



THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SALMON ASSOCIATION N·E·W·S·L·E·T·T·E·R

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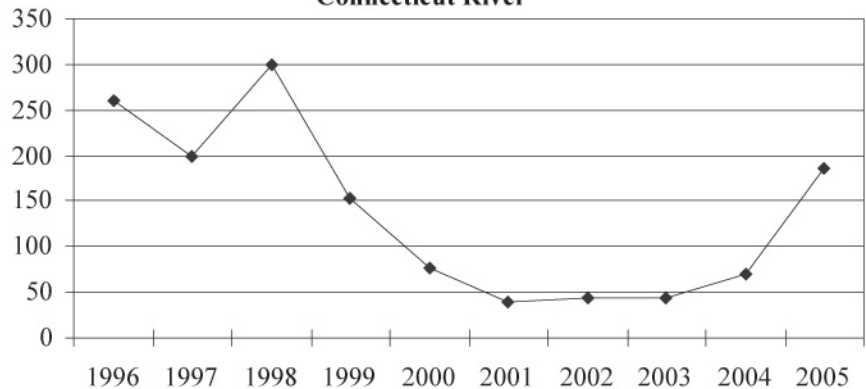
2005 Migration Best Since 1998

Known Adult Salmon Returns Up 268% in Significant Increase Over 2004 Totals

By Robert A. Jones, President, Connecticut River Salmon Association

The known returns of adult salmon increased significantly in 2005 over recent years and reached 185 by July 25, the largest return since 1998. So is this a reason for jubilation or is this but a single point in a series of ups and downs? Perhaps a little of both — certainly a 268 percent increase in adult returns from a year ago is reason to be hopeful that the causes of the low returns in recent years are beginning to be overcome. Also a variation in annual returns can be expected. Only time will tell and under the circumstances, no one is making any predictions.

10 Years of Known Salmon Returns to the Connecticut River



The accompanying chart depicts the known adult salmon returns to the River for the past ten years. It is noteworthy that except for the years 2000, 2003, and 2004, all recent salmon releases have been fry. During those years, 48,000, 28,000, and 95,000 smolts respectively were released. Seventy

(See Migration, page 2)



Save the Date!

Saturday, January 21, 2006

CRSA Annual
Dinner and Auction/Raffle

The Hawthorne Inn
Berlin, CT

For highlights of the 2005 dinner, see page 5.
For a list of 2005 auction donors, see page 7.

five thousand smolts were available for stocking this past spring. The 2000 release can be considered suspect since the hatchery where they were reared had to be shut down and sterilized due to a disease problem and the stock planned for the 2001 and 2002 releases had to be destroyed. The 2003 and 2004 smolts were considered to be in excellent condition. The adult salmon from the 2003 release would have returned this spring

along with grilse from the 2004 release. The size and composition of the 2006 return will be significant.

It is recognized that raising a few million fry is less costly than rearing a few thousand smolts; however, if scientific analysis determines that a significant number of this year's and next year's returns are from smolt releases, perhaps a reconsideration of the restoration stocking policy is in order.

There are some other interesting aspects of this year's run. Of the 131 salmon captured at the Holyoke Dam, 14 were released to continue their upstream migration in the Connecticut River. Two of the 27 fish captured at the DSI dam on the Westfield River were released to continue up that tributary. All other returning fish captured at the Leesville Dam on the Salmon River (12), at the Rainbow Dam on the Farmington River (15), the DSI dam and at Holyoke were transported to the Richard Cronin National Salmon Station in Massachusetts. Of the 14 fish released at Holyoke, five made it over the Turners Falls Dams, four

passed through the fishway at Vernon, Vermont, three negotiated the fishway at Bellows Falls, Vermont and two made it through the fishway at the Wilder Dam above White River Junction, VT, approximately 190 miles from the mouth of the River.

