



SYMPOSIUM REPORT



NEW BRUNSWICK

2026 Atlantic Salmon Symposium



The Foundation for Conservation of Atlantic Salmon



New Brunswick Salmon Council

Supported by **Canada**

2026 Atlantic Salmon Symposium Report

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2026 Atlantic Salmon Symposium Report

Executive Summary

At the 2026 New Brunswick Atlantic Salmon Symposium, the Foundation for Conservation of Atlantic Salmon (FCAS) and the New Brunswick Salmon Council (NBSC) co-hosted individuals from across the province's Atlantic salmon conservation community of practice to advance implementation of Canada's National Strategy for the Future of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*). Building on previous symposiums held in 2022, 2023 and 2024, the goal of this event was to discuss tangible steps that translate national commitments into coordinated, place-based action at the provincial and watershed level.

To inform and ground conversations in the international and national context shaping Atlantic salmon conservation, the symposium opened with presentations about international, national and Indigenous salmon governance and conservation planning. Then, through facilitated working sessions and breakout discussions, participants identified the structural barriers most consistently limiting progress on the ground: funding silos, data gaps, inconsistent monitoring, permitting inefficiencies and governance structures that have yet to reflect the genuine decision-making authority of Indigenous nations. Participants identified situations where collaboration is working and the conditions that make it successful. Successful models share common characteristics: long-term relationships built on trust, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and leadership embedded in planning and governance, and a shared commitment to collective outcomes over organizational or jurisdictional interests. Finally, presentations were shared regarding research, tools and technologies to ensure salmon conservation is informed by the best available science.

Cross-scale challenges permeated all discussions; participants stressed that planning and implementing conservation at the watershed scale is a distinct undertaking, fundamentally different from working at provincial, national, or international scales. Facilitating effective information sharing between these disparate scales emerged as a top priority for ensuring work in each context is meaningfully informed by what is happening at the other scales. Further, there is a mismatch between watershed-scale problems and the site-by-site triage that is necessary for most local organizations given limited capacity.

Drawing on the collective knowledge and lived experience in the room, participants converged on priorities for watershed-level success including: meaningful Indigenous leadership and shared governance, permitting streamlining, habitat protection, stocking flexibility, and more consistent funding to enable the breadth of research and action necessary to turn the tide on the decline of Atlantic salmon populations. These priorities and the symposium's discussions continued the building of a clear foundation for coordinated action that Atlantic salmon conservation requires.



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Indigenous Opening Prayer • Introduction

Indigenous Opening Prayer



Elder Noel Milliea

Elder Noel Milliea reminded us that salmon are nearing an endangered state not because science failed to warn us, but because greed, commercial pressures and neglect have overridden Indigenous principles of balance, gratitude and taking only what is needed. He emphasized Mi'kmaq values of sharing, caring and respect for all living beings, and called for greater inclusion of Indigenous voices in stewardship and decision-making. As salmon populations decline because of pollution, overharvesting and habitat loss, Elder Noel urged communities to restore respectful relationships with nature, address barriers to collaboration and protect salmon for future generations by acting now.



Raymond Lacroix
President, FCAS



Butch Dalton
President, NBSC

Introduction

On March 12-13, 2026, leaders from across the New Brunswick Atlantic salmon conservation community gathered at the Convention Centre in Fredericton for a Provincial Atlantic Salmon Symposium, co-hosted by the Foundation for Conservation of Atlantic Salmon (FCAS) and the New Brunswick Salmon Council (NBSC). Watershed groups, government agencies, academic researchers and Indigenous organizations came together with a shared commitment to the future of the species. This event, in tandem with a parallel event in Nova Scotia, were

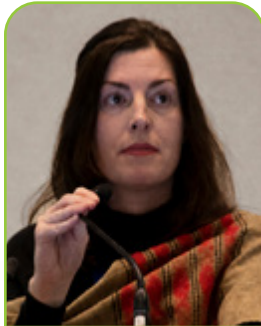
designed to follow-up with the first round of provincial symposiums held in 2022–2023 and the 2024 Inter-Provincial Atlantic Salmon Partnership Symposium. The goals of the symposium are to foster insightful discussions aligned with Canada's National Strategy for the Future of Atlantic Salmon and inspire ways to actions for Atlantic salmon conservation.

The symposium fostered informed dialogue and built a shared understanding needed to translate Canada's National Strategy for the Future of Atlantic Salmon into coordinated, on-the-ground action at the provincial and watershed levels. This report captures key themes and takeaways from presenters and participants, offering a summary of the symposium's proceedings. Detailed outputs from group activities appear in the appendices for those seeking a more detailed record of the discussions.

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion

Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion



Livia Goodbrand

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization's Strategy and Canada's National Strategy

Livia Goodbrand (*Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)*)

Key Takeaways

- **Connecting plans across scales is challenging yet critical.** International rebuilding planning for salmon connects with national planning through regular reporting. National planning efforts rely on existing collaborative efforts at the local watershed level to make progress towards stated goals.
- **Introduced genetic material, habitat change and alteration and temperature extremes are highlighted as Canada's most critical issues for salmon.** Canada's Conservation Commitment Report (CCR) to North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) prioritizes these threats for their impacts across many populations of salmon across the country.
- **The focal rivers approach connects international threats-based reporting to place-based management.** Canada can report to NASCO on the status of CCR named threats and show measurable progress towards addressing them. Domestically, that progress is generated through place-based work in a bounded set of watersheds where capacity can realistically be concentrated, reflecting the reality that specific threats, their severity and the feasible responses all vary by watershed.
- **The focal rivers approach will concentrate federal capacity on a subset of priority systems.** Because there are approximately 1,000 Atlantic salmon rivers nationally and constrained federal resources, focal rivers will be selected for concentrating federal efforts and reporting by Canada to NASCO to tell the story of salmon conservation.

Summary

There is strong alignment between national and NASCO commitments. Livia introduced the concept of focal rivers and reviewed tools to support implementation of the national strategy. To align domestic and international actions, Canada developed the national strategy in parallel with the NASCO strategy. Development of this strategy has been supported by an internal network including Nicole Bouchard, Livia Goodbrand, Erin Groulx and others. The national strategy focuses on four Strategic Outcomes:

- Watershed groups developing management plans
- Improving administrative processes
- Improving data sharing and accessibility
- Developing a stocking policy with coordination amongst provincial, federal and Indigenous groups.

The CCR formalizes Canada's commitment to the international (NASCO) process. The CCR identified introduced genetic material, habitat shifting and alteration, and temperature extremes as the highest priority threats, based on their impacts across Atlantic salmon Designatable Units (DUs). Under the CCR, Canada proposed a focal rivers approach to direct federal conservation capacity and report progress to NASCO. There are roughly 1,000 identified Atlantic salmon rivers across the country, so the focal approach is necessary to maximize impact, make efficient use of limited resources and align with existing policies and frameworks. The selection criteria for focal rivers within each DU is still being refined. The ability to leverage existing resources will be important given limited federal funding moving forward.

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion

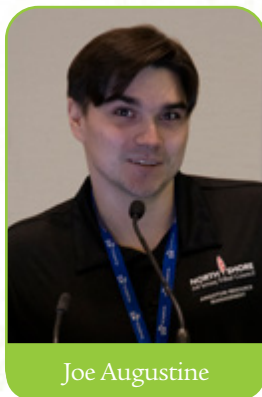
The presentation was interspersed with questions from symposium participants. Two questions stood out as particularly relevant to the broader Atlantic salmon community.

How will focal rivers be selected and implemented?

The concept is new and the process is still in the developmental phase. The initial approach identified rivers using Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) population status data, but the list of rivers was not adequate. DFO then developed a more robust, criteria-based selection in collaboration with the Newfoundland and Labrador Aquatic Research and Fish Management team. The criteria are being tested now and if effective in Newfoundland, it will be applied in other regions. Livia emphasized DFO's interest in collaborating with FCAS and other organizations on this work.

Will the salmon-focused strategy fully capture broader ecosystem dynamics?

The focus on salmon is intentional, as it helps attract funding and drive action. Efforts to streamline project permitting remain ongoing and will be piloted on select rivers.



Joe Augustine

Plamu First: Five-Year Strategic Plan

Joe Augustine (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)

Key Takeaways

- **Plamu First offers a working model of Indigenous-led, watershed-scale collaboration that aligns explicitly with all four strategic outcomes of Canada's national Atlantic salmon strategy.** The Collaborative Leadership Council formalizes decision-making roles for First Nations, NGO and DFO representatives, providing a transferable governance template.
- **The plan pairs habitat, population and research interventions, many of which are designed to mitigate threats from striped bass, a central but contested pressure.** DFO has not formally acknowledged the striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) predation impact on Miramichi salmon, signalling an unresolved science-policy gap relevant to focal river planning.
- **Implementation depends on a \$38 million federal funding request that remains unresolved and progress to date reflects this constraint.** Coordination and collaboration have advanced, while tangible actions on known priority threats have lagged due to resource limitations.

Summary

Joe Augustine opened his presentation with a personal reflection, recalling childhood memories of the Miramichi as one of New Brunswick's premier salmon rivers and lamenting that such abundance is now gone. Because of its historical abundance, he advocated for the Miramichi to be designated as a focal river.

The inaugural virtual Plamu¹ First conference in 2021 brought together NGOs, government bodies and Indigenous organizations around a shared goal of increasing Atlantic salmon populations in the Miramichi. In the 2021 conference, six strategic imperatives were established, all dependent on sustained funding:

- Improving coordination
- Addressing known threats
- Expanding public awareness

¹ "Plamu" is the Mi'kmaq word for salmon, a species inherently woven into Mi'kmaq culture and way of life.

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion

- Addressing data gaps
- Habitat enhancement
- Conducting a priority threat assessment.

The 2024 Plamu First conference reviewed progress on these imperatives, recognizing strong gains in coordination and collaboration but noting limited advancement in addressing known threats due to resource constraints. Plamu First released its five-year strategic plan² in April 2025. Its overarching goal is to restore Atlantic salmon and ecosystem balance in the Miramichi through long-term funding, an integrated watershed management plan, an Indigenous-led leadership council, codified agreements and stronger data sharing. Governance is structured through a Collaborative Leadership Council with an executive committee (comprising two First Nations, one NGO, one DFO representative), a steering committee, an engagement table, a technical table and full-time staff including Plamu Defenders³.

