

Bryn Robinson

NEWSLETTER

Hammond River Angling Association

Operations



Office phone - 506-832-1230

Email - office@hrra.ca

Hall rentals call 506-645-1698

Follow us on Facebook at:

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Paul Wood

HRAA Membership

Winter is not a pause in the life of a river- it is a period of quiet preparation.

As snow settles across the Hammond River watershed and ice begins to form along its edges, the river continues its slow work beneath the surface. Groundwater still feeds cold tributaries. Fish find refuge in deep pools and woody cover. Ice thickens and shifts, shaping what the spring freshet will bring.

For HRAA, winter is a season of watching, measuring, reflecting, and planning. It's also a time to look back at what we've accomplished together. From tree planting, soil sampling, habitat restoration, education programs, water monitoring, and policy advocacy- our work is made possible because of our members, volunteers, partners, and supporters. HRAA exists because people care enough about this watershed to stay involved year after year.

That being said, it is now time to renew your HRAA membership! HRAA memberships directly support on-the-ground conservation, watershed monitoring, and community education throughout the Hammond River system. When you renew, you're investing in the science, stewardship, and advocacy that protect this river now and into the future.

2026 membership dues:

·Junior (16 and under)	\$5
·Regular	\$10
·Family	\$15
·Senior (65+)	\$5
·Lifetime	\$150

Ways to pay:

- Go online to our website www.hraa.ca/membership and pay using PayPal, VISA or MasterCard
- Send an Interac e-Transfer to accounting@hraa.ca
- Call us at 506-645-1698 and pay using VISA or MasterCard
- Mail your cheque to HRAA, 10 Porter Rd., Nauwigewauk, NB, E5N 6X1



Thank You Rick McKillop

A heartfelt thank you Rick McKillop!

Some people leave their mark in quiet ways- not through titles or speeches, but through steady hands, generous time, and a lifelong love of place. Rick McKillop is one of those people. His story with the Hammond River Angling Association is woven into the river itself: into the early days of the organization, the buildings we gather in, the events we host, and the generations who have learned to love the Hammond River because of him.

Rick is now retiring from his service on the HRAA Board of Directors and from serving on our Dinner & Auction Committee, and we pause to reflect with deep gratitude on a lifetime of dedication, craftsmanship, mentorship, and care, and to say thank you for all that Rick has given to the HRAA and our community.

Rick's story with the HRAA goes back to the very beginning. An avid fisherman from a young age, Rick is a charter member of the Association and was present at the very first meeting to form the HRAA. From those early days, he quickly became involved in the work of the organization, serving on multiple committees, including the Maintenance Committee and the Dinner Committee, and helping shape the foundation of what the HRAA is today.

In the early 1990s, Rick played a key role in envisioning and constructing the HRAA Conservation Center. Alongside Gary Hicks, Louis Duffley Sr., Bill Marr, and Jim Gillespie, Rick helped brainstorm what a permanent home for the Association could look like. At the time, Rick was working at the dry docks and was able to rally volunteers to help bring that vision to life. He also took the lead on building the beautiful gazebo overlooking the Hammond River- a place many of us have gathered, reflected, and enjoyed the river over the years.

In March of 2020, Rick was invited by Paul Daigle to join the HRAA Board of Directors. Over the past four years, Rick's presence on the Board has been steady, thoughtful, and deeply rooted in his belief in the HRAA's purpose. He has always been a strong supporter of the Association's commitment to conservation, the preservation of the Hammond River watershed, (particularly its salmon), and the importance of educating future generations. It has been especially meaningful to see his grandchildren take part in HRAA's youth programs and grow their own connection to the river.

Rick's volunteerism reaches into nearly every corner of the organization. He has been a long-time contributor to the Annual Dinner & Auction, assisted with countless fish counts, fishing derbies, anglers' socials, and community events, and has been instrumental in the ongoing care and maintenance of the Conservation Center. Rick is someone the HRAA has always been able to count on- whether for a planned project or an unexpected need.

