

Save Our Char Committee
(SOCC)



5 Year Strategic Recovery Plan
For the
Sea Run Arctic Char in
Parkers River (Western Brook)

In Partnership With:

Department of Fisheries & Oceans

Nordic Economic Development Corporation

St. Anthony Basin Resources Inc.

Community University Research Recovery Alliance (CURRA)

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Town of St. Anthony

Department of Natural Resources – Forestry & Wildlife Division

Vision:

The vision of the Save our Char Committee is “To protect, preserve and enhance the unique local population of Sea Run Arctic Char, Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout in the Pistolet Bay area through promotion of education, scientific study and public awareness for present and future generations to enjoy.”

Mission Statement:

By 2014, the Save Our Char Committee will have stimulated environmental stewardship through detailed research on fish stocks at Parkers River (Western Brook). This will be accomplished through the promotion of conservation, cooperation and consultation.

Background:

The Save our Char committee was developed in the fall of 2007 out of concern for the significant decline of Arctic Char in the Pistolet Bay area. The committee was originally formed in 1982 but had been dormant over the years until the committee members observed a large decline in the Arctic Char stock.

The committee is concerned that this small unique population of Arctic Char may become extinct. In response, they wanted to start the process of getting this decline reversed before it was too late to save these fish.

The committee partnered with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Nordic Economic Development Corporation, SABRI, CURRA, MUN, and the Department of Natural Resources – Forestry & Wildlife Division to develop a plan to address the committees concerns. The 5 Year Strategic Recovery Plan was completed in consultation with all these groups.

Goals & Objectives:

The committee has been working closely with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Nordic Economic Development Corporation, CURRA (MUN) and SABRI in our quest to return the small stock of Arctic Char in Pistolet Bay to sustainable levels. The committee has received tremendous support from these groups and greatly acknowledges their ongoing support.

Listed Below are the goals and objectives that the Committee believes would be the best route for achieving our plan of returning this stock back to normal levels. Some projects have already started while others are just in development stage. These are as follows:

1. Counting Fence:

- ✚ Research and develop a counting Fence for the Parkers River with a goal to have it in place by year 5 of our Recovery Plan.
- ✚ The counting fence would help the committee study the migration patterns of the fish frequenting Parkers River. It would also determine return levels that can be monitored to determine sustainability.
- ✚ Nordic Economic Development Corporation is partnering with the group to develop a proposal and be the proponent for funding for the counting fence.

2. Depth Survey:

- ✚ The committee is working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Department of Natural Resources – Forestry & Wildlife Division to survey Stock Pond using an ice auger to locate deep water holes. The committee will conduct the study in late February 2009 to complete the groundwork project.
- ✚ The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has committed to complete 3D mapping for a complete image of the bottom of Stock Pond. This project will determine the best possible resting places for Arctic Char during winter. Note: Arctic Char normally rest under ice in deep water areas and Stock Pond is believed to be the resting place because there are deep water holes in the pond.

3. Heads Collection Program:

- ✚ The committee partnered with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to collect Arctic Char heads during the summer of 2008. Twenty heads were collected and are being processed by MUN in conjunction with CURRA.

- ✚ Samples have also been sent for Genetic analysis. Eoliths are all collected and will be analyzed for aging and chemical compound.
- ✚ The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has already approved the above projects and is paying for the analyzing of these fish.
- ✚ An Arctic Char verse Sea Trout study is also proposed. The committee plans to approach a university student under CURRA (MUN) who may wish to incorporate these fish as part of her thesis on Trout in the Western Region.

4. **Underwater Camera:**

- ✚ The Committee is working closely with Department of Fisheries and Oceans to set up an underwater camera in Parkers River to get an accurate and inexpensive count of fish in the system.
- ✚ This program involves placing a camera under water at a set location and video taping during the 2009 summer season.
- ✚ When the season is over the Committee plans to sit down and review the tape to count and identify fish. Provincial wildlife officials will help set up and trains everyone to ID fish.
- ✚ This information will be used to determine the stock status for Arctic Char, Atlantic Salmon and Trout.
- ✚ The committee plans to seek funding for this camera through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and is looking for volunteers to review the video in the fall of 2009.

5. **Voluntary Hook and Release program:**

- ✚ From 2009 to 2014, the committee is requesting a Hook and Release program for Char in the Pistolet Bay area. During this time any Char caught would hopefully be released.
- ✚ All fish released could be counted also on a voluntary basis by going to the website page maintained by Nordic Economic Development Corporation and/or calling the Department of Fisheries & Oceans in St. Anthony.
- ✚ Fishers can retain Char if they wish but the Committee is asking all users to practice Hook and Release fishing when and where possible.
- ✚ The committee believes the local communities will respect this program and help out by practicing hook and release and recording all fish caught. Note: Fishers who wish to keep Char are strongly encouraged to report their catches as well.
- ✚ This information will be crucial to the recovery of the Arctic Char in Pistolet Bay. All users can feel good about having a part in helping rebuild this unique stock of Arctic Char for all users.
- ✚ The committee wants to ensure locals that no other activities will be affected (Salmon, Smelt) by this voluntary Hook and Release program. Note: The Mouth of the Parkers River would remain closed.

6. Website Promotion & Awareness:

- ✚ The committee plans set up a website page to be maintained by the Nordic Economic Development Corporation with information on the Arctic Char of Pistolet Bay and a link which would give users information on what to do if you catch a Char. Numbers will also list for people without web access to call the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in St. Anthony with their information (Size of fish, where and when caught.)
- ✚ The website could include topics like:
 - a) SOC committee (Mission, Goals, Objectives)
 - b) Pistolet Bay area facts
 - c) Arctic Char, Atlantic Salmon and Trout information
 - d) Activities by the SOC committee.
 - e) Link for submitting fishing log, DFO, Crime stoppers, etc

7. Stream (Spawning) Survey:

- ✚ The committee, The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Provincial wildlife officials will team up to do a stream survey in the fall of 2009 or 2010.
- ✚ The study will gather information on spawning and rearing areas for Arctic Char and other species in the Parkers River.

8. Mark-Recapture Program:

- ✚ The Committee is working with Provincial Wildlife, Fisheries and Oceans Science to develop the mark-recapture program.
- ✚ The program involves tagging some fish and releasing them for future studies on migration patterns, survival rates and growth rates.
- ✚ The committee will work with the Province and set fyke nets for sample collection during spring/summer seasons. Samples would be tagged and returned to the water.

9. Restocking Parkers River Program:

- ✚ The committee feels that if stocks do not recover significantly in the next few years a plan to restock the river must be developed.
- ✚ This plan will involve capturing spawning Arctic Char and setting up a hatchery to rear the fish to be released into the system.
- ✚ This program will increase greatly the survival rate of these fish and help rebuild this small stock.

10. Public Support:

- ✚ The committee plans pursue these projects with public support for them in a general membership meeting to be held in late February 2009.
- ✚ Current and future membership will also be updated on a regular basis through emails and at committee meetings.
- ✚ The general public will also remained informed through news releases and feature articles published in media such as The Northern Pen, etc.