

The Salmon North of Seven by Gray Merriam

Many think that the Salmon starts south of Highway 7 because that is where the name first appears on maps. Not true. In fact I would argue that the most important part of the Salmon is north of 7.

When evaluating the importance of a piece of landscape, a basic rule is: higher in elevation and farther upstream makes landscape more important. The reason is simple. Higher ground and higher up a watershed are essentially the same; both mean that that land can affect a greater area of landscape downhill and downstream.

This is the situation for the critical parts of the Salmon that are north of 7. Starting just south of Mazinaw Lake in Bon Echo Park, the drainage of the land is to the south into Story Lake. From Story Lake, Beaver Creek drains southward along Road 41, picking up local drainage from around Cloyne and flowing south to Northbrook. At Northbrook, Beaver Creek crosses 41 and flows through the east side of the village to cross 41 back to the west just south of Northbrook. The creek picks up all the local drainage from around and within Northbrook and along Road 41 before flowing back to the east of 41 and south toward the northwest corner of Kennebec Lake.

Fortunately, on that leg of its route, Beaver Creek flows through many wetlands in the western portion of the Kennebec Wetland Complex (KWC). This Wetland Complex is listed as a Provincially Significant wetland, one of the largest and most pristine. Although much of the KWC is crown land, it is not a Conservation Reserve or similarly protected area. Many of our neighbours live in the KWC, often without knowing it, and all traditional uses are still practised there. At present it is a very successful integration of traditional uses and good stewardship of the land. And the KWC is a wonderful filter system for the headwaters of the Salmon before they enter Kennebec Lake. Not only do those many little wetlands safeguard the quality of the Salmon's water, but they also moderate the peaks of flow. Two years ago when we had a severe September rainstorm, the peak of runoff in the Salmon was less severe than in neighbouring rivers. The upstream wetlands caught and held much of the heavy rain and let it out slowly over the next several days.¹ Because most of the area drained by Beaver Creek is in second growth forest, effects on the water quality and the flow rates of runoff extend all the way to the very hilltops. That is very fortunate because much of the area is Precambrian bedrock with very little soil cover and having as much forest and ground cover as possible is essential to the health of the watershed.

The flows from the central and northeast section of the upper Salmon watershed start in the central area of the Kennebec Wetland Complex where

Dead Creek starts. Draining east across Henderson Road, Dead Creek flows to the Conservation Reserve at the west end of Hungry Lake. Here the flows from Hungry and Mink lake watersheds join and start south as Crooked Creek. Again, much of this flow is safeguarded by the KWC, the source of Dead Creek, and by other wetlands to the east. A large wetland on Crooked Creek just south of the Hungry Lake Road is typical of the filters working in this branch of the Upper Salmon. A baseline station for monitoring of water quality by sampling bottom-dwelling invertebrates has been established on the lower Crooked Creek because it is considered pristine and little affected by human activities. Eventually, Crooked Creek enters Cox Lake which is joined to Kennebec Lake by a continuation of Crooked Creek.

Beaver Creek and Crooked Creek come together in Kennebec Lake along with some other local inflows from the Kennebec lake subwatershed. One of these is an undefined drainageway that brings water to the Salmon in Kennebec Lake all the way from Kaladar along the north side of Highway 7. Another crosses 7 from the south and enters the east end of Kennebec.

Clearly, much of the quality of the Salmon depends on flows from the Upper Salmon, north of 7. The Salmon definitely is not just south of 7. When thinking about stewardship of the Salmon watershed, the Upper Salmon, the Salmon north of 7 must be given priority. We need to safeguard Beaver Creek's passage through the areas of Cloyne and Northbrook and along Road 41. Effects on the Creek need to be given high priority in planning developments in that entire area. Similarly, municipal planning for the area along Henderson Road need to be evaluated for effects on Dead Creek. Ditching along and across Henderson Road needs re-evaluation of effects on flows eastward toward the Hungry Lake Conservation Reserve and Crooked Creek.

The Salmon River Watershed really is the Jewel of Eastern Ontario and we should look after the Upper Salmon Watershed as priority in our stewardship of the entire Salmon Watershed.

¹ *The Salmon River Watershed: Jewel of Eastern Ontario* by The Friends of the Salmon River, Tamworth, ON, 2006.