

Bureau of Fisheries Workplan - Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Plan Report Card



Department of Environmental Conservation

Progress Key

High or Complete

Moderate

Low

Deferred



Last updated: 4/2/2024

FISH CULTURE OBJECTIVE #1

Develop additional hatchery capacity to support the Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon fishery management objectives.

Strategy		Progress				Total
		2023	2024	2025	2026	
1-001	Partner with the USFWS to raise 140,000 yearling smolts at Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery from 2023-2025.					
1-002	Pursue continued partnership opportunities with USFWS for fish production beyond 2025.					

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #1

Develop an Atlantic salmon fishery in the Salmon River during the summer and early fall fishing season

Strategy		Progress				Total
		2023	2024	2025	2026	
1-001	Increase the number of Atlantic salmon smolts stocked in the Salmon River to 50,000.					
1-002	Direct stock Atlantic salmon smolts in the Salmon River estuary when water temperatures are near 46-50 F.					
1-003	Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.					

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #2

Develop fall/winter tributary fisheries for Atlantic salmon in Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek (Monroe County) and South Sandy Creek (Jefferson County).

Strategy	Progress					Total	
	2023	2024	2025	2026			
2-001	Increase the number of Atlantic salmon smolts stocked in Oak Orchard Creek to 50,000.						
2-002	Establish Atlantic salmon stocking policies of 50,000 smolts in Sandy Creek and South Sandy Creek.						
2-003	Direct stock Atlantic salmon smolts near the stream mouth when water temperatures are near 46-50 F.						
2-004	Explore opportunities for pen-rearing Atlantic salmon in Oak Orchard Creek and Sandy Creek.						
2-005	Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.						

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #3

Improve the post-stocking survival of Atlantic salmon.

Strategy		Progress					Total
		2023	2024	2025	2026		
3-001	Stock only spring yearling smolts.						
3-002	Concentrate stocking low in the watershed.						
3-003	Stock Atlantic salmon smolts at water temperatures close to 46-50 o F.						
3-004	Experiment with pen-rearing Atlantic salmon smolts.						
3-005	Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.						

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #4

Evaluate sport fishery quality and stocking methods to inform adaptive management strategies.

Strategy	Progress					Total
	2023	2024	2025	2026		
4-001 Monitor the quality of the sport fishery through the Lake Ontario Creel Survey, covering both lake and tributary fisheries.						
4-002 Explore options for angler diary programs to monitor Atlantic salmon catches in tributaries during the summer months.						
4-003 Develop a tool for anglers to collect fin clip information from angler caught fish to evaluate pen vs. direct stocked Atlantic salmon in the Salmon River.						
4-004 Use genetic parentage-based tagging to evaluate the relative performance of Sebago strain vs low thiamine tolerant Sebago strain Atlantic salmon smolts.						
4-005 Experiment with using traditional fisheries sampling techniques (e.g. trap netting) to collect adult Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario tributaries.						
4-006 Work with cooperating anglers to collect tissue samples from angler caught Atlantic salmon for parentage-based tagging analysis.						

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #5

Maintain and improve high quality habitats to support all life stages of Atlantic salmon.

Strategy	Progress					Total
	2023	2024	2025	2026		
5-001 Complete planned fish habitat enhancement projects in the Salmon River.						
5-002 Conduct habitat assessments in Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, Salmon River, and South Sandy Creek to determine the extent of coolwater habitat available during the summer months and assess their capacity to support natural reproduction.						
5-003 Explore opportunities for habitat improvement projects that increase coolwater habitat, spawning habitat, and juvenile rearing habitat in Lake Ontario tributaries, with an emphasis on the Salmon River, Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek.						
5-004 Actively seek conservation easements on Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek.						
5-005 Opportunities for habitat improvement at alternate locations may also be explored.						

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #6

Promote responsible stewardship of Atlantic salmon sport fisheries.

Strategy		Progress					Total
		2023	2024	2025	2026		
6-001	Develop fish identification products for Atlantic salmon and make them available to anglers in print, online, and social media formats.						
6-002	Conduct public outreach to improve Atlantic salmon identification and increase angler appreciation and participation in the Atlantic salmon fishery.						

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FISH CULTURE OBJECTIVE #1

Develop additional hatchery capacity to support the Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon fishery management objectives.