Thank You Rick McKillop

His woodworking has left a lasting mark as well. Rick's craftsmanship is both beautiful and enduring, and we've been fortunate to feature his work at past auctions, including a stunning handmade trout net. In 2021, Rick even stepped in as Camp Director for a day when needed, and he built the easels that continue to be used at Nature Camp today!

Above all, Rick's deepest connection has always been to the river itself- the time spent fishing, enjoying the beauty and serenity of the Hammond River, sharing stories with fellow anglers, and teaching his children and grandchildren, Bailey and Cameron, the joys of fly fishing. These are the moments that have shaped a lifetime of dedication to conservation and community, and we were honored to present Rick with the Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award in 2024! Rick's contributions to the HRAA span decades, generations, and countless acts of service. As he steps back from these formal roles, his legacy remains firmly woven into the fabric of the Association.

Thank you, Rick, for everything you have given to the HRAA, the Hammond River, and our community. Your impact will be felt for many years to come!



HRAA Goes Hollywood(ish)!

This past summer and fall, we had a very cool behind-the-scenes moment, as the HRAA got to help support the production crew for *The Slack*.

Turns out there's nothing quite like seeing your home turf become a moody, maritime noir... complete with cameras, crew, and that magical "quiet on set" energy (which we definitely respected).

A slow-burn noir set on New Brunswick's Fundy coast, *The Slack* follows a natural resources protection officer with a brain injury investigating the disappearance of a fisherman. She's forced to reconstruct a night she can't fully remember, and confront the unsettling possibility that the truth depends on a mind she can't entirely trust. Dark. Atmospheric. Very Fundy. We love supporting local initiatives, especially when they shine a spotlight on our region in such a compelling way. So grab a blanket, dim the lights, and prepare for some serious East Coast intrigue.

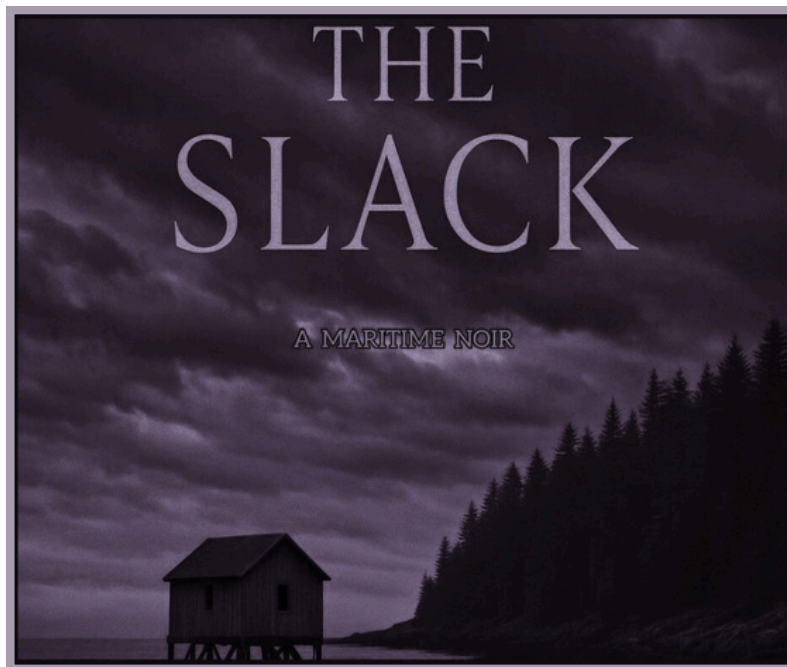


Only on Bell Fibe TV 1 and the Fibe TV App

February 2026



Tune in and see if you can spot some familiar places and shorelines!



Projects

Restoration: Growing for the Future

The 2025 field season marked one of the most productive restoration years in HRAA's history. Across five restoration sites, HRAA staff, volunteers, and partner organizations planted a total of 7,137 native trees and shrubs throughout the Hammond River watershed. These efforts focused on riparian buffers, bank stabilization, and habitat enhancement in areas where erosion, land use, or altered flow regimes have reduced ecological function.