For those interested in all species in the River, the following table shows the returns of those species captured and released at Holyoke and the other fishways at downstream tributaries:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Alewife | 1 |
| American shad | 117,756 |
| Atlantic salmon | 185 |
| Atlantic salmon released | 16 |
| Blueback herring | 534 |
| Gizzard shad | 127 |
| Sea lamprey | 29,482 |
| Shortnose sturgeon | 1 |
| Striped bass | 226 |

Of interest are the dismal returns of alewife and blueback herring as well as the very low return of American shad this year. Speculation suggests that the large population of striped bass and coastal commercial fishing for shad before they reach the Connecticut River may be the cause. ♦

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SALMON ASSOCIATION

The Connecticut River Salmon Association (CRSA) is a nonstock, nonprofit Connecticut corporation. Our mission is to support the effort to restore Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut River basin, a joint undertaking by the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut, together with the US Fish and Wildlife Service of the National Marine Fisheries Service, pursuant to an act of Congress in 1983.

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In Memoriam: Stephen Sloan

Stephen Sloan, activist conservationist, author, radio program host, CRSA Life member, and the guest speaker at our 2004 Annual Dinner, passed away at his home in Manhattan on April 28, 2005. He was the author of *Fly Fishing Is Spoken Here*, *Ocean Bankruptcy*, and *Thanatofish*.

Steve was a member of the United States Delegation to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and was a Trustee of the International Game Fish Association. He set 44 world fishing records and was the first person to take a world record qualifying bluefin tuna on a fly rod. The Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum posthumously awarded its 2005 Lee Wulff Conservation Award to Steve in recognition of his lifetime's work dedicated to conservation of America's sport fisheries. On his radio show, "The Ecozone," Steve interviewed authors, scientists, administrators and fishery managers on a variety of fisheries oriented subjects. He was founder, chairman and CEO of the Fisheries Defense Fund, which sponsored his radio show. Archives of his shows can be heard on the Fisheries Defense Fund web site www.fisheriesdefensefund.org. ♦

The Connecticut River Salmon Association 2005 Annual Dinner and Auction Donors and Contributors

Without the support of the following organizations and individuals, our fund raising dinner and many of our activities would not be possible. Our thanks to each for their contribution and their support of Atlantic salmon restoration.

(Check out photos from the 2005 Auction on page 5 of this newsletter!)

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William Hankinson Elected to CRSA Board of Directors

By Jim Carroll, CRSA Secretary

The CRSA Board of Directors elected William F. Hankinson of Tolland, Connecticut, to the board in March, 2005. Bill has agreed to serve on the board and also continue to be an important ongoing contributor to the CRSA Education Committee.

Bill, a Connecticut native, and his wife Jeralyn live in Tolland in an 18th century farmhouse they have restored. They have a daughter living in Flagstaff, Arizona, and a son in Manhattan.

Bill received an Associate's Degree in Forestry from Paul Smith College, a Bachelors of Education from Eastern CT State University, a Masters in Science Education from the University of Connecticut and a fifth year degree from Southern Connecticut State University, which made Bill a Teaching Science Specialist.

Bill retired in June 2003 after 35 years teaching science at Timothy Edwards Middle School in South Windsor. In addition to his outstanding contribution to the academic programs at the school, he also started the Timothy Edwards Outdoor and Skiing Club. He organized and managed trips to Vail, Telluride, Whistler-Black Tomb in British Columbia and to Austria. Over the years, he also organized day and overnight trips to many ski locations in Connecticut and throughout New England.

Bill's longstanding interest in the outdoors includes camping, hiking, boating and fishing. He has fished in Yellowstone National Park, many Montana rivers, Arizona and much of the New England coast.

President Bob Jones has said, "We are delighted to have a person with Bill's



Bill Hankinson of Tolland, CT, was elected to the CRSA Board of Directors in March, 2005.

enthusiasm, energy and educational expertise on the board." ♦

The CRSA School Program

Two Rivers Magnet School Hosts 2005 Connecticut BioBlitz

By Jim Carroll, CRSA Secretary

On June 3 and 4, some 170 prominent scientists and naturalists from all over America and 30 Connecticut middle school students gathered at the host Two Rivers Magnet Middle School in East Hartford for the sixth annual Connecticut BioBlitz. A program of the Connecticut Center for Conservation and Biodiversity and the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, this event is part academic competition, part serious academic research project and part festival. BioBlitz is organized to see how many species of plants and animals can be found and identified in a 24-hour period within a 2.5 mile radius of the school.