The plan outlines a wide range of on-the-ground projects, including salmon stocking, hatchery assessment and enhancement at the Miramichi Salmon Association, a gaspereau (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) bycatch gate to reduce striped bass interactions, cold-water pool restoration, erosion mitigation and bank stabilization, a collaborative smolt trap-and-transport program using PIT and acoustic tagging to move salmon past striped bass spawning areas, smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) mitigation, riparian protection, and striped bass population management. Complementary research projects include smallmouth bass population estimates, gene banking, improved predation bypass methods, expanded smolt tagging and studies of non-bass predators such as birds and seals. Advocacy efforts round out the plan through the Plamu Defenders program, an annual conference and Plamu-focused education and outreach.

Plamu First has submitted a \$38 million proposal to the federal government, emphasizing that the strategy aligns fully with the four strategic outcomes of Canada's national strategy. When asked if they were actively lobbying for this funding, Joe answered that they are advancing their efforts by speaking directly with key decision-makers and remain committed to securing this funding.



Tim Robinson

PLAMU: Medicine for the Land (Film)

Produced by Danilo Piljevic & David Borish, presented by Tim Robinson

Key Takeaways

- **Ecological recovery and cultural recovery are inseparable.** Bringing salmon back to the Petitcodiac is not only a biological achievement but also a restoration of the cultural relationship that was severed when the species was extirpated.
- **A rare proof-of-concept may be undermined just as it begins to work.** Salmon are returning to a watershed where they had been wiped out, yet the closure of the Coldbrook Biodiversity Facility (Nova Scotia) and Mactaquac Biodiversity Facility (New Brunswick) may threaten that progress. However, closures may open a path for Fort Folly First Nation to take over or create a new program and advance Indigenous-led management.

² The strategic plan can be found here: <https://nsmtc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Plamu-First-2024-Five-Year-Strategic-Plan-2025-2030.pdf>.

³ The strategic plan defines Plamu Defenders as “a team of boots-on-the-ground staff who continuously monitor the Miramichi watershed, record anecdotal catch data, engage with recreational and commercial fishers and advocate for conservation.”

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion

Summary

Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic (iBoF) salmon have been listed under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) since 2003 and their decline has impacted the Fort Folly community. In response, the Fundy Salmon Recovery Project⁴ was launched in 2016, bringing together a diverse group of partners to support salmon recovery through collaboration built on trust and respect. Salmon in the Petitcodiac watershed were once extirpated but are now starting to return. Expanding recovery efforts across multiple rivers is seen as critical to long-term success, alongside the need for sustained funding.

The short film featured interviews with stewards, community members, program staff, Fort Folly First Nation members and Parks Canada staff (Fundy National Park). Community members spoke about reconnecting with salmon in rivers where the species had been extirpated, noting that restoring the health of the land and water has also revitalized their cultural connection to salmon.

The recent closure of the Coldbrook and Mactaquac Biodiversity Centres are impactful, as these hatcheries have been actively supporting salmon recovery on the Petitcodiac River and across the broader iBoF population. The Fort Folly First Nation could be well positioned to take over the program.



Charlie Marshall

Indigenous-Led Governance & Collaboration: Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum

Charlie Marshall (*Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APC)*)

Key Takeaways

- **Indigenous voices have secured a foothold in international salmon governance.** APC's advocacy earned an IPRI (Indigenous Peoples' Representatives and Institutions) seat at NASCO. They currently have non-voting observer status, but it is a meaningful first step.
- **The Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum launched a process that is directly shaping national policy.** Discussions will inform Strategic Objective Two of Canada's National Strategy, which is why that objective was intentionally excluded from the symposium's collaborative sessions.
- **Five clear priorities are guiding First Nations salmon work going forward.** The priorities include education and youth engagement, a unified regional voice, co-decision-making and shared governance, improved public communication, and support for Indigenous-led initiatives with the Shared Atlantic Salmon Stewardship Declaration.

Summary

Charlie Marshall presented his work with the APC, a regional Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management (AAROM) organization that supports collaboration, communication, regional policy, and research and advocacy on behalf of its 33 member communities. APC's role in Atlantic salmon governance is both regional and international through NASCO. In recent years, Indigenous organizations like APC have worked collectively to fight for an IPRI seat at NASCO. Though it is presently a non-voting observer seat, it represents a significant achievement for international representation of Indigenous voices.

The Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum, held the week prior to this symposium, focused on partnership, collaboration and responsibility. The goal of the forum was to create a space for First Nations to

4 More information on the Fundy Salmon Recovery Project can be found at <https://fundysalmonrecovery.com/>

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come together and identify opportunities for collaboration both among themselves and with collaborative partners. The first day was restricted to Indigenous participants and the second day was open to all. The Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum discussions will inform Strategic Objective Two of Canada's National Strategy: Alignment with Indigenous Rights. To avoid pre-empting or duplicating that process, the New Brunswick Atlantic salmon symposium organizers did not include Objective Two in the symposium's collaborative information-sharing sessions.

The Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum identified five priority areas for First Nations salmon work:

- Education and youth engagement
- Fostering a unified voice to strengthen regional collaboration
- Advancing co-decision-making and shared governance
- Improving public communication
- Supporting Indigenous-led salmon initiatives.

Charlie concluded his presentation by presenting the Shared Atlantic Salmon Stewardship Declaration⁵, a statement that individuals and organizations can sign, designed to drive immediate action and highlight Indigenous peoples' global commitment to Atlantic salmon stewardship.



Karl Phillips

Smolt Tracking in the Miramichi

Karl Phillips (University of New Brunswick (UNB))

Key Takeaways

- **Problem framing shapes management solutions.** Only 6.4% of tagged smolts reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 2023, cold-blooded predators consumed 65.1%. Karl offered an important reframing, the issue is not that there are too many striped bass, but that there are too few salmon.
- **Two conservation stories are now in tension.** Striped bass recovery in the Miramichi is one of the region's most celebrated achievements and balancing the conservation needs of recovering bass and declining salmon will require a much deeper understanding of bass demographics to inform any intervention.

Summary

There is emerging conservation tension in the Miramichi River as striped bass populations recover and Atlantic salmon decline. In 2023, researchers tagged 249 smolts and only 6.4% reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while cold-blooded predators consumed 65.1%. Research on the use of telemetry technology in the Miramichi River studies predation by striped bass. Small acoustic tags to detect when tagged fish stopped moving, indicating mortality.

Striped bass populations can fluctuate suddenly and dramatically as a function of their demographics. The recovery of striped bass in the Miramichi River is one of the greatest conservation success stories, however, fewer bass would likely lead to more returning salmon. There is a need to study bass demographics thoroughly. The way to think about the problem is not an overabundance of bass, but a shortage of salmon. In response to a question regarding whether the absence of smolts in striped bass stomachs means bass are not consuming Atlantic salmon, the large disparity in population sizes means that predation by even a small proportion of the bass population could have a significant impact on salmon numbers.

⁵ The Stewardship Declaration can be found here: <https://wildsalmonday.com/declaration/>

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion



Kurt Samways

Atlantic Salmon Research in the Bay of Fundy Region

Kurt Samways (*UNB/Canadian Rivers Institute*)

Key Takeaways

- **Wild salmon are outperforming expectations in the iBoF.** Return rates are increasing independently of fish released through the Fundy Salmon Recovery Project, suggesting that wild fish, with their greater lifetime fitness, may be driving population recovery.
- **Region-specific marine use data is essential for effective management.** The findings that show where in the Bay of Fundy salmon spend their time challenge broad assumptions about marine threats, reinforcing the need for adaptive, place-based management.

Summary

The goal of this research is to better understand what is happening in the marine environment and how it influences Atlantic salmon migration patterns, growth and diet. While the marine environment is known to be shifting, how those changes translate into salmon behaviour and survival remains poorly understood. There is reason for cautious optimism in the iBoF, where return rates have been increasing independently of fish released through the Fundy Salmon Recovery Project. This suggests improved survival of wild fish whose lifetime fitness tends to be greater than that of hatchery-supported counterparts.

Salmon scales provide a detailed archive of a fish's life history, including feeding patterns, and may offer evidence of environmental shifts or changes in foraging locations. Between 2024 and 2025, 208 tags were deployed on migrating salmon. Predation events accounted for approximately 12% of mortality, primarily from seals and sharks. The data also indicated that Atlantic salmon primarily use the upper portion of the Bay of Fundy and have very limited interaction with aquaculture operations. These findings highlight the importance of region-specific management approaches. This dataset provides a strong framework for developing adaptive management strategies moving forward.



Gael Mercier

Temperature Modeling in the Restigouche

Gael Mercier (*Le Conseil de Gestion du Bassin Versant de la Rivière Restigouche (CGBVRR)*)

Key Takeaways

- **Accurately forecasting warm water temperature can enable faster management response.** This addresses the time lag between measuring dangerous conditions and implementing warm water protocols – a period when salmon are most vulnerable to thermal stress-related mortality.
- **Deterministic models can be made probabilistic by running scenarios in parallel with slightly varying inputs.** Pairing CEQUEAU modelling and ensemble forecasting is an effective way to understand the probability of exceeding warm water thresholds.

Summary

The presentation discussed a water temperature forecast model that is being used in the Restigouche watershed, one that is adaptable to other watersheds around the province. The model seeks to improve warm water protocols by developing a reliable and robust water temperature forecasting model that provides an indication of when warm water thresholds are likely to be exceeded. This allows managers to make quick de-

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Presentations: Information Sharing and Context for Discussion

cisions during periods when salmon are most vulnerable. The team used the CEQUEAU model for temperature forecasting, applying ensemble forecasting to generate 50 different discharge and temperature scenarios across the Restigouche Basin, creating a probabilistic output from a deterministic model. This modelling is packaged in a simple web interface and a mobile app to make it accessible. Further research will focus on improving efficiency, conducting cross-validation and consulting with partners, anglers, and camp owners regarding the model's management implications.



