Help DSF Achieve Significant Landmarks

Please consider making Atlantic salmon and the rivers of eastern Maine part of your legacy through a planned gift to the Downeast Salmon Federation.

Planned gifts are deferred contributions made through your will or estate plan, a beneficiary designation, or life income gift. Planned giving can help you achieve your philanthropic and financial goals as you establish a legacy of giving back to the fish and streams that you love.

Join the Downeast Legacy Society today. Contact Tracy Shaw at (207)483-4336 or email dsf@mainesalmonrivers.org for more information.

“Mother nature may provide nourishment to both the body and soul, but she needs a good caretaker. The Downeast Salmon Federation does just that in a precious place.”

ALAN “CHUBBA” KANE - Photographed here with his wife Bonnie and poodle Emma.
We were able to confirm some of the young salmon that were a result of the 60 redds (salmon nests) documented in 2019 in the East Machias River. These redds came from salmon stocked from the Peter Gray Hatchery in years past. Visit the DSF Facebook page to see the videos.

www.facebook.com/downeastsalmon

This is one of the salmon rear¬ing habitat sections of rivers and streams where DSF’s Peter Gray Hatchery stocks parr. It is also where the DSF Land Trust (in partnership with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection) annually places tons of clam shells along the stream to add calcium and provide pH mitigation in an effort to aid Atlantic salmon and macroinvertebrate development. Maine DEP works with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to compare juvenile fish production pre and post treatment. DEP also assess the productivity of lower trophic level organisms by doing macro-invertebrate surveys and leaf pack surveys.

Recent data highlights the breakthrough observed in the smolt to adult return ratios in the Peter Gray Parr Project. This has led to the decision to expand the program into the Narraguagus River based on the following data:

Over the period of the Peter Gray Parr Project, Peter Gray fall parr stocking results in an average smolt production rate of 0.60 smolt/unit of habitat (100 sq meters) stocked in the East Machias River (Brucks et al. 2020; DSF 2020).

If performance were similar in the Narraguagus and Machias rivers, stocking Peter Gray fall parr in the 9,100 units of currently vacant habitat would produce approximately 5,460 additional smolts for the Downeast SHRU. At the average 25W (sea winter) SAR observed on the East Machias River from the PGPP (1.92%) (USASAC 2020), additional smolt production from expanding Peter Gray fall parr stocking into this vacant habitat would result approximately 105 additional 25W spawners. This data could be extrapolated to other salmon rivers to estimate production if similar results to what has been seen in the East Machias were observed.

The average SAR from the Peter Gray Parr Project (2.117%) is 2 times greater than the previous 5-year average SARs for naturally reared salmon (fry stocked or naturally spawned salmon) on the Narraguagus River (1.055%) and nearly 20 times greater than return rates of smolt stocked salmon on the Penobsot River (0.107%) (USASAC 2020).

Parr stocking produced greater than 2 times more smolt/unit than fry stocking in 2013. In comparison, during the same period the neighboring Narraguagus River, which has three times more salmon habitat than the East Machias River, had a mean smolt production of 0.22 smolt/unit. In 2019, the smolt production per unit of habitat supplemented in the Narraguagus River was 0.16 smolt/unit. In 2019, Parr stocking in the East Machias River produced 5.4 times the number of smolt per unit of habitat supplemented when compared to the Narraguagus. The Narraguagus River is primarily supplemented with unfed fry and variable natural reproduction.

Decadal median large parr density during the span of the Peter Gray Parr Project is 10.5 parr/unit, compared to the decadal median seen during unfed fry stocking of 4.9 parr/unit. This is a 114% increase over an 8-year timespan. Parr densities produced by stocking Peter Gray parr in the East Machias River are more than double what they were during the period of unfed fry stocking. This is the highest decadal median large parr density observed since electrofishing began in 1987 (USASAC 2020).

In June of 2020, DSF and 9 other conservation groups plus six individuals with decades of fisheries experience sent a letter to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, requesting the inclusion of Atlantic salmon on the state’s list of endangered species. The Native Fish Coalition, the Native Fish Coalition Maine Chapter, Maine Salmon Federation, Maine Council of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, Union Salmon Association, Upstream Watch, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Elliatsville Foundation and Kennebec Reborn were joined by former DFW& commissioner Ray “Bucky” Owen, fisheries scientists Edward Baum, Matthew Scott, Joan Garner Trial, Mark Whiting and journalists Catherine Schmidt and Topher Browne.

The forcefully worded letter left no doubt that this group with decades of direct experience in the Atlantic salmon field feels that imminent extinction is a possibility without their inclusion on the Maine ESA list. Read the article in the Bangor Daily News, June 1, 2020 edition.

MCHT has been a significant supporter of the Downeast Salmon Federation for many years. Their partnership has helped DSF meet many milestones in growth and advancement.

With a similarity of purpose in conservation in Downeast Maine, DSF and MCHT often collaborate and share resources in a joint effort to coordinate or initiate conservation of a high value resources such as land or habitats. DSF currently has 5809 acres of land under conservation. MCHT has been a significant supporter of the Downeast Salmon Federation for many years. Their partnership has helped DSF meet many milestones in growth and advancement.

