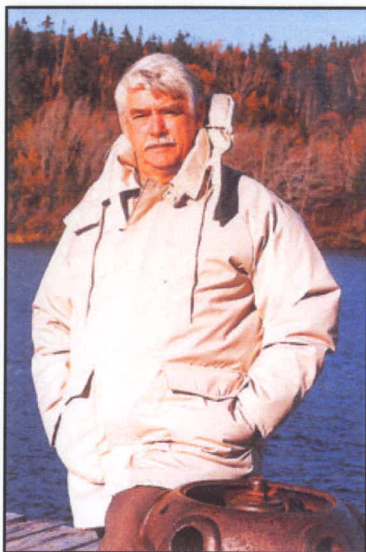


## Tight Lines ... The Len Rich Memorial Award for Up and Coming Writers



It has been a year since Len Rich passed away on April 13, 2009 at the age of 71 after a brief, but courageous battle with cancer. His many friends in the angling and writing world continue to miss him, and will never forget him. As a columnist, author, photographer and mentor of up and coming writers, Len Rich left a profound legacy, touching the lives of many throughout the writing and fly fishing worlds. One of his greatest gifts was his capacity to see the extraordinary in the ordinary and share it with others through his columns, books and encouragement. His voice and his passions live on through his writing and the people he touched, inspired and mentored.

A prolific and award winning writer, Len was recognized by the Outdoor Writers of Canada and the New England Outdoor Writers Association for his books and articles. In 1991, he received the coveted Canada Recreational Fisheries Award from the Governor General, in recognition of "writing that influenced a generation of recreational fishers."

Len authored several books, including *Newfoundland Salmon Flies and How to Tie Them*, *Best of In the Woods*, *Fly Fishing Tips and Tactics*, *Rivers and Woods*; *So You Want to Be an Outfitter*; *Memoirs of a Fly Fisher*, *Tales of Christmas*; and his latest *Bill Bennett: Pioneer Bush Pilot and Outfitter*. He also wrote hundreds of articles for various national and international publications and ASF's Atlantic Salmon Journal.

In 2007, he was selected to receive the OWC's Jack David Mentorship Award for his work with up and coming writers. He led the OWC Mentorship Program and served as the Eastern Director of OWC for several years. In 2008, Len chaired one of OWC's most successful conferences ever.

At his memorial service, a fellow writer paid tribute to Len's generous and selfless contribution to his other writers:

*"We knew Len's generous spirit and that he loved to share what he had learned over the years. He had a true desire to see everyone develop their gifts. He had the gift not just of writing. Along with nature photography, tying flies and fly fishing, he had the remarkable ability to see potential; potential for a story in any situation; see the story that anyone's life could tell; potential in people to do things they didn't think they could; how to reach beyond our existing goals; how to dream big and set about making that happen. He showed us the nuts and bolts of 'how' and I'm sure that's true for the fly fishers just as much as the budding writers. He believed so much in us and what we could achieve, that we had no choice but to believe it too."*

Miramichi Salmon Association Inc.  
www.miramichisalmon.ca

Doug MacDonald, Chairman  
(506) 853-6235

J.W. Bud Bird, Chairman Emeritus  
(506) 462-6666

Mark Hambrook, President  
(506) 622-1781

Manley Price, Vice-Chairman  
(506) 369-1890

J. Louis Newell, Vice-Chairman  
(617) 426-1196

#### Staff:

Mark Hambrook, President  
Jenny Reid, Biologist  
Nola Chiasson, Office Administrator  
Tyler Storey, Field Technician

Miramichi Salmon Association  
485, Route 420  
South Esk, NB  
E1V 4L9  
Phone: (506)622-4000  
Fax: (506)622-6111  
E-mail: miramichisalmon@nb.aibn.com

Jo-Anne E. Linton  
Fund Raising Coordinator,  
Salmonletter Editor  
Miramichi Salmon Association  
125 Whiting Road, Suite 200  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5Y5  
Phone: (506) 457-2220  
Fax: (506) 457-1114  
E-mail: jlmsa@nbnet.nb.ca