Ryan Hill

Poor Upstream Passage-Atlantic Salmon at the Trap-and-Transport Fishway

Ryan Hill (UNB)

Key Takeaways

- **Significant upstream salmon passage issues persist at the Mactaquac Dam.** Only 19% of tracked salmon successfully passed upstream, with an average passage duration of 58 days in the first formal performance assessment of a fishway whose effectiveness had not previously been measured.
- **Operational alignment may be as important as structural upgrades.** The fishway was in operation only 30% of the time when salmon arrived and over 90% of detections occurred during daylight hours. Salmon, however, typically

migrate at night, suggesting that operating schedules that are better aligned with fish behavior could complement the planned refurbishment.

Summary

The Mactaquac dam is the largest on the Atlantic seaboard and acts as a complete barrier to upstream fish movement, except through a fishway primarily designed for gaspereau. This fishway operates as a non-volitional system, meaning fish cannot pass at the time of their choosing. Instead, an operator must trap, lift and transport fish across the dam. The research assessed the performance of the Mactaquac fishway, which had not previously been formally evaluated. Using a combination of PIT, acoustic and combined acoustic, and radio tags (CARTs), researchers mapped the movement of salmon through the fishway. Of the 37 salmon tracked, only 7 successfully passed upstream, representing a passage efficiency of just 19%, with an average passage duration of 58 days. Although 64% of tagged fish were detected within the fishway, most did not reach the crowding pool where they could be captured and transported. Compounding the issue, the timing of fishway operation matched neither the natural migratory timing of the fish nor the flow release pattern of the dam, meaning that the fishway was often not open when fish were trying to migrate.

The fishway performance at Mactaquac is poor, with operational schedules misaligned with fish movement and attraction patterns. There is a need to increase operating frequency, particularly during daylight hours and to better understand fishway hydraulics to improve attraction. With Mactaquac currently undergoing a refurbishment process that includes planned upgrades to the fishway, it is important to consider environmental hydraulics, implementing automated trapping structures, enabling round-the-clock operation, conducting regular reassessments through adaptive management and establishing clearly defined management objectives.

In the question-and-answer period, DFO confirmed that they were aware of the challenges associated with the Mactaquac fishway and are in ongoing discussions about the problems with New Brunswick Power. Other examples of salmon-focused fishways demonstrate that 90% successful passage rates is a feasible target (improving from the present 19%).

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Connecting Outcomes Across Scales: National to Local

Connecting Outcomes Across Scales: National to Local

Achieving Strategic Outcomes: Participant Perspectives

**See Appendix A for a more detailed record of feedback for each National Strategy output*

Strategic Outcome 1: A collaborative, place-based approach to stewardship ensures healthy, climate-resilient ecosystems that can support Atlantic salmon

Working examples of a collaborative, place-based approach: Participants noted that there are already successful examples of collaborative, place-based approaches, including the Fundy Salmon Recovery program as well as partnerships on the Kouchibouguac, Restigouche, Hammond and Miramichi Rivers. These projects are supported by a combination of private, foundation and government funding. They are developing or implementing plans that address habitat, water quality, climate, invasive species and other salmon conservation priorities.

Existing gaps and barriers to success: Participants noted challenges in engaging government agencies, limited socio-economic expertise within conservation-focused groups and the significant effort required to engage the broader public.

Funding, capacity and permitting challenges were identified as the most tangible day-to-day barriers to implementation. Stable, multi-year funding agreements, including support for long-term post-restoration effectiveness monitoring, were identified as a foundational need. High staff turnover and reliance on short-term workers drain capacity for local watershed groups and increases training costs. For example, several groups that have the capacity to develop a plan lack the capacity to implement one.



Persistent permitting challenges experienced include slow turnaround times, inconsistency between regional offices and the misalignment between funding approval and permit issuance processes.

Elements of successful collaboration: Continuous communication and long-term relationships built on mutual respect and shared purpose were identified as the most critical to successful collaboration. Major roadblocks occur when government-level representatives are not involved at the watershed level or when data collected by various parties are unused or unshared at provincial or federal levels. Participants noted coordination gaps across many levels of government.

Recommendations: Participants recommended the development of a standardized watershed plan template that could be shared between groups, to build collective capacity without drawing down individual watershed group capacity. They suggested beginning with focused sub-watershed habitat plans before scaling up to address the full suite of social, cultural and economic dimensions of integrated planning.

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Connecting Outcomes Across Scales: National to Local

Participants supported the introduction of blanket permits for low-risk, routine activities and called for defined timeframes and greater standardization across the permitting process.

Cold water refugia, riparian areas, headwaters and woodland buffers were identified as the most critical habitat features to protect and should be considered priority conservation areas. Participants called for priority area protections to be embedded in regulation rather than left to discretionary enforcement.

Participants noted that funders tend to favor new projects over the sustained, long-term work that watersheds need. Evaluation of restoration effectiveness should focus on newer, unproven techniques while continuing to apply methods with an established track record. Expanding evaluation beyond adult return numbers to include a full life-cycle analysis was also strongly recommended.

Strategic Outcome 3: A vibrant, inclusive and knowledgeable community on Atlantic salmon is positioned for success

Need for a centralized data hub: Participants identified access, quality and coordination as the core challenges to effective knowledge sharing. Multiple participants noted the need for a centralized data hub where partners can access timely, standardized information and understand who is working where. Some

participants believe DFO is the appropriate entity to establish data standards and host a dedicated salmon data platform; however, anticipated federal staff cuts were flagged as a tangible threat to data continuity. Participants noted issues with receiving raw data in a timely manner (from government programs), a lack of support for data interpretation and lack of communication when datasets are submitted.

Available data and remaining gaps: Participants identified a range of datasets suitable for contributing to the NASCO Salmon Atlas, as well as remaining data gaps. Predation, bycatch and international harvest were highlighted as critical marine pressures requiring greater data collection and attention going forward. There was also strong support for including Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge as information sources alongside western data.

Conservation economy needs and recommendations: Effective conservation requires economic support. One participant recommended a gap analysis to map what economic programs and resources currently exist, to identify what is missing and to chart a collaborative path forward. Education and outreach were cited as essential tools for rebuilding the public's connection to salmon, including ecological, cultural and economic value. Indigenous-led initiatives including Plamu First were highlighted as conservation economy initiatives deserving dedicated and reliable support. Finally, participants stressed that long-term, sustained funding is a foundational requirement, not a nice-to-have.



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Breakout Sessions: Key Takeaways and Themes from Group Discussions

Strategic Outcome 4: Practices that support the management of fisheries and protection of Atlantic salmon are transparent, well-informed and responsive to the needs of salmon in a rapidly changing world.

Tools for Atlantic salmon management and protection: Participants offered three tools for successful on-the-ground protection of Atlantic salmon: angler education, enforcement and stocking policy. Across all three, participants agreed that effective action requires accessible communication, genuine collaboration and clear objectives. Reinforcing best practices with anglers requires meeting people where they are, including the installation of on-the-ground signage, plain-language protocols and education starting with youth. Strengthening enforcement against poaching (particularly during warm water events) will require greater funding and officer capacity alongside meaningful partnerships between law enforcement, Indigenous communities and local stakeholders. Plamu First Defenders were brought up as an example of a positive community-grounded model for enforcement.

Stocking policy and practices: Participants noted that successful stocking policy must begin with a clearly defined rebuilding objective. Stocking should not be considered a default solution; alternatives should be evaluated first, habitat viability should be confirmed and any stocking program should be designed to closely reflect the natural life cycle of salmon within a broader adaptive strategy for the population.

Approach for successful scaling: Successful scaling of the national strategy at the watershed level will require clarity in purpose, equitable collaboration and management approaches that are responsive to conditions on the ground.

Breakout Sessions: Key Takeaways and Themes from Group Discussions

**See Appendix B for meeting minutes*

Key Takeaways

- **Collaboration:** Success will require a foundational shift in how partners relate to one another. Successful collaboration should be built on trust, equitable authority and a shared commitment to outcomes over process.
- **Addressing structural barriers:** Jurisdictional boundaries, funding silos and top-down decision-making are the structural barriers that most consistently limit what is achievable on the ground.
- **Models for success:** Where progress is happening, it is because strong relationships have been prioritized, IK and leadership have been genuinely integrated and all parties have been willing to move beyond their traditional roles and limitations towards a common goal. That is the model the national strategy must enable and support at scale.



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Breakout Sessions: Breakout Group Summaries

Breakout Group Summaries

Building successful multi-party collaborations depends on the genuine willingness of all parties to work together and follow through. Participants identified trust gaps, inconsistent data sharing and a lack of coordination to achieve funding goals as persistent barriers. IK was discussed as a distinct and rigorous way of understanding the natural world. Participants discussed how IK may be considered equally alongside Western science. Collective outcomes, rather than organizational or jurisdictional interests, must be a focus for successful collaboration.

Implementation of scale, cost efficiency and prioritization: A gap was identified between the scale of the problems facing Atlantic salmon and the scale of the capacity available to address them. Participants called for clearer information on the scope of Focal River planning at DFO and a need for watershed-level dialogue. Participants noted a desire for stronger government support and legislative tools to better approach watershed-level impacts. Lack of landowner collaboration was identified as a significant limiting factor in successful project implementation. Equitable funding models and a triage approach to infrastructure issues (culverts and roads) were identified as practical priorities.



Indigenous leadership and co-management: The relationship between First Nations and salmon was described by participants as existential. The future of salmon and First Nations people is bound together. Management systems that fail to meaningfully include IK systems are therefore incomplete. Participants were clear that IK is not information that can be extracted from its

context; it is a living system of knowing and doing, inseparable from the people and land it comes from. Participants emphasized the need for a genuine transfer of authority from DFO to Indigenous and local management structures to enable the meaningful inclusion of IK. There was concern that DFO's results-oriented culture lacks the mechanisms to meaningfully value relationships and collaboration, and that embedding community engagement into performance measures is essential to shifting that culture. The partnership between Parks Canada and Fort Folly First Nation in the iBoF was held up as a model where recognition of Indigenous leadership in salmon conservation has been demonstrated through action, not just words.

