Town Hall Summary

Salmonid Association of Eastern Newfoundland

August 12th, 2026

Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who came out for our Salmon Cove Town Hall! With nearly 50 community members in attendance, it was incredible to see so many people come together to share their thoughts, ask questions, and voice their hopes for the future of the Salmon Cove Watershed.

Your input is so important as we work toward better understanding the watershed, supporting Atlantic salmon, and identifying the priorities that matter most to the community.

Thank you for taking the time to join us, share your experiences, and be part of the conversation. We're excited to keep working together and look forward to what comes next!

1 Algae

Blue-green algae blooms have been documented in several Newfoundland waterbodies in recent years, including Forest Pond, Gander Lake, Hunts Gully and Paddy's Pond.

The discussion highlighted that algal blooms are influenced by several factors, including temperature, sunlight and the availability of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen. While warm, sunny conditions can encourage algal growth, the presence of nutrients is an important factor in determining whether a bloom develops.

Forest Pond buoy reached maximum recorded temperatures of approximately 24.1°C in 2024 and 23.17°C in 2025.

One of the questions raised was why a significant bloom has occurred this year despite cooler and less sunny conditions than in previous years. There is currently no confirmed single explanation. Potential nutrient sources discussed included the treatment lagoon, surrounding land uses, organic material entering the watershed and reduced flushing associated with the blockage at the bottom of Forest Pond.

Further investigation is needed to better understand the sources and movement of nutrients within the system.

2 Forest Pond Blockage

The blockage at the bottom of Forest Pond was a major topic of discussion. This is one of SAEN's main concerns as it limits salmon moving upstream into key spawning grounds.

SAEN is interested in exploring whether removing the blockage could improve salmon and water movement and reduce nutrient accumulation within the pond. A similar blockage was removed in 2010.

However, any proposed removal would need to undergo the appropriate environmental assessment and regulatory review. It is also important to understand potential downstream effects before any action is taken as brought up by a concerned resident.

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https://www.stoppoaching.ca/make-a-complaint/

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3 Atlantic Salmon Migration and Spawning

Residents raised several questions about salmon that may become trapped below barriers or in ponds. Atlantic salmon generally require clean, well-oxygenated gravel and flowing water for successful spawning. While salmon may attempt to spawn in ponds if suitable habitat is available, ponds are generally less suitable than gravel riffles and other flowing sections of rivers.

Spawning in Newfoundland generally occurs from mid-October to early November, depending on local conditions.

If salmon are unable to pass an upstream barrier, they may remain in pools and wait for increased water levels and flow. Extended periods of holding can increase stress, energy expenditure and vulnerability to poaching; an issue several residents said is common in the area.

Maintaining access to upstream spawning habitat is therefore an important part of supporting salmon populations.

4 Nutrients and Algae Management

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the importance of understanding and reducing nutrient inputs. While physical removal of algae from a large pond is generally not a practical long-term solution, reducing nutrient inputs and addressing the sources of those nutrients can help manage the underlying conditions that support blooms. Continued monitoring and investigation will be important in determining which sources are contributing to nutrient levels in Forest Pond.

5 Water Flow and Spout Brook

Low water levels and flow were also discussed, particularly in relation to Spout Brook (Northwest brook).

SAEN raised concerns about the lack of recent water releases associated with the dams/penstock infrastructure. Restoring appropriate water releases could potentially help address low-flow conditions, although the feasibility, ownership, regulatory requirements and environmental implications would need to be investigated.

6 Environmental Impacts

The presence of a non-toxic algal bloom does not mean that there are no environmental impacts.

As algae die and decompose, dissolved oxygen can decrease. Dense blooms can also reduce sunlight reaching aquatic plants and affect aquatic insects and other organisms. In severe circumstances, low oxygen levels can contribute to fish mortality.

The extent of these impacts depends on the characteristics and duration of the bloom and the conditions within the waterbody.

Community Concerns

Residents expressed strong concern about the recurring algae issue and its effects on the community.

Concerns raised included:

- The appearance and smell associated with the bloom.
- Potential impacts on aquatic life.
- Concerns about Atlantic salmon habitat and migration.
- Low water levels and flow.
- Ongoing poaching.
- Impacts on tourism and the local community.
- The need for action to reduce nutrient inputs.

A clear message from the evening was that residents want to see practical action taken on this issue by the provincial and federal governments, and not solely continued monitoring and research.

Next Steps

The discussion identified several areas that could be explored moving forward, along with **action**:

- Investigating nutrient sources within the watershed.
- Understanding the role of the Forest Pond blockage and potential options for addressing it.
- Learning more about treatment lagoon releases and associated water quality.
- Investigating water flow and infrastructure in Spout Brook.
- Continuing water-quality and temperature monitoring.
- Exploring funding opportunities for watershed restoration and nutrient reduction.
- Strengthening community awareness around reporting suspected salmon poaching.
- Continuing communication between SAEN, residents, the Town and relevant government agencies.

SAEN also received a request to consider providing a letter of support to the Minister regarding the Forest Pond algae issue. This will be passed along for approval to the Board.

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