

23) **It devalues the fishery and the associated angling infrastructure** which over the years has been the primary vehicle through which the river has been protected and preserved.

24) **It fosters a spirit of negativity in a sport which relies heavily upon anticipation and optimism.** In this environment, a bad day's fishing is often viewed as a biological crisis and even a good day's fishing can be considered unsatisfactory, with some of our best salmon pools producing some of our loudest complaints.

25) **It fails to apply a credible risk/benefit analysis to the management of the fishery** and offers no proof of its efficacy. It clings to an idealistic agenda which is being advanced despite all pragmatic arguments and evidence to the contrary.

26) **It has its origins in a motion adopted by the US directors of the Atlantic Salmon Federation** in New York in November 1997, and by the Miramichi Salmon Association in Boston in Feb 1998. Since then, it has essentially been a solution looking for a problem. Rather than being a means to an end, it appears to have become an end unto itself.

27) **It is a bullying tactic resorting to the use of peer pressure and "grilse shaming"** to marginalize a people and sacrifice a way of life that spans several centuries. It disengages the local fishery by robbing us of an essential element of our cultural and visceral connection to the Miramichi river.

28) **It continues to be a divisive and controversial measure,** squandering good will and fracturing a conservation consensus which until the mid 1990's had enabled anglers of all stripes to speak with a single, unified voice to address the many real threats to the Atlantic salmon.

If you agree with these points, consider signing this below and sending it postage free to your MP.

Mr. Pat Finnigan, MP
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

from:

28 Reasons to Oppose Mandatory Release of Grilse on the Miramichi River System

More info at MiramichiRiver.Com

1) **It disregards the fact that the vast majority of Miramichi grilse are male** and are of limited value in putting more eggs in the gravel.

2) **It has been introduced at a time when most assessments of juvenile salmon stocks show continued high concentrations** of all age classes, even after years when adult returns are reported to be low.

3) **It has been imposed upon people who live here by people who don't.** As a result, it changes the mix of fishermen on the Miramichi which has always been part of this river's charm and character. Many visitors have observed that it is not the same without the locals on the river.

4) **It elevates the value of the resource above the residents of the Miramichi.** By managing people for the benefit of the salmon instead of the other way around, a vital sense of local stewardship is eroded as people are disengaged from their ownership of the resource.

5) **It has caused most local anglers to simply stop salmon fishing this year.** In their absence, a small but lethal number of poachers have seized the opportunity to fish and retain, no longer targeting grilse as in the past but now targeting large multi sea winter female salmon. As a result, more eggs in the gravel were lost to the Miramichi in 2015 than in previous years. The consensus among most biologists is "better to lose 15 grilse than to lose 1 female salmon.

6) **It has resulted in a 44% one year decline in N. B. resident license sales,** leaving in its wake a major gap in surveillance, observation and deterrence of all forms of watershed misuse by poachers and other environmental offenders.

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7) **It has been part of an unsuccessful effort aimed at setting a good example for the Greenland fishery**, despite the fact that grilse don't go to Greenland. Dating only back to the late 1950s, the Greenland fishery is both predatory and opportunistic, lacking a foundation in either historic or aboriginal tradition. While great concern is expressed for the socio-economic impact of a reduction in the Greenland fishery, there is little evidence of consideration for a similar impact on the Miramichi.

8) **It continues a recent pattern of woefully inept collective bargaining** whereby the angling fishery is subjected to massive restrictions and reductions with no expectation of anything in return.

9) **It enables DFO to evade their responsibility to properly manage all aspects of the Atlantic salmon fishery**, having learned that when this is imposed, it seems to sufficiently appease the conservation industry.

10) **It deflects attention from more serious threats** such as high seas interception, the Greenland fishery, Striped Bass in the estuary, first nations gill net harvest of large salmon, Smallmouth Bass in Miramichi lake, predation from seals, mergansers and cormorants, pollution and disease from aquaculture, watershed degradation and habitat destruction.

11) **It has regularly been portrayed as the least we can do for the salmon**, but it appears to be all we can do. Having done the least, our leaders seem content to do little else. Given their abundance of revenue, shouldn't we expect more from our conservation industry than the least we can do.

12) **It unfairly blames and punishes the victim for the mismanagement of our Atlantic salmon resource**. Advocates often pay lip service to knowing that the angler is not the problem and yet they offer no other solution than to target the angling fishery.

13) **It is a departure from a sophisticated, "river specific" management strategy** which for more than 30 years has made the Miramichi the envy of salmon anglers the world over. The safety valve of grilse retention has ensured widespread compliance with the mandatory release of large salmon, long held by venerable anglers and advisers to be the most practical means of ensuring the future of the resource.

14) **It serves as a smokescreen to divert attention from the massive failures of the conservation industry** over the past two decades. In the leadership vacuum which has plagued the salmon world since the mid 1990's, our organizations have been hopelessly ineffectual at doing anything to address the many real threats to the Atlantic salmon. By their own rhetoric, they essentially admit to presiding over 20 years of declining stocks, having done little more than to discover new ways to monetize failure.

15) **It is usually a stepping stone to a total closure of the fishery**. It subjects traditional angling practices including catch and release, to a level of public suspicion and scrutiny which often results in loss of privilege. The permanent closure of the entire Saint John river system in the mid 1990s is a perfect case in point, where DFO used anglers as a scapegoat, blaming incidental hook and release mortality. Interestingly, none of our conservation groups spoke in the angler's defense.

16) **It ignores the fact that angling is an inherently inefficient means of harvest** in which the low chance of successful interception is part of its appeal. There clearly is no comparison between the casting of a tiny fly into a big river, seeking a voluntary response from a non feeding, transient fish and the use of mono-filament gill nets which are both lethal and indiscriminate.

17) **It violates an overarching principal of selective harvest** which should be the cornerstone of all resource management, including our woodlands.

18) **It risks putting too many grilse on the spawning beds**. Harvesting some grilse would make it less challenging for large male salmon to mate with large females. As Dr. Fred Whoriskey said in 1998 in the Atlantic Salmon Journal, "the progeny of a grilse salmon mating are predominantly grilse." In his landmark book "The Atlantic Salmon", Lee Wulff observes "Grilse rarely 'grow up' to be very large salmon....There is every reason to believe that if a grilse spawns, his progeny will inherit his tendency to return to the river as a small fish." (p. 208) He also contends that "discerning anglers will keep grilse for food but return the large salmon to the river in order to let these big fish spawn." (p. 11)

19) **It is a miserly management strategy which defrauds local Miramichi anglers of their birthright**. The significance of grilse to the Miramichi's overall spawning effort is like "pennies to a millionaire", yet some persist in being penny wise and pound foolish.

20) **It is a disgrace to a comparatively healthy ecosystem such as the Miramichi** that its reputation has been so tainted by those whose irresponsible rhetoric resorts to whatever means necessary to get this measure adopted. In a 1998 press release, the ASF even quoted Art Lee's description of the Miramichi as a "dying river". In stark contrast, DFO science publications regularly refer to the Miramichi system as the largest producer of Atlantic salmon in North America.

21) **Its justification is based upon a manipulation of limited adult assessment data** which is both inconsistent and insufficient. This often results in inaccurate counts and knowledge gaps which DFO stock status reports readily admit.

22) **It drives non-residents away from the river by painting a gloomy outlook** for the salmon resource. While most visitors have little interest in keeping grilse, they intuitively understand that any river which cannot feed its family cannot entertain its guests.