

Central Queens Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation

WATERSHED NEWS



Winter 2026

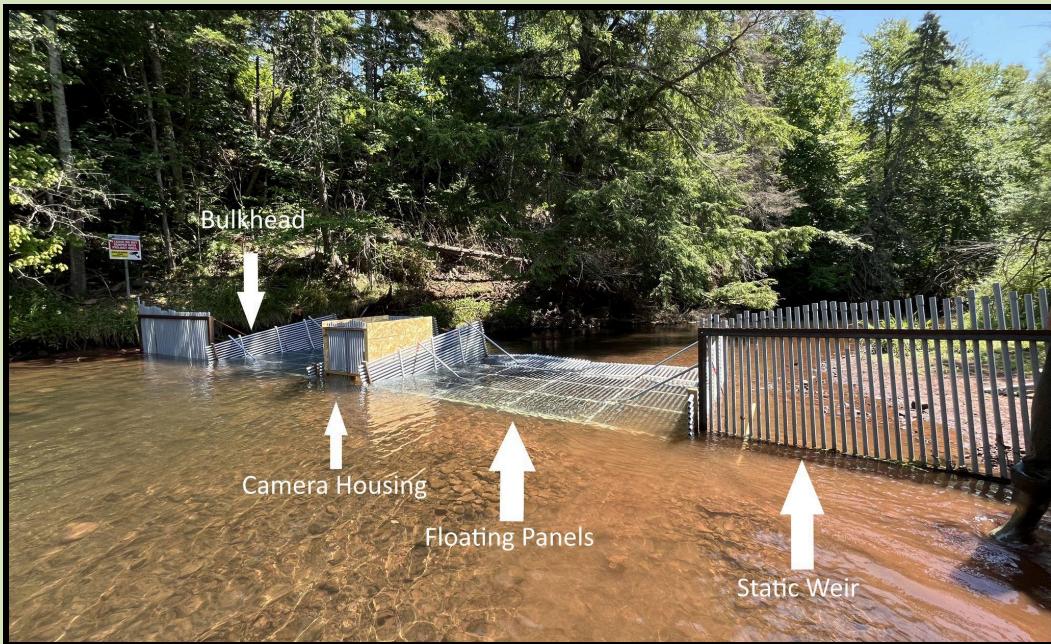
What a year! To wrap up our 2025 season, we're excited to highlight our accomplishments and share how we've completed several of our funded projects.

West River Riverwatcher Project

In July, our field crew installed PEI's (and eastern Canada's) first-ever Riverwatcher Camera, marking an exciting milestone for fish monitoring in the province. This innovative technology will passively provide accurate population estimates of migratory fish within the West River watershed. Target species observed included brook trout, rainbow trout, Atlantic salmon, and striped bass along with a wide range of other wildlife such as common muskrat, American mink, North American beaver, American eel, blueback herring, stickleback, brown trout, Atlantic tomcod, and rainbow smelt.

The primary objective during the first year was to better understand how the system operated and apply the lessons learned to ensure smooth and effective data collection during 2026. The Riverwatcher system and floating fence were removed from the river on December 30, and we are already looking forward to reinstalling the system this spring!

To learn more about our Riverwatcher project, visit our website at www.centralqueenswildlife.ca



2026 Redd Survey

In mid-November, we began our annual Atlantic Salmon redd surveys. During the 2025 season, surveys were completed across all major tributaries of the West River, resulting in the documentation of **87 Atlantic salmon redds**. Most redds were observed along the main branch of the West River, likely reflecting lower water levels during peak survey periods. Although water levels increased in late November, higher flows limited survey conditions. Surveys were conducted weekly from November 6 to November 25. Following November 21, increased rainfall led to turbid conditions, making surveys more challenging and causing some previously identified redds to appear more aged.

CQWF worked closely with partner organizations to develop a standardized redd survey form aimed at improving redd survey accuracy. This new approach will ultimately be adopted by salmon groups across PEI. By standardizing redd count methods, subjectivity is reduced, key assumptions within population models can be reassessed, and overall monitoring of Atlantic salmon redds across the island is strengthened. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) relies exclusively on watershed groups' redd survey data to track Atlantic salmon population trends.

If you would like more information on our redd surveys, you can find our finalized reports on our website www.centralqueenswildlife.ca.



