



**Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation
PEI Watershed Alliance
2022 – 2023 Provincial Symposiums**

The path to a healthy and sustainable wild Atlantic Salmon population in Atlantic Canada and in Québec



Summary Outcomes from the November 23, 2022 Symposium

Charlottetown, PEI



Post-Fiona catastrophic storm impacts, climate change and the essential role of the Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance dominate discussion at the ASCF's third provincial symposium in Charlottetown, PEI

The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation (ASCF) and the PEI Watershed Alliance (PEIWA) welcomed a diverse group of over thirty community, indigenous, research, government, conservation, and watershed management stakeholders to its third of five provincial wild Atlantic salmon symposiums. The symposium, held on November 23, 2022 at the Farm Centre in Charlottetown, was organized in cooperation with the Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance (The Alliance). Representatives from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

DFO staff lead an interactive engagement session



(DFO) in Ottawa and the regional office in Moncton also travelled to Charlottetown to participate in the symposium, leading an interactive session with respect to the elements contained within their draft "Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy".

Charline McCoy, the ASCF's Executive Director, and **Heather Laiskonis**, President of the Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance, launched the symposium with a focus on priority setting, planning, partnerships and collaboration. The need for a common voice and common goals were identified as shared objectives for the

symposium and the foundation for effective and sustainable environmental stewardship at the watershed level. The rapidly escalating impacts of climate change was a common theme throughout the day.

Stephen Chase, VP Government Affairs, provided an overview of the evolution of the [Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation](#) and its role as an agent and facilitator of watershed conservation activities on behalf of DFO and the Government of Canada. The ASCF's trust fund has grown to approximately \$42 million, supporting over \$1.3 million for seventy-three separate projects in PEI since the Foundation's inception in 2007. The ASCF funds have helped leverage more than \$5.8 million in local watershed projects in PEI (a ratio of 5:1).



Stephen reinforced the importance of the ASCF's volunteer Provincial and Scientific Advisory Committees in supporting successful watershed restoration and conservation activities across all five eastern Canadian provinces.

Rosanne MacFarlane and **Mary Finch**, representing the Government of PEI, delivered two presentations and updates focused on the evolution of wild Atlantic salmon conservation activities on PEI. The [Guignion Report](#) was identified as a critically important foundation for provincial watershed ecosystem planning activities based on extensive survey, mapping, data collection and stakeholder consultation activities. The Guignion Report continues to set the tone for targeted conservation and restoration activities on PEI rivers, including efforts to proactively address and mitigate the on-going impacts of increasing water temperatures, predation, bank and substrate erosion, sedimentation, agricultural pesticide run-off, stream impoundment and loss of riparian zone vegetation.

The [Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action](#) works with the Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance to connect people and groups together and provides funding in support of multi-species watershed conservation and restoration efforts. The Department also facilitates interaction and collaboration with key agriculture, aquaculture, transportation and municipal stakeholders. The importance of funding continuity at the watershed management level was identified as an on-going priority.

The morning wrapped up with a series of watershed updates and project presentations led by:

- **Jordan Condon**, Watershed Coordinator, [Central Queens Wildlife Federation](#)
- **Frances Braceland**, Co-Watershed Coordinator, **Fred Cheverie**, Souris & Area Watershed Advisor, and **Keila Miller**, Co-Watershed Coordinator, [Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation](#)
- **Katie Jordan**, representing the [Abegweit Conservation Society](#)
- **Hannah Murnaghan**, Watershed Coordinator, [Morell River Management Cooperative](#)
- **Nicolas Bergeron**, Coordinator / Field Technician, [Hillsborough River Association](#)

Jordan, Frances, Fred, Katie, Hannah and Nicolas collectively reinforced the environmental and human impact challenges facing Prince Edward Island's watersheds, highlighted by the catastrophic impacts of Hurricane Fiona this past September and climate change. They showcased the range of creative solutions that have been introduced across the Island to restore salmon rivers and their tributaries, including enhanced buffer zones, debris removal, sedimentation control and the restoration of spawning and rearing habitat. The evolving role of science as a watershed management tool was also reinforced, along with the importance of traditional indigenous knowledge. Volunteer development and community / youth engagement were identified as common themes and key watershed conservation success factors.



Charlotte Large, Project Manager with the [Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance](#), kicked off the afternoon with an interactive discussion focused on the Alliance's role as an umbrella watershed conservation organization. The symposium participants offered an enthusiastic endorsement of the role and mandate of the Alliance and the importance of speaking with a strong and unified voice with both the provincial and federal governments. The discussion reinforced the growing need for human and financial resources at the watershed level, as well as the ability to access incremental research capacity and technical resources.

Émilie Godbout-Beaulieu, an Economic Policy Analyst with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, facilitated a follow-up small group engagement session with respect to the agency's draft [Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy](#). The discussion focused on the critical need for collaboration, partnerships, enhanced communications and the need for incremental DFO resources (including staff) directed specifically at PEI watershed groups and salmon conservation. There was also general consensus regarding the urgent need to transition as-soon-as-possible from DFO policy and strategy to action in preserving and rebuilding wild Atlantic salmon stocks, as well as greater clarity with respect to the regulation and enforcement of recreational angling. Symposium participants were encouraged to have their voices heard as part of DFO's on-going stakeholder engagement process.



