**ST. MARY’S RIVER ASSOCIATION**

**Annual General Meeting – May 28, 2023**

**Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia**

1. **Welcome**

Scott welcomed everyone (membership, guests, fellow board members and executive) to our 2023 Annual General Meeting.

1. **Call to Order**

The annual general meeting was called to order May 28, 2023, by President, Scott Beaver. The meeting was held at the Sherbrooke Lions Club.

There were approximately 35 members at the meeting.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Scott made a motion to approve the agenda and it was seconded by Rene Beaver.

1. **Approval of the Minutes**

Minutes for the 2022 AGM were emailed to all board members for review; Scott made the motion to approve and was seconded by Brian Cox.

1. **Guest Introductions**

* Kathryn Smith, Guest speaker "Cooling off: Finding and engineering cold-water habitat in Nova Scotia, Canada."
* Keith Spafford, NSNT Landowner Outreach
* David Hardie, DFO Atlantic Salmon Research Biologist
* Nick MacInnis, MacInnis Natural Resource (MNR) Services Inc
* Charlie MacInnis, MacInnis Natural Resource (MNR) Services Inc
* Deirdre Green, Atlantic Salmon Federation Nova Scotia Program Director

1. **President’s Report-Scott Beaver**

Scott highlighted some of the exciting items that are not being covered in the guest updates as follows:

1. Aquatic Ecological Restoration Fund - By now you have heard about our $1.56 million grant from the federal Aquatic Ecological Restoration Fund. This is the largest fund we have received yet. This will support four more years of restoration work within the watershed.
2. NOPE- Tim Halman put out a letter regarding Archibald Lake protection. There were two remaining parts required for its protection. One is a socioeconomic analysis of any impacts the designation might have which was just released 2 days ago. The second is to conclude consultation with Mi’kmaw groups which is still in progress.
3. Canada Parks And Wilderness Society (CPAWS)- They have been doing a lot of work in the watershed. They have found over forty rare species in the Archibald Lake wilderness area and have now expanded their efforts into the greater watershed. They’ve been snorkeling to identify eel grass beds in the estuary and have made some rare finds identified right in the outflow of Archibald Brook and other areas in the main river. Thank you CPAWS.
4. Promotional videos- We have worked with Wild NS (East Link by Firefly Digital Media), to produce 3 episodes featuring the St. Mary’s so far. The latest episode was this season, and its focus was Archibald Lake. Our new board director, Lanny Boyer has been approved to create 12 short videos focusing on past directors capturing history in the watershed and a few great stories. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details on that. CPAWS has donated $5000 for a video and the SMRA has matched the donation. This will be a sea trout angling/paddling/camping promotional video. We were also approached by a German Production company. They are creating a three-part series on Atlantic Canada and have chosen the St. Mary’s for the Nova Scotia portion of filming. We will be working with them to help them find wildlife in the area (turtles, salmon, etc.).
5. Inland Fisheries- We work with the Fraser’s Mill’s hatchery for our Sea Trout stock enhancement project. The hatchery has a new supervisor and has the funding to upgrade the facility in terms of water quality and will focus on recirculating and cooling efforts. They also provided us with eggs for the Fish friends’ program in the local school. The grade 4/5 class had a fish tank with eggs in their classroom. They watched them grow, learned about their life cycle, and released them into the river. Director Liz Jones led this project, thank you Liz.
6. Mi’kmaw groups have been in the area working on a brook floater study.
7. St. Mary’s University- Dr. Linda Campbell is working in the area studying Rainbow Smelts in Lochaber. It appears there are two distinct species which are very rare.
8. Randy Lauff, a biologist from St. FX is leading a Boreal Owl Nest box project along with Edwin Demont. Edwin is using a device called an audiomoth to record sound in the forest and uses this to identify rare species.
9. DFO- DFO has been a wonderful partner in conservation with us. David Hardie will speak on some of the projects they have been working on.