Other Field Season Highlights

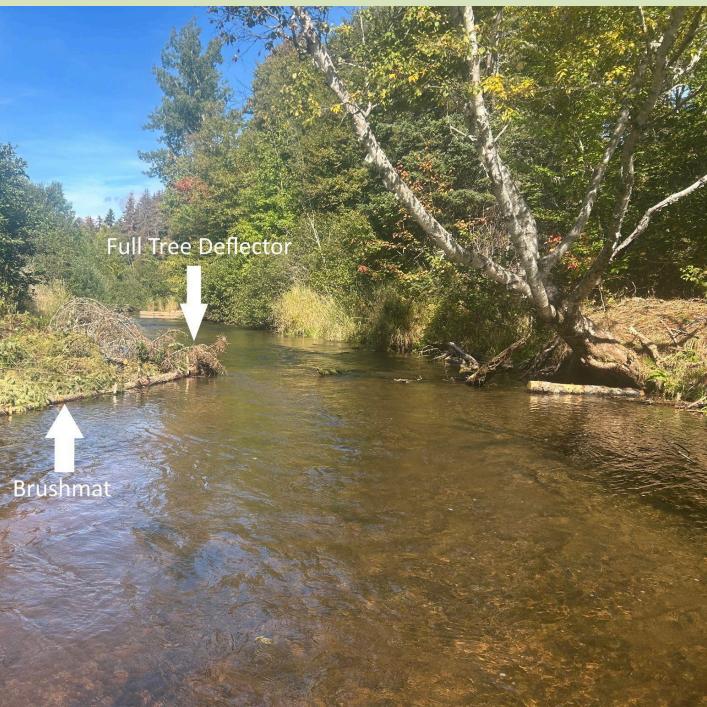
Some of the other field season highlights CQWF achieved included the regular maintenance on **~24.1 km of stream habitat** and riparian enhancement work. Enhancing the riparian zones of our watersheds provides countless benefits to the system as a whole through selective thinning in areas of early succession. Native late-succession species can be introduced to help enhance these areas, providing more robust riparian margins for our rivers. This year, we maintained or expanded our existing plantations and created several new plantations in three new areas. In the 2025 field season, our crew planted a total of **1,400+** native trees and shrubs and **~4,500m²** of riparian habitat enhanced.

The installation of structures improves the habitat for aquatic species by providing essential habitat components required at different life stages. When proper planning and consulting are implemented, these structures can provide benefits to the river's functionality and resident species for years to come. Installed structures require annual check-ups and associated maintenance to ensure they are providing the intended functionality for the rivers. In total, CQWF installed **23** brushmats and **94** cover logs. CQWF also implemented a new form of deflector this year in the form of a **full tree deflector**. We also installed **7 spawning structures** this year and maintained an additional **30 spawning structures**.

Every year, CQWF performs electrofishing surveys to understand the densities, recruitment, and presence of salmonids within our watershed. In total, CQWF performed electrofishing surveys at **15 long-term index sites**. In conjunction with the new work we have completed on new sections of the river, we established an

additional **four new index sites** in these sections of the river to be revisited on a yearly basis to understand how the restoration work we complete on these rivers relates to the fish population and whether any trends can be observed prior to and following restoration; these sections of newly worked streams also had habitat survey sites established to help track the changes occurring on a yearly basis.

If you would like more information on our electrofishing surveys, you can find our finalized reports on our website www.centralqueenswildlife.ca.



2026 Winter Woodlot Tour

CQWF, in partnership with Hunter Clyde, Trout River, and Wheatley River watershed groups, would like to invite the public to attend the annual Winter Woodlot Tour from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm on January 31st at Bluefield High School, 924 Colville Rd, North Wiltshire, PE

There are many fun and family-friendly activities planned, as well as exhibits where you can learn more about our Acadian forests. There is no charge to attend. There will be heated tents and free hot apple cider. For more info: Facebook: PEI Winter Woodlot Tour Instagram: @winterwoodlottour We hope to see you there!



Get Involved!

A major component in succeeding in our restoration ventures is having volunteer support. If you would like to become more involved, send us an email at cqwf.pei@gmail.com to subscribe to our email list. We will send out notifications for upcoming events and frequent updates on what our crew has been up to during the field season!

CQWF hosted two volunteer events on Saturday mornings during the summer. Our first volunteer day involved planting native trees along with a showcase on the Riverwatcher project. Our second event showcased the Riverwatcher system along with an open house that included our observations so far and a silent Auction. We would like to thank all of the sponsors who donated items to the silent auction, ensuring it was such a success. These events are a great chance to have a first-hand

experience with watershed activities! Stay tuned to our Facebook page or join our email list to stay up to date on upcoming events for 2026. We are also hosting an Angler Buy sell and swap March 28th, 2026 which will have an admission cost of \$2, we will also be giving a small presentation to outline some of the work we are planning for the upcoming field season to spread awareness of what will be going on in our watershed and give the public a forum to present any input they may have.

Our Funding Partners

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our volunteers and funding partners, without whose support we would be unable to continue our restoration efforts:

- The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation
- The Atlantic Salmon Federation
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- PEI Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure
- PEI Dept. of Communities, Land and Environment
- PEI Dept. of Tourism
- Government of Canada
- Clean Foundation

Plans for 2026

We're heading into 2026 with an exciting and ambitious list of projects! Much of our summer will focus on in-stream work to keep our watershed clean, healthy, and functioning at its best. We'll also continue monitoring key environmental indicators and using that information to guide our restoration efforts.

Planned projects include installing new fishing platforms and upgrading existing ones at Carragher's Pond in Emyvale, along with habitat enhancement work in the lower West River. These efforts will support migrating fish species while improving angling access through a stronger trail system.

We're also looking forward to welcoming new faces at our Saturday morning volunteer days. Events typically take place on the last Saturday of each month starting in June at 9:00 a.m.—stay tuned for dates!

From everyone at Central Queens Wildlife, we wish you a happy, healthy winter and look forward to another great year ahead.