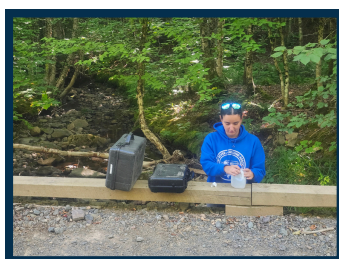
In total, restoration efforts covered 22,327 square metres of planting area and included 125 metres of active bank stabilization at Crowley's Pool alone. These projects aren't about quick fixes. Trees and shrubs planted today will take years to fully mature, but their benefits last decades. Shade, root structure, sediment capture, nutrient uptake, and habitat complexity all increase over time, strengthening the river's resilience in a changing climate.

Soil Sampling: Building Smarter Restoration from the Ground Up

In 2025, HRAA expanded its restoration toolkit by pairing planting work with watershed-scale soil characterization.

Over 50 soil sampling sites were selected across priority areas of the watershed, including restoration locations and comparative sites. Samples were collected and analyzed for a wide suite of parameters, including, pH, nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium), organic matter (humus), moisture and conductivity, and metals and trace elements.

In several priority areas, duplicate samples were collected from bare versus vegetated sites, allowing us to better understand how vegetation influences soil condition and nutrient dynamics. Why this matters: soil conditions play a major role in plant survival, growth rates, and long-term restoration success. By building a soil profile of the Hammond River watershed, we are creating a dataset that will guide our planting strategies for years to come and positions HRAA as a leader in evidence-based riparian restoration.



Education remains a cornerstone of HRAA's mission! In 2025, our education programs reached hundreds of youth and community members, offering hands-on experiences that connect people directly to rivers, wetlands, and wildlife.

Beyond the classroom, HRAA staff and volunteers delivered presentations and outreach events across the region, including the Hampton High School job fair and environmental presentations, a presentation at the Saint John Naturalist Club, being a keynote speaker at the Wolastoq/St. John River Summit, hosting DFO and various project partners for a collaborative restoration site bus tour, and several cyanobacteria and water-quality presentations!

These programs foster curiosity, stewardship, and scientific literacy, often providing participants with their first meaningful connection to freshwater ecosystems. To any teachers that receive our newsletter- now is the time to start booking your environmentally educational field trips for the 2026 season, and we hope to see you at the HRAA Conservation Center!

Electrofishing Surveys: Tracking Juvenile Salmon Trends

Electrofishing surveys are one of the primary tools used to assess juvenile Atlantic salmon abundance and distribution within the watershed. By surveying consistent sites over time, we can track population trends, evaluate restoration success, and identify emerging concerns.

In recent years, electrofishing results have told a complex story:

- 2022 – No survey conducted due to a broken backpack electrofisher
- 2023 & 2024 – An increase in juvenile salmon abundance, coinciding with access to approximately 2,000 fry stocked during each summer
- 2025 – A decrease in juvenile salmon counts

The decline observed in 2025 does not necessarily indicate a population collapse, but it does signal a year of stress. Significantly low water levels throughout the summer and fall limited available habitat and reduced the number of sites that could be safely and effectively surveyed. Low water can concentrate fish into fewer refugia, increase thermal stress, and reduce overall survival of juveniles.

In addition to changes in juvenile salmon abundance, 2025 surveys revealed unexpected species occurrences, including finding yellow perch in the lower reach of Salt Springs Brook, and both yellow perch and pumpkinseed sunfish in the upper Salt Springs Brook- almost 10km away from the mainstem river!

These findings raise important questions about species movement during periods of low water, including whether fish may be dispersing from connected lakes or seeking refuge as conditions change. These anomalies reinforce the value of consistent monitoring and will guide future survey design and management discussions.

Redd counts provide a direct indicator of reproductive activity within the watershed. Each redd represents a successful spawning event and a potential future generation of salmon.

In 2025, environmental conditions posed significant challenges to this work.

While we were happy to finally see some rain after a significant period of drought, the rain made hosting our volunteer redd count event impossible! Due to repeated heavy rainfall, volunteer redd count surveys were cancelled three times, making it unsafe to proceed. Despite this, HRAA staff completed 31 redd surveys between October and November, ensuring continued data collection even under difficult conditions.