The symposium wrapped up with an interactive panel discussion moderated by **Mary Fitch** with participation from **Fred Cheverie**, **Rosanne MacFarlane**, **Jordan Condon** and **Chris Hunter**, Director of Programs, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island for the [Atlantic Salmon Federation \(ASF\)](#). The panel session focused on three key discussion themes:

1. Top Salmon Conservation Priorities

- a) **Focus:** *The need to “control what you can control” - PEI watershed conservation groups need to focus on creating the best inshore habitat they can, recognizing the increasing challenges associated with climate change and human impacts.*
- b) **Science:** *There is a critically important and elevated role for science in terms of both watershed monitoring and conservation activities.*
- c) **Resources:** *Incremental resources are required to shift PEI watershed conservation activities from a reactive approach (i.e., maintenance and restoration activities) to a proactive approach*



(i.e., managing and showcasing ecosystems that support healthy and growing wild Atlantic salmon populations and other species).

2. Best Way to Address Priority Issues, Both Locally and Provincially

- a) **Planning:** An updated provincial wild Atlantic salmon plan is required to support the transition from reactive to proactive activities at the watershed level, while building provincial capacity. Expectations are high that the DFO Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Strategy will be actioned in 2023, delivering enhanced funding and resources for conservation and restoration activities.
- b) **Monitoring:** The opportunity exists to launch a fully coordinated and consistent provincial approach to watershed monitoring and assessment activities (including data collection and analysis), with additional technical support. The Watershed Alliance would serve as the ideal delivery agent.
- c) **Enforcement:** Stricter regulation and enforcement on PEI salmon rivers is required, including enhanced buffer zones and local land use management controls. Land acquisitions (where possible) should be considered, as well as consistent recreational fisheries enforcement. Enhanced public and municipal engagement and education efforts are required.

3. The Path Forward – Creating an Enhanced Collaborative Partnership Model for PEI

There was general consensus that the Guignon Report and Prince Edward Island Watershed Alliance serve as the foundation for an enhanced wild Atlantic salmon conservation partnership on PEI, with an elevated coordination effort involving the Alliance; the PEI Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada; the

From teacher to conservationist – Fred Cheverie is the PEI recipient of several national awards



Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation; indigenous communities; the Atlantic Salmon Federation and other community stakeholders. The importance of “getting people in the room together” and the establishment of dedicated “action teams” were also highlighted, as well as the need for from all levels of government to commit the required resources to “get the job done”, particularly as a follow-up to the catastrophic impacts of Fiona. PEI also faces seasonal workforce challenges which are increasingly impacting watershed conservation activities.

Charline McCoy and **Heather Laiskonis** closed the symposium by acknowledging the passion and commitment of the symposium participants, while committing to on-going cooperation and collaboration. **Fred Cheverie** was acknowledged and recognized as a proud PEI recipient of several [national conservation awards](#), including the



prestigious national [Roland Michener Conservation Award](#) - granted yearly to an individual demonstrating a commitment to conserving Canada's natural resources.



Attachment A: ASCF Background

The ASCF, founded in 2007, was established as an endowment fund by the Government of Canada to create lasting financial support for Atlantic salmon conservation projects. Since its inception, it has granted more than \$12.5M to 763 projects, including applied scientific research grants and Indigenous-led projects. The outcomes of this work speak for themselves with more than 100 km² of Atlantic salmon habitat opened or improved.

The ASCF Board of Directors approved a renewed strategic plan in the spring of 2022 focused on transformational growth. The plan will guide the Foundation's direction and priorities for the five-year period extending from mid-2022 to 2027, including the goal to double the size of the ASCF's trust fund and the funds it distributes on an annual basis in support of Atlantic salmon conservation efforts in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Québec.

Sixty volunteers representing government, research, academic and several non-governmental organizations from five provinces support the work of the Foundation and are contributing their time and efforts in organizing the five provincial symposiums.

The ASCF's Vision, Values and Mission are well positioned for transformational growth:

Vision:

To contribute to the attainment of healthy and sustainable wild Atlantic Salmon in Atlantic Canada and in Québec

Values:

Inclusiveness and Partnerships, Volunteerism, Balance and Integrity

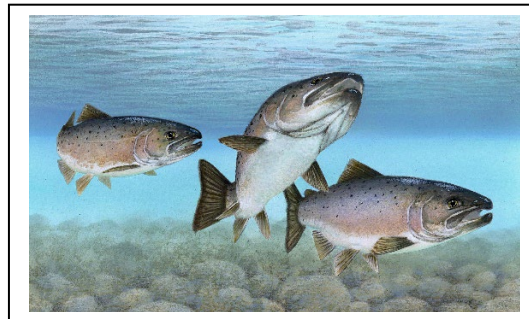
Mission:

To promote enhanced community partnerships in the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and its habitat in Atlantic Canada and Québec



Attachment B: ASCF Outcomes

The ASCF has delivered over **\$12.5 Million** in funds to **734** Projects since **2008**. Through effective governance, the original **\$30 million** trust fund has also grown to over **\$46 million**.



- 113 million square meters of habitat access opened and 2.2 million square meters of improved habitat.
- 8,989 volunteers contributed 211,822 hours of effort.
- 155,241 individuals involved in education & awareness.
- \$1.5 million contributed to 80 Indigenous organization projects.
- \$2.5 million contributed to 75 applied scientific research grants, aimed at improving the effectiveness of Atlantic salmon conservation efforts.
- 2,958 jobs sustained, mostly in rural areas - ASCF funded projects help sustain an eco-tourism industry worth several hundred million dollars annually in 5 provinces.
- ASCF funds have leveraged more than \$62.3 million in overall project valuation from other sources for an impressive leveraging ratio of 5:1.

Geographic distribution of ASCF funds since 2008:

- New Brunswick: **\$3.06 million**
- Newfoundland & Labrador: **\$3.07 million**
- Nova Scotia: **\$1.33 million**
- Prince Edward Island: **\$1.24 million**
- Quebec: **\$2.34 million**
- Scientific Advisory Committee: **\$1.47 million**