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure
1-001	Partner with the USFWS to raise 140,000 yearling smolts at Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery from 2023-2025.	USFWS plans to raise 140,000 yearling smolts in 2023	140,000 yearling smolts were raised by USFWS and stocked in spring 2024
1-002	Pursue continued partnership opportunities with USFWS for fish production beyond 2025.	Continue discussion with USFWS for fish production beyond 2025	Ongoing

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #1

Develop an Atlantic salmon fishery in the Salmon River during the summer and early fall fishing season

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure
1-001	Increase the number of Atlantic salmon smolts stocked in the Salmon River to 50,000.	Stock 50,000 yearling smolts in Salmon River in 2023	80,000 yearling smolts were stocked at Salmon River in 2023
1-002	Direct stock Atlantic salmon smolts in the Salmon River estuary when water temperatures are near 46-50 F.	Stock yearling smolts near the stream mouth when water temperature is near 46-50 F.	Yearling smolt Atlantic salmon were stocked one two dates in the Salmon River in 2023. Both stockings occurred near the stream mouth. The first stocking was on 4/21/2023 and the second was on 5/10/2023. Water temperatures were near 50 degrees at both stockings.
1-003	Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.	Stock paired lots of genetically marked low thiamine tolerant (Low TT) strain and control fish in 2023-2025	25,000 Low TT strain and 25,000 Sebago strain Genetically marked Atlantic Salmon smolts were stocked at Salmon River in 2023

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #2

Develop fall/winter tributary fisheries for Atlantic salmon in Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek (Monroe County) and South Sandy Creek (Jefferson County).

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure
2-001	Increase the number of Atlantic salmon smolts stocked in Oak Orchard Creek to 50,000.	Stock 50,000 yearling smolts in Oak Orchard Creek in 2023	40,000 spring yearling smolts were stocked at Oak Orchard in 2023. We plan to stock 50,000 smolts in 2024 and 2025.
2-002	Establish Atlantic salmon stocking policies of 50,000 smolts in Sandy Creek and South Sandy Creek.	Stock 50,000 yearling smolts in Sandy Creek and South Sandy Creek	40,000 spring yearling smolts were stocked at both locations in 2023. We plan to stock 50,000 smolts in 2024 and 2025.
2-003	Direct stock Atlantic salmon smolts near the stream mouth when water temperatures are near 46-50 F.	Stock yearling smolts near the stream mouth when water temperature is near 46-50 F.	All yearling smolts were stocked near the stream mouth at Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek. Stocking dates and water temperatures were: Oak Orchard Creek - 5/15/2023 at 63 degrees Sandy Creek - 4/3/2023 and 4/4/2023 at 46 degrees South Sandy Creek - 4/3/2023 at 38 degrees - 4/4/2023 at 42 degrees

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2-004	<p>Explore opportunities for pen-rearing Atlantic salmon in Oak Orchard Creek and Sandy Creek.</p>	<p>Identify volunteers for Atlantic Salmon pen-rearing projects at Oak Orchard Creek and Sandy Creek.</p>	<p>Establishing pen-projects at Oak Orchard Creek and Sandy is being deferred until stocking for the low thiamine tolerant strain evaluation is complete in 2025.</p>	
2-005	<p>Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.</p>	<p>Stock paired lots of genetically marked low thiamine tolerant (Low TT) strain and Sebago strain (control) fish in 2023-2025</p>	<p>Stocking for the low thiamine tolerant strain evaluation began in 2023. 10,000 experimental low thiamine tolerant strain Atlantic salmon smolts and 10,000 Sebago Strain smolts were stocked at Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek in 2023 as year one of a three-year experimental stocking program to evaluate the relative success of a potentially low thiamine tolerant strain of Atlantic salmon.</p> <p>Experimental lots and control lots were genetically marked using parentage-based tagging.</p>	

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #3

Improve the post-stocking survival of Atlantic salmon.

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure
3-001	Stock only spring yearling smolts.	Stock 200,000 yearlings smolts	
3-002	Concentrate stocking low in the watershed.	Stock all Atlantic salmon near the stream mouth	
3-003	Stock Atlantic salmon smolts at water temperatures close to 46-50 o F.	Stock yearling smolts near the stream mouth when water temperature is near 46-50 F.	
3-004	Experiment with pen-rearing Atlantic salmon smolts.	Test the effectiveness of pen-rearing Atlantic salmon at the stocking location for three weeks prior to release.	
3-005	Evaluate the relative performance of the low thiamine tolerant Atlantic salmon strain.	Stock paired lots of genetically marked low thiamine tolerant (Low TT) strain and Sebago strain (control) fish in 2023-2025	

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #4

Evaluate sport fishery quality and stocking methods to inform adaptive management strategies.