As a new science and technology magnet school, Two Rivers was honored with its selection as the first Connecticut school to host Connecticut BioBlitz, an enormous challenge and, as it turned out, a very successful one. The two-day East Hartford event featured the 2.5 mile survey on Friday and a day of presentations, hands-on activities, nature walks and tours and other learning opportunities for the general public on Saturday. Writing in the *Hartford Courant*, Linda Case said, "What the scientists came up with, in the shadows of the glass towers (of Hartford), was astonishing: They found a veritable menagerie of moles, turtles, bald eagles, wing flies, bass, green algae and spiders to mention but a few. The grand total of species was 1,791."

Two Rivers Magnet School is a CRSA School Program participant. Ed Smith, a science teacher, an Atlantic salmon program instructor and a school BioBlitz committee member, sent an invitation to new CRSA board member Bill



CRSA's booth at the 2005 Connecticut BioBlitz, hosted by Two Rivers Magnet Middle School, a CRSA School Program participant.

Hankinson proposing that CRSA be one of the select exhibitors at the BioBlitz. Bill, a retired teacher, is also the CRSA liaison to the school.

An exhibit was developed highlighting the CRSA school program. A television monitor ran last year's New England Cable News three-part series about the CRSA program. The booth was manned by Bill Hankinson and CRSA director Jim Carroll. Bill said, "This was a great opportunity for the CRSA to gain more exposure for our School Program thanks to Ed Smith and Two Rivers Magnet School Principal, David Pearson." ♦

Senator Lieberman Visits Barkhamsted Elementary



Senator Lieberman with Steve Kidd's 6th grade class at Barkhamsted Elementary

By Jim Carroll, CRSA Secretary

Senator Joseph Lieberman visited Steve Kidd and his sixth-grade students at the Barkhamsted Elementary School on March 31 to learn about their participation in the CRSA School Program. The Farmington River Anglers Association (FRAA), which donated \$800 for the school's tank and chiller systems, sponsors the school.

Senator Lieberman talked with the class, especially about his long-term commitment to the environment. "You have been extremely impressive and I have learned a lot about you," he said. "You've convinced me we need to continue this program."

Principal Joanne Sciola said this was the third year Steve Kidd's class raised salmon eggs. ♦

Highlights from the 2005 CRSA Annual Auction and Dinner



Dexter Peavey and Bruce Cox discussing the saltwater flies Bruce tied for the Silent Auction



Guest Speaker Jack Noon: Historian, Writer and Fisherman



Grand Prize: Paul Just Custom Rod on 9'4 wt. T&T blank, Ross reel, Cortland fly line and accessories. Value \$1,400



Buy a ticket - win a prize!



USFWS Regional Director Marvin Moriarty (center), CRSA president Bob Jones (left) and US Commissioner to NASCO Steve Gephard (right)



Happy Grand Prize winner Kris Jacobsen

**Save this date: Saturday, January 21, 2006
2006 Dinner and Auction - Hawthorne Inn, Berlin, CT**

“MEET THE SCIENTISTS”

In “Meet the Scientists,” we profile the fisheries scientists and managers who constitute the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission Technical Committee. Members of the Technical Committee are assigned by their respective state and federal agencies that make up the Commission. The Committee's charge is to provide sound scientific and management advice to the Commission and to develop, update and implement a management plan for the restoration effort as approved by the Commission. Each member of the Technical Committee conducts work on the Committee in addition to regular duties assigned by his or her own agency.

JOE RAVITA, CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

By Steve Gephard, Senior Biologist, CTDEP

Joe Ravita is a familiar face at the annual CRSA dinners and his donated salmon flies generate active bidding in both the live and silent auctions. Joe's low-key manner often belies the important role he has played in the effort to restore Atlantic salmon to the Connecticut River Basin. As the long-time driving force behind the Whittemore Salmon Station in Barkhamsted, CT, he helped develop many projects and procedures that have been critical to the restoration program.

