exploits River will be allowed, subject to a mid-season review to assess the returns.

Maritimes Region

The Maritimes Region consists of five Salmon Fishing Areas (19, 20, 21, 22 and 23). 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.

- For Salmon Fishing Areas 19, 20 and 21, management measures implemented in 2008 will be continued for 2009: i.e., mandatory barbless hooks when salmon fishing (all rivers in these Areas are hook and release only)

Gulf Region

The Gulf Region consists of four Salmon Fishing Areas (15, 16, 17 and 18). A number of management measures, implemented in 2008 will be continued for 2009:

- Daily live release limit during spring salmon (kelt) season (April 15 - May 15) is 10 on Miramichi;

- Portions of Main Southwest Miramichi and Northwest Miramichi Rivers are restricted to single barbless hooks for all angling;
- Dunk River (PEI) opened with restrictions from April 15 - Sept 15; catch and release only, barbless hooks with artificial lure and fly only; and
- Closing of Tryon River's east branch to angling.
- For Salmon Fishing Area 18 (NS) reduced from 8 to 4 the number of salmon tags available to anglers and implemented mandatory barbless hooks from October 1 to October 31 when salmon fishing.

In addition, two new management measures are being implemented for 2009:

- Barbless hooks with flies must now be used for angling all species (including salmon) during the period of April 15 to May 15 in most "fly fishing waters" in the Miramichi drainage (12 rivers); and
- In Prince Edward Island, there will be no retention of Atlantic salmon in 2009. No tags will be issued and fishing is by single barbless fly only.

Quebec

Salmon populations occur in 109 rivers and 5 tributaries in Quebec and are grouped into 11 fishing zones. A number of new elements have been introduced for the 2009 fishing season and are contained in the 2009 Quebec salmon sportfishing regulations (available on line):

- New rules concerning fishing tackle that may be used in a salmon river: prohibitions on using a hook with more than two points in a salmon river during a salmon fishing period, and on using more than two artificial flies in a salmon river;
- New fishing rules have been introduced for a number of rivers;
- Rivière Mont-Louis has been closed to salmon fishing;
- Certain tributaries of the Escoumins, Godbout, and Trinité rivers henceforth have a salmon river status;
- Anglers have an obligation to avoid injuring as much as possible a fish that is released under all circumstances, and a ban on fishing using hooks intentionally manipulated to hook or pierce any part of the fish has been instituted.
- In addition, the obligation to register a salmon by telephone with an office of the Department if no registration process is specifically indicated in the 2009 Quebec salmon sportfishing regulations.

