



Council

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The Role of General Education in the Conservation of Atlantic Salmon

NGO Statement

Coomhola Salmon Trust

“The Role of General Education in the Conservation of Atlantic Salmon”

presented (with Attachments) by Coomhola Salmon Trust to NASCO Conference,
Mondariz, Galicia, Spain

5 June 2001

Monsieur President, distinguished NASCO delegates, may I first thank our hosts for such a warm welcome here in Galicia:

“Muchas gracias por su caluroso recibimiento aqui en vuestro hermoso pais. Gracias por su hospitalidad, y os deseo mucha suerte en la conservación de vuestro Salman Atlántico!”

I represent Coomhola Salmon Trust, who operate from County Cork in the southwest of Ireland. Our brief is general environmental education...our method refers to local salmon populations as the touchstone or proof of local landscape quality.

We salute the work of NASCO...this immense, unified effort to assess and preserve the Atlantic Salmon is nothing short of wonderful in its scope. But my presence here is to remind NASCO members, collectively and severally, of the need to communicate with, and educate, your ordinary citizens.

The sciences which are brought to bear upon the problems associated with saving the salmon are, of necessity, quite rarefied. A gulf opens between your learnedness, and the comprehension and practice of those who impact upon salmon habitat; in effect, the general population.

I note that “Education”, as an operational measure, enters more frequently into the language of NASCO priorities; for example, in the “Proposed Approach to the Protection and Restoration of Atlantic Salmon Habitat”, Annex 7:

“...consultation, explanation, education, and politics may be of significant factors...in achieving the aims of this Plan.”

I would differ with this supposition in just one regard...there is no “may” or might about the role of Education. Models in Canada, the USA, Scotland, and now Ireland amply demonstrate that Education should augment conservation efforts every step of the way.

In this time of increasing awareness and appreciation of and indeed concern for the natural world, the salmonids are a natural symbol for high quality environment, whose presence furthermore vouchsafes the existence of an entire suite of other species. Therefore, our Environmental Education Programme, *StreamScapes*, seeks to communicate three main points to a wide, general audience:

- 1) instilling awareness of, and pride in, salmon, salmon life-cycle and the manifold natural and socio-economic benefits which attend the preservation or restoration of pristine aquatic habitat.
- 2) Enumerating the problems which contribute to the erosion of this state.
- 3) Demonstrating “best-practice principles” which apply to our activities in pursuit of livelihood and recreation, including domestic management (which we refer to as our “Sinks and Toilets as Tributaries” campaign).

I would refer you to *StreamScapes* educational materials in your pigeon-holes, and furthermore refer you to a supporting website, www.streamscapes.org as examples of these efforts.

Accordingly, I urge all NASCO members to ensure that *Salmon* are included in primary, secondary, and adult education curricula in your respective jurisdictions. The day that *Salmon* enter the everyday, working vocabularies of the general population is the day that we will surely see the turning point in our efforts to conserve this wonderful creature.

I wish to express appreciation to the Irish Marine Institute, the Central Fisheries Board, and Heritage Council for supporting *StreamScapes* educational activities.

Finally, may I pay tribute to the efforts of our Secretariat.

Thank you.