

# Response Statement - Atlantic Salmon, South Newfoundland population

**December 8, 2011**

**Common Name:** Atlantic Salmon, South Newfoundland population

**Scientific Name:** *Salmo salar*

**Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC):** Threatened

**How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment:** The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Atlantic Salmon, South Newfoundland population, should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Threatened. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Atlantic Salmon, South Newfoundland population, to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

**Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC:** This species requires rivers or streams that are generally clear, cool and well-oxygenated for reproduction and the first few years of rearing, but undertakes lengthy feeding migrations in the North Atlantic Ocean as older juveniles and adults. This population breeds in rivers from the southeast tip of the Avalon Peninsula, Mistaken Point, westward along the south coast of Newfoundland to Cape Ray. The numbers of small (one-sea-winter) and large (multi-sea-winter) salmon have both declined over the last 3 generations, about 37% and 26%, respectively, for a net decline of all mature individuals of about 36%. This decline has occurred despite the fact that mortality from commercial fisheries in coastal areas has greatly declined since 1992; this may be due to poor marine survival related to substantial but incompletely understood changes in marine ecosystems. Illegal fishing is a threat in some rivers. The presence of salmon aquaculture in a small section of this area brings some risk of negative effects from interbreeding or adverse ecological interactions with escaped domestic salmon. Genetic heterogeneity among the many small rivers in this area is unusually pronounced, suggesting that rescue among river breeding populations may be somewhat less likely than in other areas.

**Occurrence:** Newfoundland and Labrador, Atlantic Ocean

**Competent Minister(s):**

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

**Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:**

Newfoundland and Labrador

**Applicable federal legislation:** Fisheries are managed and fish and fish habitat are protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

**Conservation activities underway:** A moratorium has been in place on commercial Atlantic salmon fishing in insular Newfoundland since 1992 and by-catch of this species is not permitted within insular Newfoundland waters. The Newfoundland and Labrador recreational fishery is managed through Integrated Fisheries Management Plans which include a River Classification System that establishes limits on recreational fishers for each river class. As well there are a variety of additional conservation measures available to manage the recreational fishery for Atlantic salmon in the South Newfoundland DU, including licenses and tags, season dates, gear restrictions, bag limits (daily, seasonal), minimum retention size, closed areas, environmental protocols (very low waters and high temperatures may warrant a closure) and mandatory catch and release of larger fish. In some rivers only catch and release fishing is permitted and educational programs exist to promote proper catch and release practices. All of these measures have been in place for a number of years. A variety of research activities are being conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada on Atlantic salmon in the South Newfoundland DU. Research at Conne River has focused on factors influencing trends in survival and hence abundance of salmon. In particular, recent acoustic tracking studies examined the fate of salmon as they migrated into the near shore waters of the Bay d'Espoir fiord. Inferences into changes in the marine feeding of Conne River salmon, as well as other south coast salmon populations have been investigated by isotopic analyses. In addition, a genetic study is currently underway examining adaptive diversity and population structure within this DU.