The role of stocking: Given the extent of historical stocking in New Brunswick, participants noted that fully wild stocks may no longer be a realistic goal in most watersheds and that energy is better directed toward avoiding past mistakes than pursuing fully wild genetics. Clear objectives must underpin any stocking program and focal rivers are necessary given that capacity limitations do not enable in-depth work everywhere. Participants also noted that Indigenous and broader social perspectives on stocking are shifting as Atlantic salmon stocks continue to wane. Stable, long-term permitting and funding structures are needed to support a consistent, principled approach to rebuilding stocks in a sustainable way.

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Breakout Sessions: Conclusion

Conclusion

The 2026 New Brunswick Atlantic Salmon Symposium brought together a diverse and committed conservation community to address how the National Strategy for the Future of Atlantic Salmon can be effectively coordinated with local action in New Brunswick's watersheds. Across presentations, working sessions and breakout discussions, themes emerged including: the need for meaningful information sharing as a prerequisite for coordinated action; the centrality of relationships built on trust, mutual respect and shared purpose; and the recognition that IK and leadership are not supplementary to the strategy, but essential to its success.

The symposium served an important preplanning function, surfacing the priorities, gaps and structural barriers that must be addressed as the National Strategy takes shape at the provincial and watershed levels. Funding silos, jurisdictional boundaries, data gaps and top-down decision-making were identified as the most consistent obstacles to on-the-ground progress. Where these barriers have been overcome, success has come from prioritizing relationships over process and collective outcomes over organizational interests.

The goal of the symposium was not to produce any finished watershed-level plans, but to identify the building blocks needed to enable or continue those plans' development. The connections built at the symposium between people working towards the same objectives in different places are also a valuable output, strengthening the New Brunswick salmon community of practice. With those building blocks, connections and an assessment of where more detailed work is needed, conservation practitioners in New Brunswick are better equipped to expand upon proven collaborative models in the province to improve habitat and conditions for Atlantic salmon survival.



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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

Appendices

Appendix A: Gallery Walk

Participants engaged in a structured poster exercise designed to gather input on Strategic Outcomes 1, 3 and 4. Several desired outputs were listed as sub-headers on posters, with prompts (**bolded**) to help draw out responses from participants.

Only Outcomes 1, 3 and 4 were discussed at the Symposium. Outcomes and Outputs focused on Strategic Outcome 2 (Alignment of Atlantic salmon-related processes and policies within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and its supporting Action Plan) were not included in the poster exercise, as those topics had already been addressed at the APC's Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum.

Strategic Outcome 1

A collaborative, place-based approach to stewardship ensures healthy, climate-resilient ecosystems that can support Atlantic salmon.

Output: *Atlantic Salmon Roundtables or Advisory Committees are established in each province to “enhance coordination among federal and provincial governments, Indigenous organizations and stakeholders”.*

Provide specific examples of successful coordination happening within the province. Include what was successful and how it was done well.

- GKWA + GINU + Kopit salmon recovery Kouchibouguac
- Habitat restoration; egg planting in-stream; increasing trends
- GKWA and DFO officers and New Brunswick Dept. of Justice officers
- Poaching mitigation, surveillance
- Provincial EIA process
- Plamu First and Provincial MOU proposed collaborative structure for Miramichi river
- New Brunswick Watershed Caucus – group of New Brunswick watershed discussion their common issues
- Fundy Salmon Recovery (x2) - made successful by diversity of project partners, respect and support
- Watershed Management Working Group – opportunity for continued communication (x3)
- Wolastoq Priority Place Framework (ECCC)
- Restigouche Watershed Management Association and GINU on a variety of science-based projects including Watershade. Success achieved by working together on a common goal.
- The Nepisiguit Salmon Association works with GINU, Pabineau First Nation and other NGO'S very successfully.
- In the Restigouche area, the group GINU operates an annual science forum that is open to our community shareholders.

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Provide examples of coordination challenges in existing processes, or where there are gaps in coordination.

- Watershed management groups often include government representatives, but not always. Contact information may be out of date (contact with government department)
- Because of lack of coordination, the data collected might not be useful or needed or already collected.
- Government workers (ex: DTI) do not communicate with local groups while in the area and do not share the data they collected (x2)
- Collecting data but not using it
- Not enough data sharing (x2)
- Collecting overlapping data due to lack of communication (x2)
- Lack of continuous communication between parties (x5)
- Historical data not being used (x2)
- Collecting data for decision making on future plans is essential. Don't collect data just to collect data.
- Gaps include communications, one-sided decisions by government without consultation (catch limits), refusal of government to let go of the things they cannot do on the rivers any longer due to budget cuts and let the watershed groups do them. There are other things as well.
- Gaps are actually 4 levels of government and it's a lack of knowing what all the shareholders have to contribute to a solution.



Output: *An integrated watershed plan is developed to address key threats for Atlantic salmon.*

Note: “integrated” means inclusive of environmental, social, cultural and economic components.

Where do plans already exist and what specific threat(s) do the plans address?

- Forest management plans do include some mitigation strategies. They are not robust enough (x2)
- NWAI
- Maliseet Nation Conservation Council Wolastoq Plan under development (x2)
- Most FCAS funded projects have plans (x3)
- Individual iBoF rivers have plans made by respective watershed groups (x3)

Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

- Habitat restoration fisheries management public education (x4)
- Plamu First – predation, climate change, invasive species (x7)
- Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance
- Kouchibouguac habitat, water quality, silt, thermal refugia integrated
- There is a good plan for the Restigouche watershed. The main threats are lack of funding and the will by the watershed groups to look beyond the few who have been in charge of reaching out to the communities around them for new and possibly more members with the time to contribute to the plan.
- Hard to get Government agencies on board
- Various watershed groups try hard to engage the general public and this can have a positive outcome but takes time to implement

Where are plans still needed to address which threats?

- Directed funding for priority places and threats (x4)
- Expertise is needed in socioeconomics
- More info is needed for smaller systems to ID threats
- Focal sub-plans/strategies
- Is this question contrary to “integrated”? (x2)
- Better communication, more flexibility in the actual management of the resources, long term, but flexible planning for various concepts to help conserve the Atlantic salmon.
- The folks in forestry need to be at the table as well. They need to be partners not problems

**Do you have the necessary capacities to develop an integrated watershed plan? If not, what capacity gaps need to be filled?**

- Don't drink water – fish make love in it
- Some groups have specific mandates and may not want or be able to be involved in an integrated plan (x2)
- Have the capacity to develop by not implementation (x3)
- Lack SME (subject matter expert) support
- Groups (NGOs, etc.) don't have capacity to hit social, cultural, economic (in terms of quantification) because they focus on conservation and restoration and monitoring
- Pull specific sub-watershed plans together that focus on habitat to watershed level then do the social, cultural, etc.
- Having a template watershed plan to be used by groups to help build their capacity. “Blueprint”
- Yes!
- Financing and expertise
- Funding is always a challenge. Restigouche River Watershed was very fortunate with the support over 20 years ago to form the group and became very respected in community.

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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

Output: *Resources, capacity...and other funding sources are aligned towards delivery of actions outlined within an integrated watershed management plan.*

Where watershed management plans already exist, what implementation challenges are being experienced?

- Long-term funding / staff turnover (x5)
- New summer students constantly need training. New staff every year (x3)
- Directed funding based on priority places (ECCC) (x2)
- Funding sources often do not support stocking initiatives
- Multi-year agreements for funding (x6)
- Lack of coordination/prioritization
- Plamu First funding is the challenge
- Getting licensees on Crown land – i.e. companies – cooperation who work in the local watershed
- Fund long-term post restoration monitoring to conduct cross-section surveys
- Funding/ planning/ evaluation and coordination are all important
- Financing is always a struggle. Especially multi-year. Dedicated workforce would be a great help in moving the plan forward
- Communication amongst provincial and federal governments including inspectors

Output: *A project life-cycle approach to permitting is introduced to support the implementation of integrated watershed management plans in a way that is efficient, transparent and predictable.*

What challenges to federal and provincial permitting are being experienced and how can they be overcome?

- Blanket permits are the way to go (fish rescue, temperature logger, tree planting) (x2)
- Standardization of approvals/standard operating procedures (x3)
- Turnaround time on issuing permits could be shorter (x3)
- More liberal smolt acquisition and release (SAS) permitting. Be real. Few salmon left.
- Different regions of the same organizations support different things. Government.
- Grandfather clauses
- Habitat restoration permits should analyze long-term restoration efforts on Plamu
- Having the funding but not having permits in time (x2)
- Information session on federal and provincial funding program offered to potential applicants to know which programs exist and how best to apply (x2)
- It is my opinion permitting needs to be more flexible and with good reasoning and proper monitoring all permits could be regulated with much less of the diplomatic process than we have in place currently.