Joe is a native of Bristol, CT, and received a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from the University of Vermont. He began his employment with the State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) - Fisheries Division in 1985 as a seasonal resource assistant assigned to the Rainbow Dam Fishway. Already an avid fly fisher, Joe caught the salmon bug while working at Rainbow, where he captured and handled returning adult Atlantic salmon. After three years at the Rainbow fishway, Joe began full-time employment with the CTDEP in 1987 as a “maintainer” at the Whittemore Station. “Maintainer” is an awkward position into which Connecticut lumps many different kinds of workers. In fact, Joe was a “fish culturalist” and over the next 16 years, he became very skilled in this discipline. During this same time, Joe developed into an accomplished Atlantic salmon angler, fishing mostly in Maine and Nova Scotia. His face — and flies — are well-known along the Margaree River each fall. Joe became manager of the Whittemore Salmon Station in 1997 and remained in that position until the station's closing in December of 2003.

As Joe's supervisor for much of this time, I am very appreciative of the job he did and the contributions he made. Joe is a master handler and spawner of Atlantic salmon. He can corral, hand-capture, sedate, sort, and spawn salmon quicker, more efficiently, and with less physical impact to the fish than anyone else in the program. He oversaw the development and use of a salmon inventory control system and under his care, the Whittemore Salmon Station rarely lost a salmon to disease prior to spawning time. If the job called for a gadget, a trough, a tool, a box — he usually built it himself, providing good function at great cost savings to the program. He designed, built, and operated



Joe Ravita

the Hogback Dam Incubator Facility in the basement of the MDC's dam on the West Branch

Farmington River, where nearly 200,000 salmon fry were hatched annually for the stocking effort. This was the first of its kind in the eastern US and should serve as a model for future projects. He has worked closely with the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission's Genetics Subcommittee and initiated the use of mature parr broodstock and hormone implantation at Whittemore.

When budget constraints forced the CTDEP to streamline its operations in 2003, Whittemore was closed and Joe was re-assigned to the Burlington State Trout Hatchery, where he is making important contributions to the DEP's trout stocking program. However, the Inland Fisheries Division recognized Joe's critical role in the Atlantic salmon program and since that time has made him temporarily available during the late summer and fall to plan, coordinate, and help implement the program's interstate/inter-agency Atlantic salmon spawning operations. The challenge includes juggling the needs of several facilities, spawning hundreds of fish on different timetables, sea-run, kelt, parr, and domestic broodstocks, hormone implantation, an Egg Bank, a mating scheme based on a DNA fingerprinting/inter-relatedness database, and even figuring out who is going to be driving eggs north to the White River hatchery. Joe, working with many colleagues in the four states and federal government, does a great job of coordinating it all. By late October, you can find him splashing around in a concrete tank at the Richard Cronin National Salmon Station, playing traffic cop to salmon that are being shuttled between digital cameras, laptop computers, ‘knock-out’ tubs, and spawner's hands — as well as spawning fish himself.

The Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program has benefited from the tireless dedication and hard work of Joe Ravita. Even now, as he spends most of his time at the Burlington Hatchery, that commitment continues, whether as a spawner of salmon, a goodwill ambassador on Canadian rivers, or a loyal supporter of the Connecticut River Salmon Association. ♦

NASCO 2005

Prepared by Steve Gephard, US Commissioner to NASCO

The 2005 Annual meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization took place June 6–10 in the city of Vichy in the Central Massif region of France. France is working to restore several salmon populations and its largest river — comparable to the Connecticut — is the Loire, which flows north from the foothills of the Alps and then west to the Atlantic Ocean. Vichy is situated on the Allier River, the main tributary of the Loire and the stream in which most of the best salmon rearing habitat survives.

Over the years, salmon conservationists have annually awaited news from NASCO to hear what harvest quotas were set for the two mixed stock fisheries at West Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The news from Vichy this year is the same as the news in recent years: in light of the “no catch” advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES), NASCO determined that there would be no harvest quota for the West Greenland fishery in 2005, although a nominal subsistence fishery for internal use would be allowed. In 2004, those landings were estimated at 14.7 metric tons and would be expected to be around that level for 2005. The parties in the Northeast Atlantic Commission once again could not come to agreement on a harvest quota for the Faroe Islands. It should be noted that there has been no quota agreement for the Faroe Islands fishery since 2000 but the government has chosen not to fish, in light of the ICES advice. Longtime observers predict that there will not be a fishery this year either.

