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Atlantic Salmon Federation

Petitcodiac River Causeway – The end is in sight

Press release

St. Andrews, NB... The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) and the New Brunswick Salmon Council (NBSC) commend the Province of New Brunswick for its decision to restore the Petitcodiac River to at least a major portion of what it was before a causeway was installed across the river in 1968. "While this was a difficult decision for the Province, it is certainly the only environmentally correct decision," stated Patricia Edwards, ASF's Regional Director for New Brunswick.

The announcement delivered on Tuesday by Minister of Supply and Services, Roly MacIntryre, and Minister of Health, Mike Murphy, is the first step toward restoring both adequate fish passage and the natural distribution and abundance of fresh and salt water habitats within the beleaguered Petitcodiac watershed.

ASF and the NBSC are now urging the Federal government to work with the Province of New Brunswick to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement complete with timelines. "The Federal government should follow its own oft-given management advice about the strength of partnerships, the necessity for shared responsibility, and the requirement for cost-sharing," added Gary Spencer, President of the NBSC. "The time has come to right the environmental wrong that was done to the Petitcodiac. The Province has stated its position; now it is up to the Federal government to make its commitment to the environment and to the future of Metro Moncton and Atlantic Canada."

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Since its construction in 1968, the Petitcodiac causeway and its various fishways have contravened the Federal Fisheries Act by restricting or eliminating passage of any and all fish species. Countless efforts, over the past four decades to improve the fishways at the causeway failed to provide adequate fish passage for any species, including the Atlantic salmon.

Prior to 1968, the Petitcodiac River supported a run of 2000 - 3000 salmon annually, but after the causeway was completed the Petitcodiac run dwindled to mere hundreds of salmon. This decline preceded the precipitous crash of Inner Bay of Fundy salmon (IBoF) stocks. Those salmon are now listed as "Endangered" under the Federal Species at Risk Act.

Mr. Spencer also stated that, "While we are not suggesting that the causeway was the principal cause for the decline of IBoF salmon stocks as a whole, it definitely contributed greatly to the species decline in the Petitcodiac River. As long as the causeway remains in place, salmon cannot ascend the river regardless of how strong the stocks are. The sooner the proposed bridge is in place and the causeway and its gate and fishway structures are dismantled, the sooner we can start restoring wild Atlantic salmon populations to their natural range in the Petitcodiac."

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The Atlantic Salmon Federation is an international, non-profit organization that promotes the conservation and wise management of wild Atlantic salmon and their environment. ASF has a network of seven Regional Councils (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, Maine and Western New England), which have a membership of 135 river associations. The Regional Councils cover the freshwater range of wild Atlantic salmon in Canada and the United States.