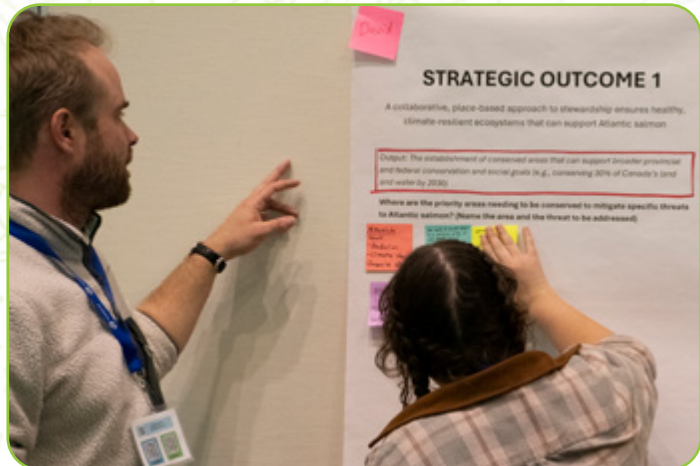
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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

- Permitting has not been a problem so far but a set time frame for application and acceptance would go a long way
- Too many projects stall without approvals

Where are the priority areas needing to be conserved to mitigate specific threats to Atlantic salmon? (Name the area and the threat to be addressed)

- Miramichi (x2)
 - Threats to climate change and invasive species
- We need to accept that in a warming world, we will NEVER recuperate salmon to pre-industrial levels. If we want to conserve salmon as a species and of itself and not as a resource to exploit (whatever the purpose or user group) we need to protect areas with no people nearby
- Conserve and protect cold water refuge, warming water is a major threat (x5)
- Protection of upper rivers and tributaries
- 50% cut max applied to small drainages (i.e. Second order streams)
- Private land conservation areas (x2)
- IPCA big salmon river (x5)
- Protection barriers in Miramichi (x2)
- Protection of head of water=address all life stages (spawning rearing) (x2)
- Natural (Beaver dams) and manmade barriers (x3)
- Riparian Zones (warming waters)
- Barriers to passage-access to spawning grounds (x2)
- Riparian zone protections against industry
- To be put into regulation so there is enforcement for priority areas
- Get rid of grandfather clauses
- Provincial protected area=buffer zone=protect cooler water (x3)
- Mining operations (tungsten/peat etc.) (x3)
- Cold water refugia need to be conserved and monitored everywhere (x6)
- Woodlands, farmlands, roadways, siltation areas, habitat restoration, cold water resources protection, enhancement
- Full watershed needs to be protected. You can't cherry pick which sections of the watershed need protection



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Where restoration and/or enhancement projects are already underway, how are these projects being supported? (Name the project, lead group and funder)

- KWRC 2024,2025
- Riparian
 - Green infrastructure
- ARF money (x2)
- GKWA-Kouchibouguac
 - Riparian stabilization
 - Fish passage
 - Restoration
 - Silt mitigation
 - Money
 - ◆ FCAS (x2)
 - ◆ DFO
 - ◆ Bass Pro
 - ◆ ETF
- Living shorelines
- Diversity of YOY
- Navigate with care, protect what's there
- Water quality
- Eelgrass monitoring
- Invasive species
- Bioindicators assessment
- Nwai (FCAS, NBWTF, AERF, NBETF) (x2)
 - Aquatic connectivity
 - Riparian restoration
 - Bank stabilization
 - Erosion monitoring
- Monitoring and restoration ACAP (iBoF-related funding) (x3)
 - FCAS #1
 - AERF (in the past)
 - AFSAR



Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

- AFS
- CNFASAR
- FCAS
- AFF
- NBWTF (x2)
- NBETF (x3)
- Many funders don't support stocking
 - Funders seem to want new and different projects. But that's not always what the watershed needs.
- Restigouche River Watershed Management Association and GINU – funding is varied but there is a significant amount of private funding through the various camp owners on the system who are involved.
- Most projects are funded but through private funders, there are few foundations. Little from governments, they need to step up to the table with monies.

What are the most critical habitat restoration projects that still need to start? (Name the stream/river/watershed, type of habitat and if possible suggested restoration techniques)

- Fundy salmon recovery in big salmon river (x2)
- Anywhere in Hammond River but especially Crawley's pool (ice shearing in winter, multidisciplinary approach needed)
- Miramichi River (x2)
 - Eradicate invasive bass, program started in 2023, but bass escaped nets
 - Program stopped but still needs to be addressed in Rotenone
- Thermal enhancement and cold-water refuge Kouchibouguac (x5)
 - Canopy cover bank restoration groundwater promotion
- Salmon recovery at Tobique at a scale that actually makes a difference
- Salmon restoration Kopit lodge GELOTIGET
 - Population decline due to poaching and clear cutting
 - Buffer zones needed
 - Agriculture runoff
 - Bank stabilization
- Much of the Restigouche system and its tributaries require habitat restoration. Most damage has resulted from razing the forests. Siltation build up is significant in many areas to the point that eventually it may impede both fish migration and travel on the rivers. Much thought and careful planning for the future is required in this area if we are to conserve Atlantic salmon.
- Cold water refuges in all watersheds

Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 1

Are restoration and/or enhancement projects and techniques being evaluated? If so, how?

- Hammond River
 - Waiting on few years to see effectiveness
- Metrics
 - Size of restoration
 - Population numbers
 - Redds
 - Water temperatures
 - Water levels
 - Diversity
 - Number of IK and Traditional Knowledge gatherings
 - Pesticides
- Techniques used (x3)
 - Water quality
 - Temperature
 - eDNA
 - CABIN
 - Electrofishing
 - Monitoring PPE post projects
 - ◆ Pre/post effects monitored (e.g. Effect on water quality, temperature etc.)
- Pre-post restoration monitoring (within 1-2 years) plus long term when funding allows (x3)
- FFHR
 - Juvenile salmon density assessments
 - Adult return monitoring
 - Do we need to evaluate restoration effectiveness? Some restoration techniques have been used for many decades and proven to be successful
 - Supposed to evaluate threats in advance so you know you have the root cause which leads to confidence that the right technique is being used in the right place
 - Therefore, we should focus monitoring on newer techniques that are not yet proven
- Bank restoration on Miramichi
 - Monitored for 5 years for CABIN (Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network)
- Only private ones that have been financed by camp owners are currently evaluated. Some have been done through the watershed committee as well but are not sure if they evaluate or not.
- Projects are evaluated on returns of Atlantic salmon rivers, expand to include bays as well



Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 3

Strategic Outcome 3

A vibrant, inclusive and knowledgeable community on Atlantic salmon is positioned for success

Output A: *The FAIR Guiding Principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, Reuse) for scientific data management and stewardship will be adopted by DFO.*

What data access and/or management challenges have you encountered that need to be overcome to help your work?

- When the data is shared, they share graphs and visuals, but people want to see the data itself that feeds into the graphs and figures (x2)
 - Data is ambiguous
- Lack of open data/data sharing
- Even if you have access to the data, not everybody knows how to use the data
- There should be training on using data – at the local (Petitcodiac River level)
- Local groups also need to know who to contact if they have questions about the data.
- Data that is being collected that is redundant – not helpful or needed
- No reason in science or was there any consultation for the reduction to a two fish daily limit. The result has been a significant loss of revenue for camps along the river. Several camps are now talking about reducing staff and cutting back on the number of weeks staff will work, thereby reducing their opportunity to draw EI for the weeks they are not employed.
- Collection of data over the last 50 years has been shared with all funding partners, government and NGOs but to what extent is the actual data being used
- Faster results of discussions, polls etc. Some Salmon counts are not released for 2 years

What are the key data gaps you're experiencing?

- Gaps in historical data (e.g. 5-year gap in the trend) (x4)
- Lack of “focal rivers” – if the data is to feed into DFO for management and they are only going to be looking at the focal river data, then data won't be collected on non-focal rivers (this is a concern for the future) (x4)
- Accurate commercial bycatch numbers
- Accurate sport fishing mortality and bycatch
- For Citizen Science Data, there should be criteria around usable data(x2)
 - Example of “Citizen Scientific Data”
- A dedicated platform to share and store data
- Getting a return on information submitted. Why wait a full year between sessions?

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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 3

How can data you collect be better/more fully utilized, if it is not already?

- More consistent methods of data collection, more consistent methods for communicating the data
- Open data New Brunswick – The province actually has the mechanism for open data to be available – there is a guy that works at the province to make these data available. The problem is that people aren't sending the data to them. People may not know it exists.
- People need to ask for specific provincial data
- Having a data hub where people know who does what to avoid duplication – people have the experience of trying to do a study and figure out later that someone is already doing that.
- Clear communication between watersheds and data collection efforts
- Try to limit duplicated data.
- IK and Traditional Knowledge/TEK should be collected (x4)
- Dalhousie University as a good example of good accessible data
- No answer other than to put the politicians out of office for not helping their constituents.
- We share data when requested.
- DFO as lead agency needs to provide a standardized format and platform for the entry and cataloging of data collected by groups working on salmon rivers. There are literally millions of dollars' worth of both current and historical salmon population and environmental data that is wasted due to inaccessibility. Getting this data into a consistent and analyzable format will provide an invaluable tool in monitoring salmon populations and the factors that affect them.



Output: *A strong, inclusive conservation economy supports Atlantic salmon, including in the areas of science, stewardship, fisheries and arts.*

What conservation economy opportunities would you like to see initiated and/or supported in the province?

- Incentivizing agricultural industry for riparian zone protections/restoration with outreach, benefits and protections = \$
 - Working with fishing stores to teach fishers about what fish should be put back
- Plamu First (x7)
- Establish Framework and conduct inventory
- What already exists – identify gaps

Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 3

- Salmon in New Brunswick should have preferred status and recognized in statute
- Importance of Atlantic salmon to Indigenous groups
- Safe and responsible tourism surrounding salmon runs
- Non-fishing tourism – interpretive guides during salmon runs (x2)
- Education/Outreach (x3)
- Atlantic salmon symposium
- Professional development workshops (x2)
- Community events that tie art and conservation together (x2)
- Educational programs in school
- Continue Fish Friends’ program (x2)
- There are lots of opportunities that could be discussed, however this should take place in a partnership atmosphere.
- More enforcement development would be nice for sure.

What constraints or limitations are there to create a strong conservation economy?

- (connected to PLAMU First comment)- DFO lack of funding for Plamu (x6)
 - Funding for under-studied (historic) salmon runs
 - Lack of long-term funding
- (Connected to framework comment above) Lack of current understanding what is actively contributing to the conservation economy
- (Connected to incentivizing agriculture comment above) The “Mafia” (Irving) monopoly in agriculture and basically set/make their own rules
- Lack of “focal rivers”
 - Not including tributaries?
- Lack of openness in exploring other options in projects for restoration (lowering water temps)
- Not a lot of exposure to conservation ideas in schools (if more city-based)
 - Lack of care/awareness to be clients (x2)
 - “What’s in it for me?”- make a personal connection
- (connected to comment on fish friends’ program)- Lack of eggs and lack of funding
 - Lack of hatcheries
- I think the government could explore some initiatives to get people involved in the conservation movement. As an example, perhaps a tax credit for the number of volunteers hours contributed to conservation projects. Also, “Participaction” was a great ignition program for physical fitness, why couldn’t we work together on a similar initiative to get the public involved in Conservation?
- Conservation of natural resources is an unseen expense of governments. Meaning people that do not use a forest, or river is not watching its demise. We need to educate the population.

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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 3

Output: *Canada will report on the population status of its Atlantic salmon stocks internationally, through the new NASCO Salmon Atlas and State of Salmon report.*

What population status information is most useful for your work?