In total, HRAA staff documented 83 Atlantic salmon redds. While redd numbers fluctuate annually due to flow conditions, spawner abundance, and access to habitat, documenting redd presence, especially during a challenging year, is a powerful reminder that salmon continue to return and attempt to reproduce in the Hammond River.

Issue Spotlight: Mactaquac Biodiversity Facility Closure

One of the most significant conservation issues facing our region is the planned closure of the Mactaquac Biodiversity Facility (MBF).

Constructed in 1968 alongside the Mactaquac Dam, MBF has played a critical role in Atlantic salmon conservation for more than five decades. The facility has served as:

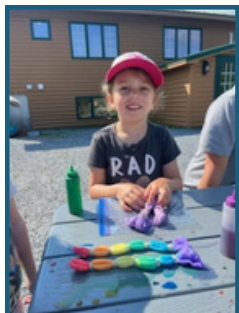
- A live gene bank for endangered Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon
- A core component of the Fundy Salmon Recovery Project
- A key mitigation measure tied to the impacts of the Mactaquac Dam

The closure of MBF raises serious concerns for salmon recovery, genetic preservation, and the long-term stewardship obligations associated with large hydroelectric infrastructure. HRAA continues to engage with partners, watershed groups, and decision-makers to advocate for transparent decision-making and science-based solutions that protect salmon populations and the ecosystems they depend on.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Several projects are already approved or underway for the coming year, including Salmon Creek restoration in Quispamsis, American eel assessments throughout the watershed, expanding community-based volunteer tree planting, and continued Outer Bay of Fundy salmon collaboration and research.

Nature Camp



This past summer during 9 weeks of camp, Sarah and her incredible team of 9 dedicated counsellors welcomed more than 350 campers, making Nature Camp 2025 our biggest and most successful seasons to date. Registration sold out in just 29 hours, a clear sign of how deeply families value hands-on outdoor learning and meaningful summer experiences for their kids.

Every single day of camp included environmental education woven into play: from exploring forests and shorelines, to learning about rivers, wildlife, and ecosystems through games, crafts, and curiosity-driven discovery. Campers didn't just learn ABOUT nature; they learned IN nature.

Throughout the summer, campers also had the chance to learn from a wide range of guest speakers, bringing real-world environmental careers and conservation stories directly to the next generation. These visits helped connect daily camp activities to the bigger picture of stewardship, science, and community care.

And of course, it wasn't all serious science- there was plenty of joy, laughter, and classic summer fun along the way. One of the season highlights was our bouncy castle fun day, which delivered exactly what summer camp should: big smiles, tired legs, and memories that stick.

Most importantly, Nature Camp 2025 reinforced what we've always known: when kids are given space to explore, ask questions, and connect with the natural world, something powerful happens. Confidence grows. Curiosity deepens. Stewardship begins.

We're incredibly proud of our counsellors, grateful to the families who trusted us with their children, and excited about what this momentum means for the future of Nature Camp.



Events

Fly-Tying - Fly Tying evenings continue until April. We meet every Thursday evening at the HRAA at 6pm. Ages 14+. No experience necessary and supplies provided.

The Slack Movie Premiere - Keep your eyes open this February for news regarding the release of the movie "The Slack", filmed here in NB!

Nature Camp Registration - Mark your calendars for March 1st at 9am when our registration portal goes live! Last year we completely sold out in just over 24 hours!!

Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance (PWA) Presentation - The staff at PWA invite our members to join them at the Salisbury Lions Club on Mar 18th at 5pm for a Habitat Restoration & Water Quality Presentation with Special Guest Edmund Redfield from Fort Folly First Nation.

Used & New Fishing Gear Sale at the HRAA - Scheduled for April 12th, 2026 from 11am-2pm. Let us know if you are interested in having your own table at the Sale.

Annual Family Fishing Derby - Our Annual Family Fishing Derby will take place on the weekend of June 5-7, 2026! We are excited for another great event. Registration opens in May.

Thanks to our Sponsors

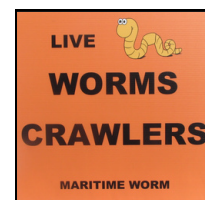


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