

NEWS CONFERENCE- P.C.C.A.; 11-18-09

My name is Dick Ruhlin and as a former State Senator, and presently chair of the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission, I have watched with dismay and frustration the negative impact global warming is having on our precious environment. Not only does it endanger our recreational and natural resources it goes beyond that to threaten the quality of evolution on this planet of ours. This process can be reversed if we act with deliberative thought and action now- without further delay, and join with the many foreign countries that are presently planning corrective steps.

The economy of Maine has long depended on quality outdoor recreation not only for our own benefit but to bring in tourist dollars that will filter through our complete financial structure. As I have enjoyed our outdoor recreation, and have taught my children to do the same; so I would have them do the same for all our future generations.

Of specific interest is the present condition of wild Atlantic salmon runs in our state rivers. All Atlantic salmon in Maine are presently designated as “endangered” under federal E.S.A. rules. This present sorry state of affairs has been brought about by two basic sets of neglect. The first which we are working hard to remedy is the natural habitat in fresh water, this habitat needs major improvements and we are hard at work with an aggressive program to accomplish these improvements. However, as salmon are a cold water species, global warming will make this difficult task even harder to accomplish.

The second major and present overriding challenge is to improve ocean survival during that critical stage of salmon development and, already apparent is the negative effect of global warming on their life and survival in the ocean. Every year it becomes ever more apparent that the melting of the polar ice cap is raising havoc with salmon survival at sea.

It will take action now from the U.S. Congress to ensure climate change does not fundamentally and permanently alter habitat and wildlife populations in Maine and elsewhere. The land and water are already changing and those changes are making it exceptionally more difficult to protect our natural resources and assure that future generations have the same recreational opportunities we enjoyed.

The U.S. Senate is currently working on a comprehensive climate and energy bill. Maine’s Senators Snowe and Collins will be key votes in any final bill. There are nearly 1 million people who enjoy wildlife recreation in Maine every year, resulting in \$1.5 million in related consumer spending, according to a survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We are counting on Maine’s Senators to pass climate legislation that protects our hunting and fishing heritage and the economy in Maine that relies on it.