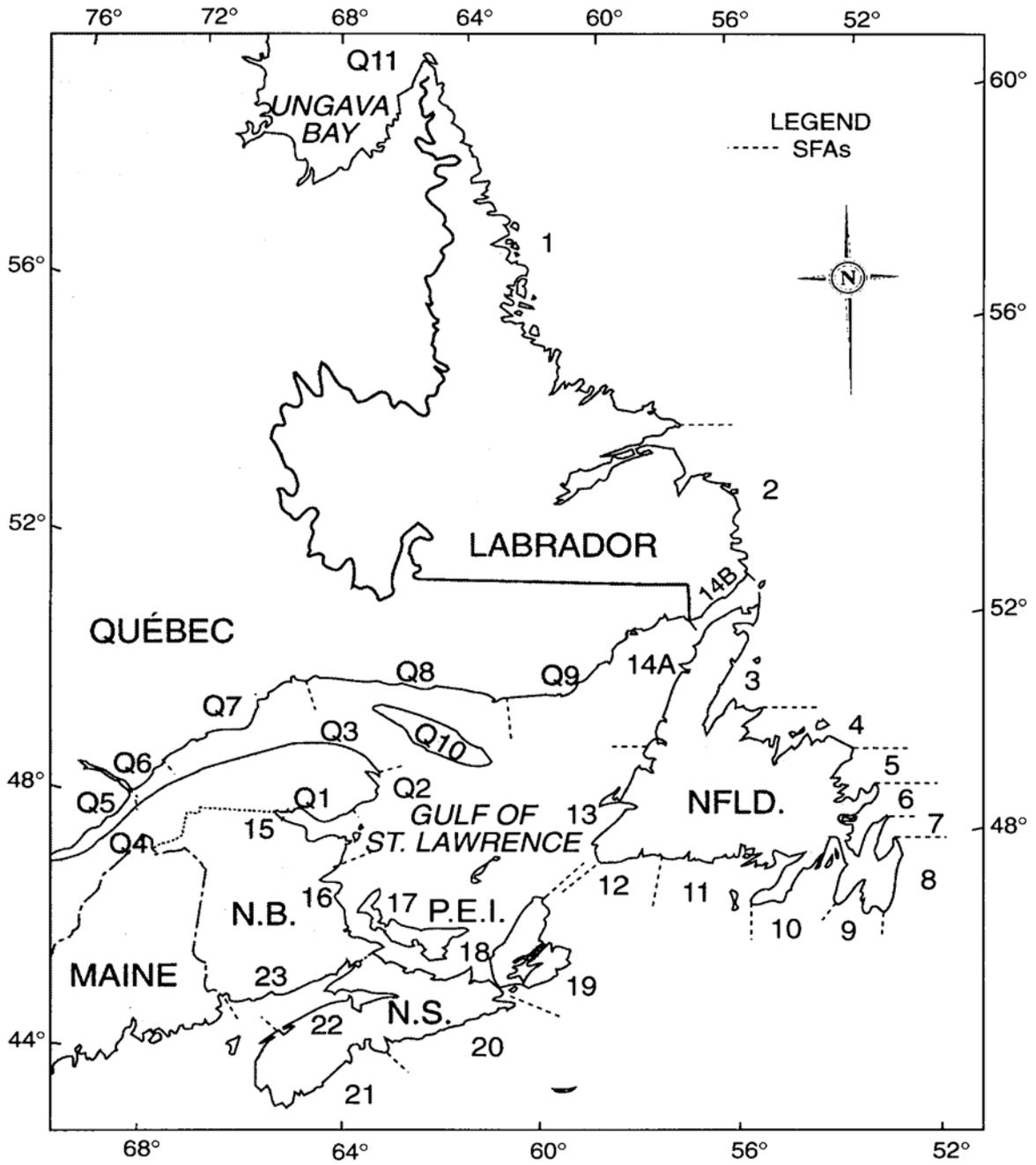
Atlantic-wide measures

Over the years, increasingly more restrictive management measures have been introduced in an attempt to compensate for declining marine survival and salmon abundance, including reduced daily and season bag limits, mandatory catch and release of large and in some cases all sizes of salmon, and in large portions of the Maritimes the total closure of the recreational fisheries. Several Aboriginal community fisheries have been reduced and, in some cases, voluntarily suspended. The failure of most stocks to rebuild to anticipated levels following increasingly more restrictive management measures of 1984 resulted in further reductions and eventually moratoria on commercial salmon fisheries in 1992 for insular Newfoundland, 1998 for Labrador and 2000 for all commercial fisheries in eastern Canada.

Nor surprisingly, there have been many calls for a new management approach. There have been calls for the federal government to take urgent action to help arrest the dramatic overall decline and to rebuild wild Atlantic salmon populations. There has been an increasing awareness that the importance of genetic diversity had not been adequately addressed in past management of salmon fisheries and its habitat. A new approach to managing salmon production and diversity is needed to conserve salmon and protect and restore the full array of benefits they provide to Canadians.

Work has been underway for the last few years on development of a “*Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy*” which will shortly be released. The policy will guide future decisions to conserve wild Atlantic salmon and their habitat and will facilitate an adaptive approach to salmon conservation. It neither amends nor overrides existing legislation or regulations but will govern how these statutory authorities will be implemented. The policy defines objectives and describes conservation outcomes, but it does not prescribe decision rules that would restrict its application.

This “*Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy*” represents Canada’s commitment and planned course of action for the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon. As such, the policy will provide guidance for the development of a strategic and integrated implementation plan to address current challenges. The policy is in keeping with a mandate to develop a common vision for the future management of wild Atlantic salmon, a governance model for fisheries management with modernized policy frameworks.



SALMON MANAGEMENT AREAS IN ATLANTIC CANADA AND QUEBEC