- Net change over a time series (x2)
- Parr and fry population (x2)
- Timely access to raw data that DFO collects – it belongs to taxpayers
- More population assessments on rivers – i.e. Tabusintac River was last assessed 26 years ago
- More robust temporal series data

What data could you contribute to the NASCO Salmon Atlas?

- Young of the Year (YOY) assessments in estuaries
- Community aquatic monitoring program
- Parks Canada population data (x3)
- Fish passage barriers in upper tributaries (x2)
- Fundy Salmon recovery methodology and success stories (x3)
- Release amount by organizations (e.g. FFHR) (x3)
- Returning population data (x3)
- Smolt estimate data
- Smolt survivability
- Fry and Parr Counts
- Fry and egg survival
- Fry stocking numbers (x2)



Output: *DFO will work beyond Canada's borders to understand and mitigate pressures that impact Atlantic salmon in the marine environment, where feasible.*

What are the most critical marine and/or international issues that Canada needs to address?

- Very little public data re: seal predation (x2)
- Salmon harvest in international waters + bycatch (x4)
- Commercial fisheries by-catch data are not available. What are the effects on salmon? (x2)
- Not a lot of documentation of Atlantic salmon in marine environment (pictures, sightings, video)
- Bigger than Tobique

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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 4

Strategic Outcome 4

Practices that support the management of fisheries and protection of Atlantic salmon are transparent, well-informed, and responsive to the needs of salmon in a rapidly changing world.

Output: *Enhanced angler education will...reinforce best practices for recreational fisheries including the importance of warm water protocols.*

What best practices should be included in angler education?

- Safe Handling – keep fish in water as much as possible (x8)
- Use of proper equipment (x2)
- Educational signs at popular fishing spots (x3)
- Additional stress of other recreational usages – e.g. boating (x2)
- Learn to release salmon right – Pettigrew method – ask Pettigrew or John Magnell
- Methodologies that mitigate stress (don't prolong bringing them in)
- Where people can find warm water protocol information on Nepisiquit, DFO has only placed QR codes, in the woods, for warm water protocol info. And there is no service at those locations
- Start teaching the children – they are the future (teaching best and safe angler practices)
- Unintended impact on closed fisheries – disturbance (x2)
- River ethics, illegal introductions to watersheds, recommended fish handling practices, general rules and regs pertaining to species, seasons etc.
- More in depth hook and release information.
- Be rapid with information instead of a year or two. More public announcing etc.



Output: *Collaboration between local law enforcement agencies, Indigenous communities and stakeholders will be explored to deter poaching, especially during warm water periods when salmon are most vulnerable.*

How can greater collaboration between local law enforcement agencies, Indigenous communities and stakeholders be achieved?

- Support Plamu First. Bring in the Plamu Defenders
- Greater messaging surrounding importance of communities rallying around protection of Plamu (x3)
- Yes, collaboration is needed by agencies, yes more funding and perhaps making the public a part of deterring poachers too. Similar to a neighborhood watch.

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Appendix A: Gallery Walk • Strategic Outcome 4

- Giving enforcement powers to Indigenous guardians like Elsipogtog fisheries guardians and Kopit Lodge Gelotigetjig
- Proportional fines - % of income
- Increased fines for poachers (x4)
- More enforcement officers per square capita (x3)
- Increase funding for more enforcement (x4)
- Work together!
- Regional meetings would be a first step.
- Through communication. Instead of criticizing begin by understanding all sides involved. Everyone has a right to be heard that wants to contribute

Output: *Policy guidance to support decision making for Atlantic salmon stocking activities will...take into consideration a range of knowledge and perspectives...*

When rebuilding is the goal, what considerations should be taken into account when developing a stocking policy?

- What are you trying to mitigate? Lack of fishing. Big old fish. Put and take. Re-establish population SAS, fry
- Risk tolerance
- What are the alternatives (x2)
- What is “wild” (x2)
- Available funds don’t support stocking (x3)
- Pre-requisite would be ample healthy habitat (x3)
- Stocking the youngest salmon possible. SAS – fry – parr – smolts
- No pilot projects fund hatchery. Liberal SAS program. Fish are disappearing. Little to lose.
- River specific threats impacting salmon (habitat, predator, etc.)
- Ratio of wild to stocked salmon
- Identify baseline populations to determine when it’s appropriate (x2)
- Is stocking benefiting more than hurting wild salmon spawn? Returning population. Number of redds/wild salmon spawning
- Proven techniques, disease implications, age class to be stocked (closer to the egg, the better!) success evaluations and best value for the money to be spent.
- Development of stocking policies that closely mimic the natural life cycle of salmon is critical. Streamside incubation is an example.
- Consistency: when rebuilding a population, consistency helps populations by giving them support until they are at a point where a consistent number of individuals return to the river over many years to reproduce. When this happens a slow reduction of stocking should be initiated to let the salmon take over

Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

without it being a shock to the system by stopping all of a sudden. Prioritization of Genetic diversity: prioritizing diverse genotypes that prioritize species survival in a wild environment over what we as humans consider «better » (bigger, brighter colours, etc).

- Protect the wild and natural state of the Atlantic salmon.
- Maximizing genetic variability/integrity while minimizing cost and complexity. There is a plethora of tools and methods for stock recovery (i.e. stocking eggs, fry, parr, smolts, adults; parr-to-adult, smolt-to-adult; trucking smolt etc. etc.). The more barrels you put on your gun, the more likely you are to hit the target. Committing to a single approach limits flexibility in dealing with environmental variation.

Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

Participants organized into breakout groups to explore the session topics in greater depth; each breakout group was assigned a facilitator and a note taker. The following are key takeaways from each group discussion:

Topic: Building Multi-Party Collaborations

Participants: Kathryn Collet (facilitator), Gert Lawlor (notetaker), Katie Russell, Jeff Russell, Marie-Helene Theriault, Ben Whalen, Allyson Heustis

Focus: Indigenous nations, NGOs, DFO, priorities, provinces, municipal, academia

Participants noted that effective collaboration requires more than getting people in a room, it requires the right people, a clear governance structure and ongoing facilitation. The group emphasized the need for regular meetings with a defined process for making decisions and moving forward, rather than ad hoc gatherings that stall on competing priorities.

There was discussion on whether an existing working group could simply be expanded rather than creating something new. There was caution against overpopulating the table because too many parties with loosely defined roles can slow progress. Where specific technical expertise is needed, a subcommittee structure was suggested to involve specialists without burdening the core group.

Timing and logistics also matter, meeting schedules need to account for the reality that participants include both paid employees and volunteers, whose availability differs significantly.

Timing and logistics also matter, meeting schedules need to account for the reality that participants include both paid employees and volunteers, whose availability differs significantly.

Trust Gaps and How to Bridge Them: Trust gaps were identified as one of the most significant barriers to effective multi-party collaboration and they operate in multiple directions. Turnover is a structural cause of eroding trust. When provincial, federal, or municipal staff change, relationships and institutional memory



Appendix B: Breakout Sessions



built over time can be lost, forcing partners to rebuild trust from scratch. Municipalities were specifically noted as difficult partners, with low buy-in compared to other groups.

Data ownership and access surfaced as a source of tension. There is wariness about any single entity, particularly government, holding a shared dataset, with concern about how data might be interpreted or used. The trust gap also runs in the other direction. DFO does not always trust data collected by NGOs and community groups, which undermines the value of community monitoring and creates a one-sided dynamic.

Field-based relationship building was highlighted as one of the most effective ways to overcome these barriers. This may include collaboration like working side by side and not just representing your own organization's interests. Shared experience in the field breaks down the transactional nature of formal meetings.

Indigenous Knowledge and Partnership: The group questioned why IK is not considered “science”. The framing of IK versus western science can itself be a barrier. Participants suggested that breaking down barriers with Indigenous groups starts with showing up. This may include meeting First Nations on their own ground rather than expecting them to come to neutral or institutional spaces or joining a public event and engaging in open discussions. Meaningful steps toward relationship-building, not just information exchange.

Several important tensions were acknowledged. Restoration sites can overlap with areas of historical and cultural significance to Indigenous communities and this must be factored into planning from the start. At the same time, Indigenous groups may not want all their knowledge or site information publicized and that boundary must be respected. This should be balanced with the recognition that important information can be lost if these conversations don't happen at all. Two-eyed seeing training, led by Indigenous groups, was proposed as a mechanism for building shared understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

Funding, Overlap and Resource Sharing: Funding was repeatedly identified as a source of friction. Competition for the same dollars pushes groups apart rather than together and there is significant overlap in what different organizations are applying to do. Thoughts on how to approach funding stressors:

- Reviewing previous funding lists before applying to avoid duplicating work already completed
- Encouraging groups with overlapping mandates to apply jointly rather than competitively
- Moving toward regionally funded projects rather than many small, disconnected ones

On the resource side, equipment hubs and banks already exist but are not well known or easily accessible. For example, DFO fisheries data is publicly available now, but it is difficult to locate and navigate. Making these hubs visible, expanding them and ensuring quick access would reduce redundancy and lower barriers for smaller groups.

Collaborative training was also raised as an underutilized opportunity, sharing knowledge and skills across organizations builds both capacity and relationships simultaneously.

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Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

Data Sharing and a Collaborative Infrastructure: Underlying several threads of discussion was the need for a shared data infrastructure that builds trust rather than centralizing control. The group proposed a data portal that would consolidate links to existing datasets and include clear instructions for accessing and interpreting them, rather than centralizing the data itself under one owner. One suggested model was a back-end system that all participating groups can contribute directly, rather than routing everything through a single gatekeeper. This approach addresses the data ownership concern while still creating the consolidated, accessible resource that the group identified as lacking.

The portal concept of linking to existing datasets with navigational guidance would complement this by making what already exists findable and usable for groups that currently can't access it effectively.

Overarching Principles: The group agreed that success depends on a genuine willingness to work together. Structures, portals and training programs are only as effective as the collective intent and follow through. Organizations working within watersheds need to be open to communicating and collaborating with each other, including willingness to share information, with a focus on collective outcomes than on organizational territory.