Scott would like to thank the huge efforts from all our volunteers. There are just so many hours that go into this work behind the scenes and we appreciate the efforts and I’m sure our community does as well.

A key direction that the SMRA has decided to give more focus as we move into the future is cold water refuge. Our guest speaker, Kathryn Smith will discuss this in greater detail during her presentation.

1. **Special Guest Speaker- Kathryn Smith “cooling off: Finding and Engineering Cold Water Habitat in Nova Scotia, Canada.**

Kathryn Smith was born and raised in Cape Breton**.** After completing a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering with the Cooperative Program at Dalhousie University in 2019, PhD student Kathryn Smith began her graduate studies working with Dr. Craig Lake. This work eventually led to an opportunity to conduct research as part of the Coastal Hydrology lab team supervised by Dr. Barret Kurylyk.

Kathryn’s PhD research focuses on investigating estuarine warming and cold-water habitat loss due to climate change in coastal rivers within Nova Scotia and PEI. Over the past three years, Kathryn has been mapping estuarine water temperature patterns using drones, temperature loggers, and fibre-optic distributed temperature sensing.

Water temperature impacts the physical, biological, chemical, and ecosystem processes in aquatic environments. These processes are also interconnected and any changes in temperature can have significant consequences for the health and stability of the ecosystem. And if we consider aquatic species – they have preferred temperature ranges where they can thrive as it impacts several factors such as their growth, metabolism, and ultimately their survival. When it comes to maintaining the health of aquatic environments, measuring temperature is a key tool. This study used a drone equipped with a thermal sensor.

Flights on the St. Mary’s were conducted on Sept. 8th & 9th, 2022. On the West Branch they found 6 groundwater springs, 5 groundwater seeps,4 groundwater brooks, 2 cooler tributaries.

There has been an increasing amount of work on enhancing and protecting thermal refuges.

1. **Nominating Committee Report and Election of Directors**

Scott Beaver stated as per bylaws we can have 20 Directors plus the executive team.

* We currently have 11 board members that are not up for re-election.
* 9 positions are open.
* 5 directors have terms that are up. Donnelly Archibald will not be re-offering. The four that are reoffering are Alan MacDonald, Derek Whiteway, Rene Beaver, and George Sutherland.

Christina and Lanny Boyer were nominated prior to the AGM. Rene Beaver nominates Edwin Demont from the floor. Alan MacDonald nominates Brian Cox from the floor. Scott asks three times if there are any other nominations. All members are in favor of the new board members. Welcome to the new directors.

1. **SMRA Reports**

**Finance Report – Gwen Boutilier**

Treasurer’s Report for Fiscal Year of April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, prepared by Antigonish Tax Services from information provided to them by the SMRA.

Opening balance at the beginning of the year was $301,300 plus $15, 000 held in GICs.

Total Revenue was $122, 015.

* Highlights in revenue
  + $8000 received from Department of Culture, History and Sport under the museum’s assistance program. These funds are to assist with the operating costs of the Interpretive Centre.
  + Grants received from NS Salmon Association for $61, 800 for restoration work.
  + Coastal Restoration Fund final payment for $22, 800.

Total Expenses were $185, 067

* The majority of expenses went towards:
  + Operating costs for the Interpretive Centre
  + River restoration activities

Closing balance $238, 248

Addition Note

* Repayment of CEBA loan by December 31, 2023 (Interest free to that point)
* Copy of the financial statements will be available on our website.

Gwen made the motion to accept the financial statement, and this was seconded by Robert Robichaud.

**Operations Report – Megan Myers**

In 2022 our tourist season was busier than the last few years. We had over 1000 visitors stop into the museum.

Patrick McGinn returned as our summer student.

We had several events:

July 1- Canada Day BBQ

July 9- Foraging event led by Cliff Seruntine

July 16- We set up a booth at the Sherbrooke Saturday Market to sell memberships and SMRA merch and hand out newsletters.

