

LD 405 TESTIMONY OF DENNIS SMITH  
DMR LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MARCH 4 2015

WHY I BECAME A BELIEVER IN PETER GRAY

I started fishing for atlantic salmon in 1973 on the Machias river. In 1974 I traveled to Scotland to fish for salmon on the Spey River.

Upon returning to Maine I fished the famous Narraguagus River where I tried without success to convince anglers to practice catch and release.

The Narraguagus and other Maine rivers continued to decline and salmon became an endangered specie.

At this point I had given up thinking that we could ever fish for atlantic salmon again in Maine.

Dwayne Shaw, Executive Director of the Downeast Salmon Federation, told me of a man, Peter Gray, from Scotland who had developed a new technique for restoring atlantic salmon.

My initial thought and reaction was “oh sure Dwayne, I have heard it all before over the last 50 or more years”.

In spite of my initial reaction I kept an open mind and went to East Machias to listen to Peter speak about his technique.

My opinion, after hearing Peter speak twice on his method, did a complete turnaround. It was obvious that he had thought and continued to think **OUTSIDE THE BOX**.

Peter Gray took the job of managing the Kielder fish hatchery on the River Tyne in northern England in 1978.

The history of the River Tyne is testimony to how successful the methods developed by Peter Gray were and continue to be.

Historically the Tyne was a great salmon river with catches in the 1000's. By 1970 the salmon were virtually extinct with zero rod catch.

Fast forward to today and because of the Peter Gray technique the rod catch has been around 5000 salmon annually.

In spite of Peters success critics and naysayers refused to accept and give credit where credit was due. Interestingly it seems the establishment (naysayers) have made it difficult for the folks at EMARC to employ the Peter Gray method. This despite the fact that of 550,000 smolts stocked in the Penobscot less than 300 returned in 2014.

It is further testimony to the promise of this endeavor to give credit to a group based in Iceland called NASF (North Atlantic Salmon Fund). They have given over \$500,000 to help build EMARC to what it is today and it is very doubtful that we would have this great facility without their help.

The biologist from DMR have used a smolt wheel to count the outgoing smolts in the East Machias annually and in 2014 the estimated smolt count was 1074 of which over 80% were hatchery fish.

All of the afore mentioned brings us here today. We want a bond which will allow us to construct a hatchery on the Narraguagus River where we can raise 600,000+ fall salmon parr. A hatchery on the Machias River to raise 800,000 and to add on to the existing hatchery at Columbia Falls. The addition would allow DSF to grow more fall salmon parr for the Pleasant River.

The success of such hatcheries cannot be over-estimated. For those of us who saw what salmon did for the Downeast economy we know how important healthy salmon population are for Cherryfield, Machias and all of the downeast area.