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MCHT is also a fellow member of the Downeast Fisheries Partnership which consists of nine organizations with a shared vision for the development of fisheries with a vision of increasing community engagement and fishery recovery in Downeast Maine. For more information see: https://downeastfisheries.org
THE ARCHIVES

We’ve collected a lot of stories along the way about the iconic Atlantic salmon. It’s been a story from abundance to decline and back again, and often hard to comprehend. However it bears noting that there have been a lot of determined and courageous folks sounding the alarm along with us. Many of them are local and regional writers, and some in the larger fishing community. In this collection, we’re showcasing a quick walk through the story from 1948 to about 1994.

Note the large numbers of rod catches from 1948-1962. In 1948, a state agency, the Atlantic Sea Ran Salmon Commission, was created and charged with the restoration and management of this fish. By 1962 the catch had increased tenfold. The writer of the article said ‘Seven rivers now have sizeable populations of salmon, and only a lack of adequate funds prevents the specification of more’. What happened? In the next edition, we’ll tell you more of the story.

Recorded Rod Catches from the Salmon Streams of Maine for the period 1948-1982

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SAFON AND THE U.S. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT - TO BE OR NOT TO BE

In a Bangor Daily News article dated February 17, 1994, writer Tom Hennessey laid out the situation. At a meeting held Feb. 11, at the Edaville Salmon Club, Maine’s Atlantic Sea-Ran Salmon Commission voted unanimously to adopt a statewide “grilse-only” sport-fishing regulation for 1994.

According to the regulation, an angler’s season limit of Atlantic salmon will be one grilse, or fish measuring between 14 and 25 inches in length, that must be tagged and registered. Any adult salmon fish measuring more than 25 inches must be released immediately after being caught.

The decision was met with some grumbling about ‘having to purchase an Atlantic salmon license to catch one grilse’. But of more concern was the looming petition by conservationists demanding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service add the fish to the Endangered Species List. That would end all local salmon fishing.

At the same meeting Hennessey wrote ‘the 1994 stocking allocations approved by the ASRSC were: Penobscot River, 700,000 fry, 580,000 smolt; Machias River, 37,500 fry; Denny River, 21,000 fry; St. Croix River, 100,000 fry, 50,000 smolt; Sara River, 20,000 smolt’. There were no stockings for the Narraguagus and Sheepscot rivers this year because river-specific fry were not available.

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM NEAR SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL

You’ve probably read in previous editions of the INTERVALE newsletter about DSF’s work to remove a dam at Salt Brook in East Sullivan in 2018.

Now that the area has been restored, the surrounding habitat has returned to its wild and abundant natural state. It’s an ideal spot for conservation and environmental learning.

We’d like to develop an outdoor classroom near the former dam site and its surrounding habitat. We believe it would make an outstanding environment for students from nearby Summer High School to participate in hands-on learning about conservation and their local habitat.

We are hosting a gap year student group this fall, and we’d like to invite you to support the project with a donation to the DSF Land Trust.

Please visit our website and add your support: www.mainesalmonrivers.org/Donate

COOL FACT

Did you know that DSF grows blueberries? Well, technically it’s DSF Land that does the work. We lease over 30 acres of conserved land to organic blueberry growers every year.

The preservation of this land close to Downeast Maine protects the rivers and streams from harmful pesticide runoff. Products from these farms and other organic partners that benefit conservation can be purchased on our website: https://www.mainesalmonrivers.org/support-dsf-buy-organic

PRESERVE HIGHLIGHT

SPRAGUES FALLS

Spragues Falls is a hide-away on the Narraguagus River near the area where the artists who created Bambi joined inspiration. The book of the movie was, based on reconnaissance trips to the region, written by artist Maurice “Jake” Day. This preserve also offers trails, a wonderful swimming hole, and a historic cemetery.

The Boar’s Nest Camp near Spragues Falls can be booked year round. It is water access only, so bring your kayak, canoe or snowshoes for this adventure.
Habitat Restoration

THE NARRAGUAGUS RIVER

In 2020 DSF continues to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and the community of Cherryfield on a critical program on the Narraguagus River. The next phase is a feasibility study by the ACOE to assess the improvement of the dam spillway to aid fish passage. The spillway, built in 1961, contains rock-filled timber cribs and was constructed to control ice jams and local flooding.

RESTORING COMMUNITIES

With partnership from the Nature Conservancy, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, DSF has embarked on a Beaverdam Stream restoration project. The project is just one of many that DSF is involved in, and a great representation of the coordination and community engagement that DSF provides.

The 6.4 acre section is a wooded stream buffer abutting Beaverdam Stream and is part of a larger DSF Land Trust Preserve. The stream has 298 mapped units of salmon habitat (each unit being 100 sq meters) + 25,800 sq meters of mapped salmon habitat.

Upstream there are river herring and a very productive brook trout fishery. The overall goal of long-term management is to maintain Beaverdam Stream forever as high quality Atlantic salmon breeding and rearing habitat while maintaining traditional human use of the property.

By removing collapsed culverts and installing a new road and trails, DSF is making the property accessible to the public for hiking, walking, mountain biking (on designated trails), snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. You can see the dramatic improvement 3 years later in these photos.

DSF has partnered with the Sipayik Environmental Department, Native Fish Coalition, Sea-Run Brook Trout Coalition, USFWS, Downeast Trout Unlimited and MCHT to study the movements of sea run brook trout between 3 waterways in Cobbscook Bay.

This summer we tagged brook trout and American eels in the Orange River and East Stream - in both these locations we have maintained tag reading stations and look forward to sharing our early results soon.

Next year we will expand the program on to Hobart Stream in the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge and continue to learn about the movements of these special brook trout between their marine and freshwater homes.