July 28- We had 30 kids take part in a day camp here at the Interpretive Centre. We did a museum tour, taught them about the salmon life cycle, did a salmon craft and played a salmon survival game.

August 6- we worked with Sherbrooke Village and the Whale Sanctuary to put on St. Mary’s River Community Fair where we set up an information booth, did fly casting demonstrations and a casting game with the kids.

October 31st- we set up a booth at Fright Night in Sherbrooke Village and handed out Halloween candy.

For this year:

May 13th- We joined other local non-profits in St. Mary’s and set up an information booth at the St. Mary’s Trail Association Open House.

July 21- the local daycare will be coming for crafts, story time, and bbq

July 22- Bug Walk with Randy Lauff. We will be meeting at 9:00 am at the Sherbrooke Village parking lot. More details can be found on our website/facebook pages.

We will also be hosting Dr. Kurt Meuller who will be giving a presentation on local mushrooms. This date will be announced in the coming weeks.

This year, the St. Mary’s River Community Fair will be held on August 5th from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM at Sherbrooke Village. There will be a variety of games, demonstrations, crafts and displays followed by the cardboard boat regatta.

Our 50/50 draw will be starting up again so keep an eye out for that.

We are looking forward to the 2023 season. Our events will be posted on our website and Facebook page. Thank you to all who help us out and drop in to see us this summer.

**SMRA Restoration Projects – Nick MacInnis**

2022 Restoration Work- work was conducted on four restoration sites on the East River St. Mary’s:

* Black Brook: Bank Stabilization and riparian zone restoration
* MacKay’s Brook: Digger log installation project
* East River, Willowdale Site: Bank Stabilization and riparian zone restoration
* East River, Newtown: East River Road bank stabilization project.

2023 Plans

We have successfully applied to DFO’s Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Fund to complete a four-year project.

* Will include digger logs and deflector work using a crew and large-scale work using machinery.
* Focus on developing cold-water refugia and important staging pools for Atlantic salmon.
* Intensive monitoring will be conducted on 6 tributaries to the St. Mary’s River

1. **DFO- David Hardie**

David gave an update on the telemetry work:

* Atlantic salmon kelt and smolt tracking.
  + They are spending time near the Grand Banks
  + tags are placed internally with a few stitches. The tags are read by a receiver in the river or by gliders (deployed to detect tags) and using seals (a receiver is glued to the top of their heads)
  + March 30th – May 28th kelt were tagged via angling.
  + Fike nets were used for smolt counts.

- used 10 satellite and 20 acoustic tags. They were released at Silver’s and there has been a 100% survival rate to the boat launch in Sherbrooke.

- Acoustic tags are good for 444 days.

- 76 smolts were tagged

- data goes to the Ocean Tracking Network

* 2022 Predation Study
* These tags contain a protein glue. If the smolt is eaten the protein glue will be digested and we are able to tell that it was eaten. Survival was 80-95%
* Other activities
* Conservation Hatchery program @ Coldbrook Facility
* Collection of adults
* Selective mating
* Fry release
* Non-target adult releases
* Smolt wheels (periodic)
* Electrofishing (annual)

