



PRESS RELEASE -Feb. 12, 2020
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rare video highlights risk of Nova Scotia gold mines

Endangered salmon filmed spawning in stream next to proposed open pit

HALIFAX – Recently captured underwater video shows a pair of wild Atlantic salmon preparing to spawn in McKeen Brook, an important tributary of the St. Mary's River that would be directly affected by the proposed Cochrane Hill gold mine.

The images were captured by the photographic team of Nick Hawkins and Tom Cheney, working with representatives of the Nova Scotia Salmon Association, St. Mary's River Association, and Atlantic Salmon Federation over 10 days in November 2019.

"This was an extremely challenging assignment and it's the first time to our knowledge that anyone has successfully filmed wild Atlantic salmon spawning in Nova Scotia," said Tom Cheney, a freelance producer and wild salmon advocate. "Nick and I hope these images, taken just a few hundred meters from a planned open pit gold mine, help people realize what's at stake."

An Australian company, St. Barbara, is proposing to mine Cochrane Hill for seven years. The project boundary under review is 600-acres in size, lies less than one kilometre from the St. Mary's River, cuts into land protected by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, and surrounds the headwaters of McKeen Brook. Major works would include an extraction pit 170 metres deep and a tailings impoundment to hold back 10.9 million metric tons of mine waste containing heavy metals and acid.

"Cochrane Hill would have such a short life and leave behind a toxic legacy to be managed forever," said Mike Crosby, President of the Nova Scotia Salmon Association. "The mine is a serious threat to water quality and water flows in McKeen Brook and the St. Mary's. It's high risk for a very small reward."

Fisheries and Oceans Canada has conducted regular surveys of McKeen Brook since 1990. Results consistently show among the highest juvenile salmon densities in the St. Mary's watershed, which is home to one of the last sizeable populations of wild salmon on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, a region where the species is considered endangered.

"Over decades there has been an incredible amount of work put into the river," said Scott Beaver, President of the St. Mary's River Association. "We have invested more than a million

dollars since 2014 to improve habitat for wildlife and recently received a \$1.2 million federal grant to continue the work. This development could undermine everything we've done."

The St. Mary's isn't the only salmon river threatened by a proposed gold mine. St. Barbara also wants to develop the Beaver Dam project, next to the nearby West River at Sheet Harbour.

"Along with the St. Mary's, the West River also has a sizeable population of endangered wild salmon thanks in large part to a 15-year acid rain mitigation program led by the Nova Scotia Salmon Association and the province of Nova Scotia," said Kris Hunter, the Atlantic Salmon Federation's director of programs for Nova Scotia and P.E.I. "Given all the work that has gone into these rivers, it's hard to conceive more inappropriate sites for gold mines."

The Nova Scotia Salmon Association, St. Mary's River Association, and Atlantic Salmon Federation are asking Nova Scotians to contact Premier Stephen MacNeil and let provincial leaders know that wild rivers and wild salmon are more precious than gold. Please visit www.asf.ca/silver

-30-

For more information contact:

Neville Crabbe – ASF Communications

ncrabbe@asf.ca

(506) 467-6804

PDFs of PR and BACKGROUNDER, plus high resolution images:

<https://www.asf.ca/news-and-magazine/news-releases/rare-video-highlights-risk-of-nova-scotia-gold-mines>

To download raw video of wild Atlantic salmon spawning in the St. Mary's visit:

<https://vimeo.com/atlanticsalmonfederation>

The **Nova Scotia Salmon Association** was founded in 1963 to promote the wise management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and trout in the province.

The **St. Mary's River Association** was formed in 1979. It's mission is to ensure health for the river, the Atlantic salmon, and the community of people that call the river valley home.

The **Atlantic Salmon Federation** was formed in 1948 to conserve and protect wild Atlantic salmon and their environment throughout North America.