



NASF HELPS FRENCH GOVERNMENT MAKE DRAMATIC CONSERVATION DECISION.

*** Removal Of High River Dams Will Restore Wild Salmon Stocks***

Dramatic moves by the French government to begin rebuilding the country's wild salmon stocks could lead the way to restoring the lost salmon runs of continental Europe.

In a ground-breaking decision the Minister of the Environment, Jean-Louis BORLOO and Junior Minister Chantal JOUANNO have announced plans to remove two major high dams. This will allow salmon free passage up the Sélune and Sée river system in Normandy and the fish will be able to reach traditional spawning grounds from which they have been barred for over 70 years.

The rivers run through one of the most popular French tourist areas and feed Europe's biggest wetland area close to the famous Mont-Saint-Michel. The two hydro-electric dams, built in 1914 and 1935, have been a major block to salmon restoration work in Normandy.

The decision to tear them down is the outcome of a partnership between NASF and French authorities, formed to decide the best ways of reviving the salmon runs of the two rivers. In 2008 the ministry invited NASF to review the area and make proposals for its future. In November last year a NASF team of salmon experts made a field visit to the area before beginning a detailed action report to restore the salmon habitat.

The team included NASF Chairman Orri Vigfusson, Dr Martin O'Grady (Senior Research Officer at the Central Fisheries Board in Ireland) and the leading figure in salmon recovery initiatives in France, Parisian banker Marc-Adrien Marcellier. They recommended the removal of the two dams, channel reconstruction, a green initiative, a business plan and cooperative initiatives to build up natural recovery.

Other individuals who worked on the report included the Chairman of Wessex Salmon and River Trust, Mr. Brian Marshall, Michael Charleston, OBE, both from England and Professor Oystein Aas from Norway.

In Lisieu, Chantal JOUANNO said: “I hope that this project will be a good example. This is a real plan to develop the valley and create substantial employment. We must strive for excellence while integrating environmental factors of local development and long term monitoring. It is a great initiative we are opening up and we must work very closely with local politicians and stakeholders.”

NASF chairman Orri Vigfusson said: “This is political courage; undeniable courage. It shows that the Sarkozy Government means business in matters of the environment and it will give real leadership to growing moves to restore the wild Atlantic salmon of Europe. NASF is proud and honoured to have been asked to advise the French government.”

Leading French salmon strategist Marc-Adrien Marcellier is a director of NASF. For over 15 years he has worked with M. Jean Allardy, a now retired senior fisheries official of the French Ministry of the Environment, to influence European policies on wild salmon.

M. Marcellier said in Paris: “This is a landmark decision that will open up opportunities for real progress in restoring the fortunes of the wild salmon, not just in France, but throughout continental Europe. It is always right to do the right thing and we are delighted at the outcome. We look forward to implementing serious action plans”

Details of the NASF proposals for Normandy can be seen here:

<http://www.nasfworldwide.com/downloads/normandy-en.pdf> (English) or

<http://www.nasfworldwide.com/downloads/normandy-fr.pdf> (French).

The North Atlantic Salmon Fund, NASF, is an international coalition of voluntary conservation groups who have come together to restore stocks of wild Atlantic salmon to their historic abundance. – nasf@vortex.is – www.nasfworldwide.com