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure	
4-001	Monitor the quality of the sport fishery through the Lake Ontario Creel Survey, covering both lake and tributary fisheries.	Conduct the open lake creel survey from 4/15/23 to 9/15/23. Conduct the tributary creel survey from 9/16/23 to 4/14/24	Both creel surveys were completed as planned.	
4-002	Explore options for angler diary programs to monitor Atlantic salmon catches in tributaries during the summer months.	Identify opportunities for implementing angler diary programs.	DEC partnered with the Douglaston Salmon Run to have anglers fill out catch ards to document Atlantic salmon catches and fin clip information from catches in the Salmon River. DEC recieved XXX pictures of Atlantic salmon to collect fin clip information.	
4-003	Develop a tool for anglers to collect fin clip information from angler caught fish to evaluate pen vs. direct stocked Atlantic salmon in the Salmon River.	Develop an online reporting tool for anglers to submit Atlantic salmon catch and fin clip data	No work was done in 2023	
4-004	Use genetic parentage-based tagging to evaluate the relative performance of Sebago strain vs low thiamine tolerant Sebago strain Atlantic salmon smolts.	Stock paired lots of genetically marked low thiamine tolerant (Low TT) strain and Sebago strain (control) fish in 2023-2025	Stocking for the low thiamine tolerant strain evaluation began in 2023. See description in Management Objective 1 and 2.	
4-005	Experiment with using traditional fisheries sampling techniques (e.g. trap netting) to collect adult Atlantic salmon in Lake Ontario tributaries.	Use traditional fisheries sampling to collect Atlantic salmon tissue samples in support of the low thiamine tolerant strain evaluation.	The first genetically marked fish were stocked in 2023. Sampling will begin in 2024.	
4-006	Work with cooperating anglers to collect tissue samples from angler caught Atlantic salmon for parentage-based tagging analysis.	Provide volunteer anglers with sampling kits to collect scale/tissue samples from angler caught Atlantic salmon.	DEC began developing a group of volunteers to participate in sample collections. Some anglers were given sample kits in 2023 to test out the feasibility of sample collection while fishing Lake Ontario tributaries. The first genetically marked fish were stocked in 2023. Sampling will begin in earnest in 2024.	

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #5

Maintain and improve high quality habitats to support all life stages of Atlantic salmon.

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure	
5-001	Complete planned fish habitat enhancement projects in the Salmon River.	Complete Trestle Pool project to remove the old bridge trestle and restore floodplain connectivity.	Work began in 2023 and is planned to be completed in 2024.	
5-002	Conduct habitat assessments in Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, Salmon River, and South Sandy Creek to determine the extent of coolwater habitat available during the summer months and assess their capacity to support natural reproduction.	Conduct baseline habitat assessments in Lake Ontario to guide future habitat restoration projects.	DEC worked with the USFWS to draft methods for conducting habitat assessments. Work is planned for 2024	
5-003	Explore opportunities for habitat improvement projects that increase coolwater habitat, spawning habitat, and juvenile rearing habitat in Lake Ontario tributaries, with an emphasis on the Salmon River, Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek.	Implement habitat restoration projects based the baseline habitat assessments.	Deferred until habitat assessments are complete.	
5-004	Actively seek conservation easements on Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek.	Seek conservation easements to provide additional public fishing access, conserve stream habitat, and implement restoration projects.	DEC is working with NYS Canals to gain conservation easements on Sandy Creek.	
5-005	Explore opportunities for habitat improvement at alternate locations may also be explored.	Implement habitat restoration projects in other streams that may be considered for developing Atlantic salmon fisheries in the future.	Deferred until habitat assessments are complete.	

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MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE #6

Promote responsible stewardship of Atlantic salmon sport fisheries.

Strategy	Planned Work	Progress Narrative	Progress Measure
6-001	Develop fish identification products for Atlantic salmon and make them available to anglers in print, online, and social media formats.	Develop fish ID material and conduct outreach on proper Atlantic salmon identification.	No work was done in 2023
6-002	Conduct public outreach to improve Atlantic salmon identification and increase angler appreciation and participation in the Atlantic salmon fishery.	Develop fish ID material and conduct outreach on proper Atlantic salmon identification.	No work was done in 2023