

NOTICE

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

as part of the consultation on the Management Framework for the
harmonization of recreational activities on salmon rivers located in
wildlife reserves, ZECs and certain private lands

Presented by



FQSA

Fédération québécoise
pour le saumon atlantique

Context

The FQSA (Fédération québécoise pour le saumon atlantique) has raised the issue on the increasing land-use conflicts and disputes and expressed its concerns over the impact of increased user pressure on Atlantic salmon and its ecosystem. Although this situation has been recognized for several years, the surge in recreational tourism in Quebec during the pandemic has exacerbated tensions and questions about the best practices to ensure the conservation of the salmon resource, the sustainability of quality sport fishing activities and the long-term development of recreational activities, including fishing, on salmon rivers.

The FQSA emphasizes that it wishes to promote cohabitation between the various river users, that it is open to regional recreational tourism development, and that the accessibility of the territory is integral to its values. However, a vision must be adopted along with concrete tools that will provide the best possible management of the Atlantic salmon and its rivers, for no development should be done at the expense of the species and its habitat.

We commend the leadership of the Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks (MFFP) in this matter. Not only did their department strive to work collaboratively with government and non-government stakeholders in Quebec, but they are also the best equipped to guide such efforts focused on Atlantic salmon, while ensuring their department's primary vocation of conservation and enhancement.

This is a broad and complex issue. We understand that this document is the first step in the development and implementation of an action plan that will span over several years and will require the coordination of many governmental and non-governmental actors. The FQSA is proud to be a key contributor to the resolution of this important issue and we will continue to be available and open for further input, consistent with our common mission and objectives of conservation and enhancement of Atlantic salmon and its rivers.

Comments

The issues described by the MFFP on the subject are accurate. We know that this report only addresses the subject of recreational activities and that other discussions must ultimately be held regarding other topics.

We are also in agreement with the guidelines that will orient our decision-making process for the next several years.

The courses of action are also interesting and important. Moreover, the fact that certain courses of action have already been implemented, particularly the provision of scientific advice on the impact of recreational activities and the evaluation of the environment's carrying capacity, attests to the importance of these issues for the MFFP.

Action Plan

Although the issues raised are valid, our members remained perplexed as to the specific content of the framework, particularly due to the lack of a specific engagement concerning the action plan to be submitted. In fact, the FQSA has conducted several consultations, both with anglers and river managers, and although the document has been well received, it would have been preferable for the management framework to propose a deadline on the submission of an eventual action plan. We reiterate that the solutions are relevant and necessary, but by no means exhaustive, and need to be clarified with a structured action plan. At this time, we do not know when this plan will be presented.

That being said, we are pleased to bring forward the issue through this document, which still requires concrete studies and regulatory audits in order to reach a strict management framework.

Special status for salmon rivers

Salmon rivers alone benefit from a special status prescribed by regulations. These rivers, which account for only 2% of Quebec's rivers, represent a major natural, ecological, cultural, identity and socio-economic heritage.

We believe that this more than justifies the need to regulate all human activity whether they be recreational or not, with an ambitious long-term vision for the

conservation of the species, its habitat and the sustainable development of salmon rivers.

Anglers and their role in conservation and sustainable regional economic development

The MFFP's Atlantic Salmon Management Plan, recognized internationally for its "river by river" approach, relies on a network of large regional non-profit organizations that reinvest revenues in salmon protection and conservation. These river management organizations are part of the regional social economy, and their activities generate important revenues for many businesses and communities involved in salmon fisheries.

Anglers are an essential part of this network; they are engaged river users whose sport and recreational activities generate tens of millions of dollars in regional economic benefits every year, and they are also the subject of a strong and necessary regulatory structure. They are also important pairs of eyes and ears that help deter poaching.

So, we again reiterate the importance of finally recognizing the special status of Quebec's salmon rivers and ask that this status serve to regulate not only sport fishing, but all human activities practised in these exceptional ecosystems.

We also emphasize the importance of recognizing fishing as a sport, cultural, social and identity-based activity that generates substantial economic benefits in resource regions.

Need for increased collaboration between levels of government

The roles, responsibilities and regulations concerning the activities and territory of the different levels of government and departments are certainly complex. The MFFP benefits from numerous regulatory and administrative powers to protect its network of river management organizations and anglers. We are very satisfied with the way the courses of action have been carried and continue to be updated.

However, we would like to see a clearer commitment from the MFFP and the Quebec government in bringing forward its leadership and vision to the federal

and municipal governments, particularly in terms of navigation and the use of watercourses.

Delegated or shared jurisdictions are rarely exclusive, and we encourage the MFFP to make a clear commitment to engage in discussions with the federal government to ensure clear and collaborative governance of Quebec's salmon rivers.

High expectations

As mentioned before, the management framework has been received positively by our network and our members. However, it is essential that the plan be pursued within a timeframe that reflects the importance of the issue, in order to achieve a real Action Plan. The collaborative approach must continue in order to achieve concrete and sustainable results. The FQSA is eager to continue its active involvement with your department in the development of the action plan that will result from this first stage of reflection, in addition to contributing to the prioritization of actions that will be defined by the various working groups.

Our objective is the conservation of the salmon resource, the sustainability of quality sport-fishing activities and the long-term development of recreational activities, including fishing, on Quebec's salmon rivers. This document is a first step in an ambitious project that will define the future of Atlantic salmon in Quebec and Canada.