

The Salmon Run



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From the President's Corner *by Jack Parker*

With early autumn's blazing colors fading to the russets of fall, cooling waters in the Saco estuary signal the last returning Atlantic salmon it's time to board the elevators at Cataract and Skelton dams and pass to upriver spawning grounds. By early October, thirty-eight fish had entered the river in Biddeford and twenty-four of them had been lifted by the Skelton elevator in Dayton and transported to nursery habitat upstream. Although this year's return is slightly less than the last, it is welcome news for our hatchery crew. In recent years, biological analyses of scales from returning fish indicated that most were from smolts stocked two years previously. As no smolts were stocked in 1991, we believe most of this year's returns originated as fry from our club's Biddeford hatchery. We expect this year's analysis will confirm that returning adults are from fry and will firmly establish the viability of our fry-stocking program.

To augment our program, the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission (MASC) authorized resumption of parr stocking in the Saco after a five-year hiatus. U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Florida Power and Light put 20,000 in the lower river in October. MASC also approved delivery of up to 800,000 eggs to us from the USFW Green Lake hatchery next February. In April, we anticipate several thousand smolts will be stocked. Additionally, some river-born smolts from wild adult fish will join this juvenile salmon convention. Prospects look good for a significantly upward return trend beginning in 2006. We have done much in pursuit of our mission to restore a self-sustaining population to the Saco, but much more remains. We are identifying what needs to be done next. To produce viable subsequent generations of wild Saco fish we need to reduce, gradually, our complete dependence on Penobscot fish, by producing eggs from Saco fish, fry from Saco eggs, parr from Saco fry, and smolt from Saco parr. We need more long-term partners with educational, scientific, work force and funding resources. We need more local and regional grassroots support. We need watershed wide improvements in habitat, fish passages and water conditions. Some may view this as overly ambitious, and detractors as futile, but our members and supporters, like the returning salmon, have overcome many obstacles over the last two decades and will continue to do so. Things are happening. We will keep you posted!

Holiday Fare *by Jack Parker*

Please open your calendars and circle Tuesday, December 9, in red and green to mark our highlight meeting of the season at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Saco. Doors will open at 6:00 pm and at 6:30, one of our members' wives, a professional Cuisenaire; will display her culinary talents by providing our dinner. She graciously offered this as an alternative to our usual potluck meal and we were quick to accept. To cover costs, we are suggesting a donation of seven dollars for each adult, no charge for children. If this works out well for all we will do it again. Following dinner, our program guest will be renowned Atlantic salmon advocate Ed Baum, who will share his views on the current situation of salmo salar. For those few of you who may not realize Ed's prominence and accomplishments on behalf of his beloved salmon, I suggest you type "Ed Baum" in the query line of your internet browser and click on search. You will soon begin to know about him. You will know more by reading some of his voluminous publications, particularly his great book, *Maine Atlantic Salmon, A National Treasure*. To make this easy for us he has promised to bring a few copies with him. This is a great opportunity for what promises to be a satisfying and educational evening. Please help kick off our upcoming hatchery season with your presence. Your guests will be more than welcome

Update on the Bar Mills License Application *By Mark Woodruff*

On June 27, FPL Energy submitted its license application for the Bar Mills dam. The application was a two-volume document describing the Bar Mills hydroelectric project and, among other topics, the existing river conditions in the head pond, tailrace, and bypass. The document also made proposals aimed at improving river conditions and angler access. I found that FPL Energy made a positive proposal regarding angler and boater access above and below the dam. There will be improvements to parking, trails, and canoe portage. The latter will be done in a manner that limits the size of the boats using the head pond. There were three topics in the application that were earlier identified by Jack Parker, RJ Mere, and myself that still fell short of our expectations. I notified the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) as part of the application review. The first topic was FPL Energy's proposed water release

of 25 cfs in the bypass on the Buxton side of the river. In my letter, I recommended increasing this to a minimum of 100 cfs because of further enhancements to habitat and angling opportunities in the bypass. The higher flows would also improve the bypass as a migratory pathway for anadromous fish. Fish passage was another topic that I felt FERC needed to consider before issuing a license. FPL Energy was definitely on track by stating it will provide upstream fish passage according to the Saco River Fish Passage Assessment Plan. However, their application would have been more complete if a preliminary design and cost estimates were provided. With this information, FERC would be able to evaluate the project's full environmental costs and impacts on operations.