Topic: Implementation scale, cost efficiency, prioritization tools

Prompt: What will it take to move from isolated projects to watershed-scale impact?

How should we prioritize barriers and restoration sites to maximize population benefits?

Participants: Mitch O'Donnell (facilitator), Kristen Milbury (notetaker), Mike Rushton, Billie-Koe Fowler, Sarah DeMone, Vanessa Leclair, Olisaemeka Ndubuisi, William Peabody

The “Focal Rivers” Debate: The preliminary concept of designating certain “focal rivers” is a significant point of concern among breakout participants. If a river is not on the focal list, the communities and organizations connected to it fear they will be left without access to funding, resources and support.

Beyond the practical implications, the term “focal” itself is unpopular. Participants felt it carries an implicit message that non-focal rivers, and the communities tied to them, are less important. This is particularly sensitive for Indigenous nations whose culturally significant rivers may not receive a focal designation despite their long-standing ecological and ceremonial importance.

There is also unresolved ambiguity around whether tributaries would fall within a focal river designation, adding another layer of uncertainty for groups trying to plan and apply for support.

The group expressed a strong need for watershed-level symposiums and communication events to clarify what prioritization means in practice and to reduce the confusion and anxiety that the current framing is generating.



Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

Scale of Restoration Work: A recurring theme was the mismatch between the scale of problems and the scale of current restoration capacity. Meaningful, watershed-wide impact requires robust, large-scale work, which in turn demands more funding, staff capacity and technical resources than most groups currently have access to.

In practice, many organizations are limited to addressing one or two small problems at a time, leaving larger, systemic issues unresolved. Combined with inconsistent stakeholder participation, this pushes groups into a site-by-site triage approach rather than allowing for coordinated, strategic watershed-level planning.

**Landowner Relations and Land Access:**

Collaboration with landowners, particularly private landowners, is one of the more persistent challenges in restoration work. Access to many parts of watersheds is restricted and many landowners are resistant to changing long-standing practices even when those practices are demonstrably harmful to the watershed.

Landowners who are experiencing direct, tangible impacts such as erosion tend to be the most receptive to restoration efforts. This suggests that community-driven identification of barriers and restoration needs is not only more equitable but also more effective at building long-term buy-in.

In regions like the Tabusintac Watershed Association (TWA) area, approximately 70% of land is Crown Land, meaning degradation driven by industry, farming, transportation and pollution falls under government jurisdiction. Here, deeper collaboration with Crown land managers is essential. Informal “gentleman’s agreements” in the TWA have been useful but need to be formalized in writing to ensure consistency and accountability over time.

Government Support, Legislation and Enforcement: Participants identified a clear need for stronger government support and more effective legislative tools to manage watershed impacts. Several specific gaps were highlighted:

Existing grandfather clauses allow some landowners to continue harmful activities that would not be permitted under current regulations, creating frustration and a sense of inequity among neighbors who do comply. Enforcement around riparian zone protection in particular is seen as inadequate, undermining conservation efforts on the ground.

Agencies like the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure need greater involvement, especially regarding culvert maintenance, replacement and deteriorating infrastructure. Even basic public education around practices as simple as lawn mowing near waterways were cited as areas needing more attention.

Culvert and Infrastructure Prioritization: A triage system for prioritizing barrier mitigation is needed, with upstream habitat gain identified as the key factor in determining where to focus. Groups like PWA face particular challenges when culverts are severely perched or deteriorated to the point where local capacity is insufficient, these cases require direct DTI intervention.

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There is a recognized need for a coordinated provincial policy plan to replace outdated culverts with open-bottom or otherwise more sustainable designs. Alongside this, capacity building and training are needed so that local organizations can take on culvert replacement and mitigation work without having to rely entirely on government response.

Road Decommissioning and Forgotten Infrastructure: A concern specific to back-road networks is the anticipated decommissioning of many provincial roads. This raises several interrelated issues:

The decommissioning process itself is poorly understood; there is genuine uncertainty about what it entails

and how decisions are made. The practical consequences for watershed health include loss of access to restoration sites and the risk that stream crossings associated with decommissioned roads will become unmaintained and overlooked. Without oversight, existing problems at those crossings could worsen significantly over time.

Funding Models and Equity: The group stressed that funding models must support rivers where conservation work is already succeeding without public visibility or political profile. Success should not be penalized by invisibility.

There is interest in channeling funding through organizations like the Fundy Coastal and Aquatic Society to distribute resources using their existing, proven model. More broadly, the group emphasized that ensuring equitable support across watersheds is essential. Any system that creates a two-tier structure of “important” and “unimportant” rivers risks undermining both the ecological and community dimensions of long-term watershed conservation.

Topic: Indigenous Leadership and Co-Management Models

Group: Leroy Anderson (facilitator), Kayla Wiens (notetaker), Alex Mills, William Simon, Joe Augustine.

Prompt: The discussion centered on transferring authority from DFO to Indigenous and local management, the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing, regional variances within DFO, limited funding for Atlantic salmon and opportunities to implement local management models.

Leroy opened by asking participants what governance meant to them. Responses emphasized the responsibility to Plamu (Atlantic salmon), particularly given their importance in sustaining Mi’kmaq communities for over 3,000 years, as well as themes of control and shared authority. From a legal perspective, participants noted that DFO does have mechanisms to transfer a degree of authority to First Nations. Strong emphasis was put on the need for a new system that is Indigenous led and managed that accounts for the non-Indigenous community with Plamu as the first step. Participants stressed that collective pressure on DFO is necessary to support the transfer or sharing of authority, including the implementation of initiatives such as Plamu defenders.

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The ZEC system was highlighted as an example of delegated management to local populations, demonstrating that such models already exist. Participants emphasized the need to embed reconciliation obligations into governance structures and shift toward localized management. Examples from the West Coast were noted as useful models, suggesting that solutions do not need to be built from scratch.

A major theme was the lack of federal funding and support for Atlantic salmon. Participants expressed frustration over Atlantic versus Pacific salmon funding, with a 1-million-dollar commitment described as a slap in the face especially given that initiatives like Plamu First align with national strategy outcomes yet receive limited backing. The closure of hatcheries was also raised as a source of confusion and concern, particularly due to inadequate consultation.

Two-Eyed Seeing emerged as a concept, but participants noted a gap between delivery and practice within DFO. There was a view that DFO is not fully upholding its obligations to Indigenous rights and interests. Achieving meaningful shared authority will require a fundamental shift in mindset within DFO, especially in how work planning is approached. Participants suggested that planning processes should be open, collaborative and free from predetermined outcomes.

While some progress has been made in recognizing IK, participants pointed to ongoing reluctance within DFO to meaningfully incorporate local and IK citing examples such as the Miramichi River, where locally collected data for DFO projects is not fully utilized. This reinforces the need for shared authority.

Finally, participants noted that DFO lacks mechanisms to value relationships and collaboration, as its work tends to be results-oriented. They emphasized the importance of embedding collaboration and community engagement into performance measures to ensure consistent and meaningful partnerships. Variability across DFO regions was also highlighted, particularly in relationships with Indigenous Nations, with staff often bearing the weight of broader departmental actions.

Topic: Indigenous Leadership and Co-Management Models

Participants: Siobhan Curry (facilitator), Tawney Lem (notetaker), Darienne Perley-Francis, Blayne Peters, Tim Robinson, Hurst Gannon, Ken Paul



Focus: Shared authority, knowledge systems, governance

Prompt: What does meaningful shared authority look like in salmon governance?

The group opened their discussion with an acknowledgement that “shared authority” and “salmon governance” are large topics that require much more time to unpack than what can be done in a short breakout session. These terms will likely also have very different meanings to each First Nation and organization. That said, a participant noted that the group cannot

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address the concept of “authority”, as Crown governments first need to recognize their need to relinquish authority, but that is not likely to happen. Therefore, it is more feasible to discuss shared management.

An example of where the federal government is making positive steps towards shared/co-management is how Parks Canada has been working with the Fort Folly First Nation in the iBoF. Parks Canada has recognized that two rivers in Fundy National Park are in Fort Folly territory. Recognition has not just been through words, but through their actions as well. A unified strategy has been developed to maintain remnant inner bay salmon and try to restore salmon numbers in partnership with the First Nation. By working hand in hand with Fort Folly on the salmon file, Parks Canada is demonstrating a form of reconciliation.

In contrast, participants expressed frustration about working with DFO on permitting, which has felt like authoritative gate keeping and with no opportunity for real governance discussions or co-management. The shuttering of two hatcheries with no consultation with the chiefs was cited as an example of this. Participants did recognize though that this was an Ottawa decision and not one made by the Regional Director General, so frustration was not aimed at the DFO colleagues’ participants regularly work with.

A participant emphasized that First Nations have a deep sense of responsibility as stewards, which has been severely encumbered by Ministerial discretion. While the Minister will continue to have the final say, participants did offer a path forward. Strong partnerships between First Nations, NGOs and others were described as the only way to get things done. Everyone in the watershed, together. The more local citizens are empowered with a common purpose around salmon the better everyone will be. Implicit to that is having the collective worldview shift closer to that of a First Nations worldview where everything is connected and seven generation thinking is applied to present day decision making. Values must also become more closely aligned, prioritizing ecosystems over economics.

The role of IK was also discussed. People need to understand that IK isn’t information that can be taken away (extractive). As a system, it’s a way of knowing and doing things. A participant summarized that First Nations’ connection to nature is such that if there are no longer salmon in their rivers, the people will cease to exist. Therefore, management systems cannot be built without IK systems.

Topic: The Role of Stocking

Participants: David Roth (facilitator), Astrea Strawn (notetaker), Becky Graham, Tommi L., Alanah Bartlett, Eric LeBlanc

Focus: Hatcheries, supportive breeding, genetic considerations

Prompt: When is stocking a useful conservation tool and when does it create more risk than benefit?

The group acknowledged upfront that the topic was broad and could go in many directions and that most participants in the breakout session (apart from the DFO representative) likely hold similar viewpoints. The discussion opened by debating genetic purity before expanding into questions of methods, economics, governance and timing of intervention.

