



NEW BRUNSWICK WILD LIFE FEDERATION INC.

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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WE NEED LOCAL ANGLERS BACK ON OUR SALMON RIVERS

New Brunswick Wildlife Federation President Charles LeBlanc said today that we need local salmon anglers back on the rivers.

He noted for the past two angling season New Brunswick anglers have been staying away from the rivers in droves and that this is a direct result of the mandatory hook and release variance order put in place in 2015.

NBWF has been in existence since 1924 and has spoken on behalf of the ordinary New Brunswick angler and hunter since that time and it is those people, not non-residents and others, that NBWF speaks for.

Anglers being on the river as eyes and ears help to deter poaching. They also contribute to the economic welfare of the small communities along the rivers. He said fewer anglers on the river also means fewer young people are being introduced to the sport. It is our youth who are the future of conservation. If they do not learn about the wise use of our natural resources, they will not learn about conservation.

LeBlanc also stated that the Federation stands for the harvest of grilse by anglers that is based on the principles of harvest by abundance and river by river management, and requests a return to the 2014 regulations for the retention of grilse unless DFO can provide scientific evidence that this request is not reasonable. That being said, he does not see any conservation

merit in the 2015 mandatory hook and release measures. The Federation views the imposition of the province-wide hook and release variance order as not reflecting the established science-based conservation principles for the management of Atlantic salmon.

NBWF was the driving force behind the promotion of the mandatory release of large salmon in the 1980's. LeBlanc says his members realize that the Northwest Miramichi system requires special treatment as returns are low there.

On the Northwest Miramichi, grilse are approximately 22% female, and grilse (female and male combined), contribute 450 eggs per fish, in comparison with large salmon which are 80% female, with a combined contribution of 6,000 eggs per fish.

On the Southwest Miramichi, grilse are 12% female and, as combined female-male, contribute 800 eggs per fish, in comparison with large salmon being 80% female with a combined contribution of 6,000 eggs per fish. The ratio of eggs from salmon combined to grilse combined, is about 13:1 for the Southwest and 7:1 on the Northwest. So, Grilse do play a role on the Northwest, but a lesser role on the Southwest. Accordingly, the Federation supports the harvest of grilse by anglers on the Southwest Miramichi and as well on all other rivers where the resource will sustain it.

LeBlanc said unless DFO can demonstrate that the science has changed from pre-2015 and justifies the release of grilse, then his Federation is asking that the 2014 retention measures be restored at the outset of the season on April 15th, with tags for anglers who wish to use them. We have to get ordinary anglers back on the river and the way to do that is to give them tags, he said.

LeBlanc realizes that DFO cannot implement real change for river by river management in the 2017 season and therefore recommends, as in interim measure for 2017, that angling regulations be returned to the 2014 tag system.

The returns in 2014 were drastically reduced and led to the mandatory release of all grilse in 2015 and 2016. He says we saw, and still see this, as a feel good action, done without being based on science. There are enough grilse on the Southwest to sustain retention.

While 2014 returns were poor, that year is not without precedent and has to be put into perspective. The 2014 returns of multi-sea winter salmon to the Miramichi are near the returns of 9,000 in 1979 and 9,500 in 1998.

LeBlanc has urged DFO to reinstate tags on the Southwest Miramichi for this angling season and says this has to be done soon, as the season is fast approaching and the provincial Fish Guide and retention tags have to be ordered by the province. To wait and then say it is too late to do anything for 2017m is unacceptable he said.

Contact: Charles LeBlanc – 506.866.4345

- Email: cleblan618@rogers.com

James Sinclair - 506.389.2605

- Email – clubsinc@nbnet.nb.ca