1. **NSNT Keith Spafford- Landowner Outreach Lead**

* NSNT focuses on land conservation.
* In 2006, the NSNT started working with the St. Mary’s River Area “Ribbon of Green”. This focussed on the West and Main Branches. SMR has some of the last, best examples of mature, intact, Acadian floodplain forest left in Nova Scotia.
* floodplains are generally flat and have rich soil making them appealing locations for settlement and settlement in these areas typically involves deforestation.
* Parts of the river also have very steep-sided slopes. These slopes have always been difficult to access for forestry and impossible to farm, leading to some of them having quite old forest on them, dominated by species like hemlock and spruce. So, the St. Mary’s contains two very different but rare forest types – hardwood-dominated floodplain forests, and softwood-dominated steep-sided-slope forests.
* There is also a significant population of Wood Turtles on the St. Mary’s which are threatened/vulnerable.
* What can I do on Nature Trust properties?? We are delighted to welcome you to many of our conservation lands. Our promise is “forever wild,” and we work to safeguard the old forest, iconic coastline, islands, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and habitat for wildlife under our protection so that Nova Scotia’s natural legacy will endure. For future generations to be able to enjoy the same wild landscapes we have today, our work includes active stewardship and outreach programs to monitor and mitigate potential impacts.
* In general, lands owned by the Nature Trust are open to the public for low-impact activities such as hiking, fishing, paddling, birding, and berry picking. Some have actual hiking trails or old roads; some are more rugged wilderness and tend to be visited less as a result.
* We do not allow motorized vehicles of any kind, which means you must travel on foot or by water to access the conservation land.
* When visiting our lands, we ask that you follow the “Leave No Trace” principles. Those principles include not chopping down trees for firewood, not building fire pits in dangerous areas, packing out what was packed in, and burying human waste and toilet paper.
* The Nature Trust also holds conservation easements on those properties, the landowner gets to make the decision about allowing visitors or not.
* If we find that a specific use of a property is beginning to threaten or damage the conservation values for which we protected it in the first place (trampling rare plants, for instance), we will no longer allow the use that is damaging it. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and would be communicated through signage at the site.
* A potential threat to the area is the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid (HWA). It is a small, invasive, aphid-like pest that causes decline and eventual death to our Eastern hemlock. HWA was first identified in Nova Scotia in 2017.
* HWA is passively spread by wind, birds, animals, and humans, making it able to move long distances. Hemlock decline is not evident until it’s too late and the pest is rampant, so early detection is key. Found only on hemlock, HWA can be identified by small woolly masses, on the underside of twigs near the base of the needles that can be seen from late fall through early spring. In the case of a lighter infestation, you may only see one or two woolly masses. During the early fall the nymphs can be seen with a distinct white halo surrounding them.

1. **Deirdre Green- ASF**

* The St. Mary’s River Association is always spoken of as a model for community groups.
* 2022 was the 4th year of salmon tracking in Greenland.
* Coming up next month is the 40th annual meeting for NASCO.
* Wild Salmon Watersheds launched in 2022. It has focussed on areas with critical issues. It’s designed to preserve and protect rivers with relatively healthy populations.

1. **Member of the Year**

* In lieu of our Member of the Year award we would like to acknowledge all of those that have volunteered over the last year and the directors who have stepped down in the last year. Thank you to Deirdre Green, John Silver, Tim Sawlor, Winston Sawlor, and Donnelly Archibald.
* In the middle of March a few board members received an email from Mark Dort suggesting that we recognize the contributions President Scott Beaver has made to our association and community. We all agreed, and George Sutherland composed a letter summarizing the thoughts of the board on this topic. Scott, please accept our thanks and this small gift to acknowledge your efforts and contribution for our association, community, and the river.

1. **New Business**

Special Resolution: Scott reads the proposed changes to the bylaws:

1.  a special resolution amending our bylaws to change the junior category of membership to a non-voting supporting member and changing the membership term for all categories of membership from a fiscal year to a one-year membership from the date of payment.

2. a regular resolution of members setting the membership fee for the new supporting member category at $10 and setting out the existing fees for the other existing categories of membership.

3. a special resolution amending our bylaws to authorize virtual and hybrid meetings of members of the association.

Lanny Boyer reads the changes to Memorandum of Association:

4.  a special resolution amending the memorandum of association to carry out the objects of the Association, or to support other bodies and organizations to carry out the objects of the association, in other watersheds and areas of the province, but excluding financial support to do so.

Rene Beaver makes a motion to move the approval of these forward. George Sutherland seconded the motion. The resolutions were carried and passed by 100% of those members present.

**10.0 ADJOURNMENT**

Scott adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan Myers

Recording Secretary