**U.S. Office:**  
Miramichi Salmon Association (U.S.), Inc.  
c/o Seaward Management Corporation  
265 Franklin Street, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02110  
Phone: (617) 426-1196

Production by  
6 Colour Copy & Printing  
Fredericton, NB



Miramichi Salmon Association

# MSA CONSERVATION SALMON LETTER

Volume 15 Issue 2

Celebrating 57 years on the Miramichi River

April 2010

## A Look at DFO Annual Assessment for Salmon Returns to the Miramichi by Mark Hambrook, President

*Jenny Reid and I attended a Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) workshop to review the way that DFO arrives at estimating the annual returns of Atlantic salmon to the Miramichi River. The information below has been summarized from its draft assessment document for 2009.*

Annual assessments of the Atlantic salmon stock of the Miramichi River have been prepared by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) since 1982. The status of the resource was assessed on the basis of whether the conservation requirement of 2.4 eggs/m<sup>2</sup> of available habitat (54.6 million m<sup>2</sup>) was attained or exceeded. Since 2001, estimates of returns of salmon have been provided to user groups and managers but the data, methods, and results have not been peer reviewed or published.

In the context of the Miramichi, estimates of returns to each branch are desired. It is not possible to obtain absolute counts of salmon in the Miramichi due to its physical size. As a result, the use of partial capture techniques to sample the runs, necessitates the use of mark and recapture models to estimate run sizes.

In 2008, the assessment was provided to the Miramichi Watershed Management Committee but the estimates from the model used by DFO Science did not conform to the perceptions of the abundance of grilse that year. In response to low counts of grilse at numerous monitoring facilities in 2009 and the discrepancies in perceptions from previous years, DFO Fisheries and Aquaculture Management requested that the assessment model and the recent year assessment be peer reviewed. DFO Management is also asking whether the present management measures are sufficient to meet the objective of attaining the conservation requirements for the river. A special science response process was initiated to consider these questions.

The result of the review in the assessment model is sufficient to estimate the returns to the Miramichi, as long as sufficient input is provided to the model throughout the season. In years when there is a lack of

data, the model will factor in previous year's data to help provide an estimate.

Some of the concerns raised at the meeting include the following: The late May and early June run of salmon are not being captured at the index trap nets because of the high numbers of gaspereau in the nets. Once the gaspereau catches diminish, a higher percentage of salmon are captured in the traps. As a result, the total number of salmon returning early in the season is underestimated and this appears to be a bigger factor in the Northwest Miramichi than the Southwest Miramichi.

The 2008 sampling year remains a problem due to frequent washouts at the index trap nets and a very large washout at the Southwest Miramichi headwater barriers on Sept 29, 2008. An early removal of the barrier in the Southwest Miramichi in 2009 likely also underestimated the abundance of salmon at that site. The model cannot reconcile these biases. As a result, returns are underestimated when the estimates are based exclusively on catches using estimated proportions of the runs at trap nets and barriers from previous years.

Some years there have been too few salmon and grilse tagged or recaptured to provide a reliable estimate. Efforts to tag additional fish at the Eel Ground marking trap and examine more fish at the Red Bank recovery trap is essential for a more reliable estimate.

Returns of large salmon to the Miramichi in 2009 were estimated to be 22,000 fish, equivalent to the estimated abundance in 2001 and 50% higher than in 2008. The grilse returns in 2009 were estimated at 12,400 fish, 60% below 2008 and the lowest number since the 1998-2009 time period.

Estimated returns of large salmon in 2009 remained low (3,000 fish) in the Northwest Miramichi but were high in the Southwest Miramichi (18,700 fish). Grilse return estimates in 2009 were 3,000 fish in the Northwest and 9,300 fish in the Southwest, the lowest of the time series in both branches. The abundance in the

*continued on page 2*