Lastly, I had been concerned about the temperature data that FPL Energy collected in the head pond. It showed that to depths of over 20 feet water temperatures in the summer were the same. Admittedly, I do not have the background of the FPL or government fishery biologists, but it just seems that a river of that depth doesn't have to be a heat sink. Therefore, I questioned how this could be improved given that the head pond is managed as a migratory pathway. In the coming months, FERC will formerly accept the application or find it deficient. After conducting an environmental analysis in 2004, FERC will make its decision to renew the license by February 2005.

My Home Town **By Bob Monroe**

I rekindled my interest in outdoor sports this year. Just the other afternoon, I set up my decoys in the Mill Pond, where there have been Woodies and Mallards coming in. While sitting in my makeshift blind, I noticed mayflies coming up off the water. It is a good time of year to be out in the woods or on the waters, enjoying the beautiful display of colors. As I sat there relaxing, I had the opportunity to reflect on some of the precious moments that I have spent hiking the trails and observing wildlife from my canoe in their natural habitat. All this without leaving the small town of Lyman, which has been my home for 52 years. I could write a book on life in the wilds of Lyman, but this short essay is enough. By the way, no ducks flew in to join my blocks of decoys. I have been privileged to meet many special people through the Salmon Club, especially Dan (Bubba) Bonville. We have been fishing together from Key West to Yellowstone, also deep into the Canadian woods plus most of New England's streams and rivers. It has been fun and rewarding, but while Dan has continued to travel, I have chosen to fish close to home, mostly in my hometown of Lyman. I have been canoeing and fishing and discovering that some of the best fishing can be found close to home. I have caught crappies, large mouth bass, not to mention sightings of moose, deer, wild turkeys, and much more. If you didn't know better, you would swear you were in the North woods.

This year, as part of the stocking program, we released fry into Lyman waters for the first time. Hopefully, in two years,

smolts will swim down to the Saco River on their way to Greenland. Just knowing that we have Atlantic salmon in our back yard is awesome. There are ten ponds or lakes in Lyman that contain brookies, browns, rainbows, crappies, and bass. Also, there are a number of nice streams with native brookies. So, take the time to look in your back yard. Maybe you will enjoy it as much as I have mine.

Cast and Blast with Club Members **By Dan Bonville**

Our first cast and blast was held in the Moosehead Lake area, thanks to Steve Berry and his wonderful camp up on the Moose River. Because of the second half of the Maine moose season, the dates of October 3 through 5 were changed from those that conflicted with the moose season to one week earlier. The original count of members who were to attend got whittled down from 18 to four. Attending were Fred Pierce, Nick Sabilia, Tommy McNeil and Dan Bonville. Hunting Grouse was fun but not productive, so when the rain started around noon of Saturday, we all put on wet weather gear and went fly-fishing. Everybody got salmon and one brook trout at the East Outlet of the Kennebec River. Fred and Dan fished the West Outlet and did very well with double hook-ups and salmon both landed and lost in a flurry of takes that lasted a couple of hours on Sunday morning. These salmon were all 18 or 19 inches long, very fat, very healthy, and both male and female. Tommy was head chef, Nick was chief storyteller, and Fred and Dan were the keepers of the fire as the weekend was pretty chilly. Thanks, Steve, for lending the club your cabin once again.

Say Goodbye and Say Hello to Pat Keliher **By RJ Mere**

Pat Keliher announced his decision to leave Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) as Executive Director of that group. For seven years, Pat initiated many of Maine's laws pertaining to anadromous species like the herring, shad, and of course, the striped bass. He also fought hard for public access for coastal anglers. He was a guest speaker for the SRSC. Pat now has taken on a new position as Executive Director for the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission (ASC). His primary goal will be to coordinate a working relationship between Maine and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the recovery of the Atlantic salmon Downeast. He will also spend time on the Penobscot River Restoration Project, lobbying, and fundraising. We look forward to seeing Pat Keliher doing great things in ASC as he did in CCA. Congratulations, Pat!

Submit your short article for "The Salmon Run."

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