

News Release

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Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council holds public session on Atlantic salmon conservation

November 21, 2008, Listuguj – The Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council (GMRC) held its first public information session and workshop on November 6 and 7 in Listuguj. The meetings were held to promote communications among agencies, groups and communities regarding Atlantic salmon conservation.

“We are proud to showcase to community members preliminary results of salmon conservation projects we've been working on over the past two years. Our project Promoting Healthy Lifestyles, Activities and Mi'gmaq Understanding about Restigouche River Salmon is studying possible impacts on salmon from environmental contaminants, and how that relates to the communities of Listuguj, Eel River Bar and Pabineau. The salmon is a symbol of persistence and renewal for our communities, and we are pleased to have started a discussion with other groups and governments about how to work together for its conservation,” says Mark Sark, CEO of the GMRC.

David LeBlanc, biologist and executive director of the Restigouche River Watershed Management Council (RRWMC), presented an overview of salmon habitat issues for the watershed, including siltation in watercourses, buffer zones protection, invasive species, uses of herbicides, stress caused by outboard users and flow regime modification by forestry activities and climate changes. Listuguj, Eel River Bar and RRWMC are already partners in research projects such as the smolt wheel operation, but the RRWMC is pleased of Listuguj and GMRC leadership in the salmon issues and confirmed interest for the upcoming partnership in educational and capacity building projects.

LeBlanc says: “This event gave us the chance to learn and understand the traditional importance of the salmon resources and to build bridges for a common objective: the protection of the salmon and its habitat for generations to come.”

Workshop participant Roberta Clowater, Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, NB Chapter, said, “Hearing about the creative ways the GMRC is talking to their communities about salmon conservation has inspired me with new ideas about how our groups can work together to conserve wild Atlantic salmon habitat in all the rivers of the Restigouche region.”

“Atlantic salmon is woven into our Mi'gmaq culture and heritage, and we want to do our part to make sure it will also be a part of our future,” says Victoria Metallic, Environmental Technologist for the GMRC and leader of the environmental contaminants project.

Workshop participants benefited from speakers such as Dr. Fred Whoriskey of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, who gave an overview of recent research on tracking salmon at sea, and Listuguj Councilor Wendel Metallic, who described the development of the community's Salmon Management Plan. Stephen Chase of the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation urged groups to collaborate to get more bang from their project funding buck, and Fred Metallic of Listuguj moved the audience with his video expression of what the salmon means to Mi'gmaq communities.

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