Genetic Concerns: The group recognized that the genetic question, while important, is largely irrelevant at this point. Over 100 years of stocking and fish movement (back to the 1890s) means that genetic alteration of wild populations is already a reality in most Maritime rivers, especially in New Brunswick. Rivers are called “wild” based on management practice (existence of dams), not genetic purity.

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That said, context matters. In a truly pristine, unstocked river (e.g., one in Labrador with no history of human interference), there would be hesitation to recommend supplementation. In New Brunswick, however, there may not be a single river that hasn't been stocked for over a century. The group's consensus: the damage is done in that sense and the priority should be to not repeat the mistakes of the past rather than to treat genetic purity as an achievable goal in most systems.

A key question raised was whether, if a population grows large enough, it could ever be considered genetically wild again. The discussion was nuanced, larger populations do support greater genetic diversity, but there is always a residual element; the clock cannot be fully turned back.

Lessons Learned: There are stocking practices that were once common but would no longer be considered acceptable today. The group agreed these should serve as cautionary history. An exception to the general caution around stocking is the case of extirpated populations, where reintroduction may be warranted and necessary.

Project Proposals and Permitting: The group identified a need to shift the structure of the permitting process. Poorly designed project proposals are seen regularly, but speaking against them risks offending the applying groups, even when the project would likely produce poor outcomes. The preferred model would involve a permit application reviewed by a committee of genuine subject-matter experts, including external expertise (geneticists, etc.) where needed. If all parties come to the table in good faith, proposals can be improved through collaborative discussion rather than rejected outright.

It was noted, however, that good faith advice has not always felt accessible in practice. Some geneticists hold a purist stance against stocking in any form, which can complicate neutral expert review.

Methods and objectives: The group emphasized that the right stocking method depends entirely on the objective and that the objective must be clearly defined before any program begins. Participants listed increasing population size, increasing genetic diversity, providing fish for harvest (angler or First Nations use) and connecting people to salmon (social/cultural value) as possible objectives.

Fish can theoretically be collected and introduced to a river system at any life stage. When adults or post-smolts are introduced, return rates tend to be higher. For comparative evaluation (an “apples-to-apples” common garden approach) is needed, only “apples to oranges” has happened this far. The ultimate measure of success is levels of adult returns, having passed through all the environments the fish encounters, including the ocean. However, the practicality of a common garden study is challenging because different large systems have different dominant pressures (e.g., the Miramichi, where bass predation is the primary attrition source).

The group also noted that shared ocean conditions are a common denominator across all rivers flowing into the Gulf, which further complicates river-by-river comparisons.

A broader point was raised: programs that don't necessarily result in population changes but engage people and build connection to salmon may have as much or more value than purely biological interventions.

Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

Stocking infrastructure and focal rivers: Practical infrastructure options discussed include:

Sea caging: Easier in terms of facilities, but only viable in the Bay of Fundy, not the Gulf

Hatchery facilities: Fort Folly is working with Cook Aquaculture to renovate the Springdale facility; eggs and smolts can be collected, overwintered and transferred to dark harbor sites. This is cited as a model of industry-conservation collaboration. Industry hatcheries and older abandoned facilities could be rekindled, but all require funding that is not coming from DFO.

Because the work cannot be done on every river, focal rivers are necessary. Most rivers remain nominally “wild” but resource constraints force prioritization. Smaller rivers can still serve a testing function. There was an idea of experimental rivers (analogous to experimental lakes structure) where variables could be controlled, with the Kouchibouguac (or similar smaller system).

A structural concern was raised about permitting timelines: Starting a program that won’t receive a long-term permit (minimum five years recommended) undermines the investment. Programs need stable, long-term permitting to be viable. Funding structures also tend to favor focal rivers, leaving limited pockets for smaller, experimental systems.

Gene Banking: The gene banking program in the iBoF was a 25-year experiment, funding has been pulled so it will be shuttered, leaving a “now what” gap. The program preserved some genetics but did not successfully repopulate the river systems it was meant to restore. Within the inner Bay, gene banking had been considered the only viable method; its closure has created significant uncertainty.

Notably, recent graduate student research shows that genetics in the inner Bay are actually diversifying, hatchery fish are breeding with wild fish. This suggests that some level of biological integration is occurring even without a functioning repopulation program.

Economics of Stocking: The group touched on whether stocking programs can be economically justified. Key considerations included:

- Cost of smolts versus adult return rates must be weighed by river.
- Some rivers are not producing sufficient returns relative to investment, which has contributed to closure announcements.
- The West Coast received over \$6 million in salmon funding versus \$1 million for the East Coast, partly justified by the West Coast’s multimillion-dollar commercial fishery (there are actual financial returns coming in from the West Coast)
- On the East Coast, salmon can be fished recreationally but not retained, making economic valuation of the resource more difficult.
- The group suggested that if conservation and recreation value could be better quantified economically, the case for East Coast investment would be stronger.



Appendix B: Breakout Sessions

Park rivers (e.g., those under Parks Canada jurisdiction, where some salmon are SARA-listed) offer a different model: smolt production can be adjusted like a dial, collect more or fewer smolts from the system to rear to adults, providing flexibility to produce harvestable fish without fundamentally altering wild dynamics.

Timing of intervention: This was identified as the biggest area of disagreement with DFO. The department's tendency has been to wait until a population reaches SARA-listed status before intervening. The group's strong counterargument is that this is too late.



From a population ecology perspective, intervening earlier means that any genetic influence from hatchery fish is diluted by a larger existing wild population, thereby reducing risk while preserving more natural dynamics. DFO has acknowledged that the iBoF program was started approximately 15 years too late.

An important distinction was also raised: Biological health and genetic health are not the same thing. Genetically, a population can theoretically be maintained with as few as 50 individuals under controlled conditions, but such a small population cannot fulfill its ecosystem function. Numbers alone do not equal a healthy, functioning salmon population.

Indigenous and social perspectives: Perspectives from First Nations communities are evolving. There was previously wider resistance to non-wild fisheries in some communities, attributed in part to poor communication around stocking programs. As salmon populations have declined further, some communities that once opposed stocking are reconsidering their position, particularly in rivers where natural returns have become critically low.

The group also acknowledged that for First Nations, the discussion is not purely biological. Science is one aspect; social dimensions and ceremony are another, and both must be considered in any stocking or supplementation decision.

Anglers and First Nations communities alike may prefer a river with salmon, even stocked salmon, over an empty river. The framing of the question matters: is the goal genetic diversity, or is it the presence of salmon for ecological, cultural and social purposes?

Appendix C: Acronym Table

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Acronym	Full Name / Concept
AAROM	Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management
ACAP	Atlantic Coastal Action Program
AERF	Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Fund
AFF	Atlantic Fisheries Fund
AFS	Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy
AFSAR	Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk
APC	Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat
ARF	Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Fund
CABIN	Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network
CART	Combined Acoustic and Radio Tag
CCR	Conservation Commitment Report
CEQUEAU	Process-based hydrological model developed in Quebec
CGBVRR	Le Conseil de Gestion du Bassin Versant de la Rivière Restigouche
CNFASAR	Canadian Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk

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Acronym	Full Name / Concept
CO	Conservation Officer
COSEWIC	Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Department of Fisheries and Oceans)
DTI	Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (New Brunswick)
DU	Designatable Unit
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
eDNA	Environmental DNA
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FAIR	Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, Reusability
FCAS	Foundation for Conservation of Atlantic Salmon
FFHR	Fort Folly Habitat Recovery
GINU	Gespe'gewa'gi Institute of Natural Understanding
GKWA	Greater Kouchibouguac Watershed Association
iBoF	Inner Bay of Fundy

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Acronym	Full Name / Concept
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IPRI	Indigenous Peoples' Representatives and Institutions
KWRC	Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASCO	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization
NBETF	New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund
NBWTF	New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWAI	Nashwaak Watershed Association Inc.
PIT	Passive Integrated Transponder
PWA	Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance
QR	Quick Response (code)
SARA	Species at Risk Act
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TWA	Tabusintac Watershed Association

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Acronym	Full Name / Concept
UNB	University of New Brunswick
WCA	West Coast Aquatic
YOY	Young of the Year
ZEC	Zone d'Exploitation Contrôlée (Controlled Harvesting Zone, Quebec)

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Appendix D: Agenda

Appendix D: Agenda • Day One

OPENING

8:00 Coffee – Meet & Greet

8:30 Symposium Commences — Indigenous Opening Prayer

8:45 Welcoming Remarks
Raymond Lacroix, President, FCAS
Butch Dalton, President, NBSC

9:00 Background and Event Objectives

INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL CONTEXT

9:15 Presentations:
• North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization’s strategy
• Canada’s National Strategy
• Q&A
Livia Goodbrand, DFO

10:15 Break

SHARING & FOCUSING OUR WORK

10:30 • Indigenous Led Governance & Collaboration: Atlantic First Nation Salmon Governance Forum, Charlie Marshall, Fisheries Policy Analyst, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat

11:00 • Plamu First: Five-year Strategic Plan, Joe Augustine, Field Research Biologist, North Shore Mi’kmaq Tribal Council

12:00 Break

LINKING PRIORITIES TO REGIONAL ACTION

13:00 Interactive Exercise: (Gallery Walk)

14:30 Break

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RESEARCH, NEW TECHNOLOGIES & INNOVATION

15:00 • **Smolt Tracking in the Miramichi**, Karl Phillips, UNB
• **Atlantic Salmon Research in the Bay of Fundy Region**, Kurt Samways, UNB/CRI

16:00 **Closing Comments for the Day**

Appendix D: Agenda • Day Two

OPENING

8:00 **Coffee**

8:30 **Day 1 Recap**, Debrief of Interactive Exercise
Day 2 Outline

RESEARCH, NEW TECHNOLOGIES & INNOVATION

9:00 **Temperature Modelling in the Restigouche**, Gael Mercier and Jean-Daniel Savard, CGBVRR
Poor Upstream Passage Atlantic Salmon at the Trap-and-Transport Fishway, Ryan Hill, UNB

ADVANCING OUR WORK

9:40 **Thematic Discussions** • Breakout group sessions

10:45 **Break**

11:00 **Debrief Thematic Breakouts**

WRAP UP

11:40 **Closing Comments** • Thank you

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