The news from ICES continues to be discouraging. It reports that all stock complexes on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are “outside safe biological limits.” No region within North America met its conservation limits and there is less than a 1% chance that this year the returns will be greater than what has been observed during 1992–1996. The catch advice in all cases was to decrease harvest to the lowest possible level.

In addition to the subject of harvest, the big topic at NASCO this year was the “Next Steps” process. Last year, the Parties recognized that the subject of salmon conservation had evolved considerably in the first 20 years of the organization’s existence and it was appropriate to take a careful look at NASCO’s operations and determine if it was doing all it could do and in the best way to protect wild Atlantic salmon. Input was solicited from the various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) associated with NASCO as well as the public, in general. Public meetings were held in London, England and Portland, Maine to hear what salmon conservationists thought of NASCO and its way of doing business. At Vichy, the Council received a report from its “Next Steps Working Group” and took some initial steps to implement its recommendations. Areas of special attention are: managing salmon fisheries, social and economic aspects of Atlantic salmon, scientific research of salmon in the sea, habitat pro-

tection and restoration, impacts of aquaculture, and initiatives for endangered species (such as what are occurring in Maine). Consideration is being given to the idea of adopting multi-year harvest agreements, which would free up some annual meetings to focus on some of these issues. There is also a strong commitment to work more closely with NGOs and make the NASCO process more transparent. NASCO will consider ways that make it easier for others to participate, understand, and benefit from NASCO’s activities.

The Parties were encouraged by the attendance of France (in respect to St. Pierre and Miquelon, two French owned islands between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland). These islands have reported harvesting approximately 21 tons of salmon annually and although this is not a lot of fish compared to other traditional fisheries, the facts that most other fisheries have been shut down and that next to nothing is known about the origin of these salmon prompted NASCO to seek more information from France. Between the 2004 and 2005 annual meetings, France worked closely with Canada to collect samples and data for further analysis. At the annual meeting, France reported on these data. At this

The spirit of cooperation and mutual commitment to Atlantic salmon at NASCO never seemed stronger than in 2005.

time it appears that most of the harvested salmon are Canadian in origin but France has agreed to stay involved with NASCO as an observer (it is represented by the EU for matters within its European territory) and continue to monitor and report on the St. Pierre and Miquelon fishery.

Other business included the work of the International Salmon Research Board and its efforts to encourage research on Atlantic salmon in the sea. While fundraising efforts continue to lag behind expectations, the Board and NASCO have reached consensus on their support of the SALSEA (Salmon at Sea) program (developed by scientists mostly in Europe) as a model for the research encouraged by the Board. Also discussed were the issues of bycatch, the rivers database, applying the Precautionary Approach to socio-economics issues, predator-related mortality, and impacts of acid rain.

The spirit of cooperation and mutual commitment to Atlantic salmon at NASCO never seemed stronger than in 2005. The new president, Ken Whelan of Ireland, has infused great enthusiasm into the organization and is committed to implementing the recommendations from the Next Steps Working Group. I am proud of the leadership and support provided by members of the US delegation. There is no denying that the challenges to Atlantic salmon remain great. As runs to some rivers seem to improve, runs to other rivers stumble. We all recognize that simply cutting back on harvest will not bring salmon back to the necessary levels. However, with NASCO working with NGOs and other fishery agencies and commissions, we stand a chance to unravel the mysteries of the North Atlantic Ocean and take meaningful steps toward stock recovery. ◆

Not a Member Yet?

If you are not a member of CRSA, you are receiving this complimentary copy of our Newsletter, in the hopes that you find it informative and that you will consider joining our organization. Publishing this Newsletter is not inexpensive and our income is limited to membership dues and receipts from our Annual Dinner. By becoming a member, you not only help support this Newsletter, our School Program, and our web site, but you will also be adding your name to the list of individuals dedicated to the health and welfare of the Connecticut River and the restoration of Atlantic salmon and other fisheries resources. We need you help. Please use the membership application below and send your check today!

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