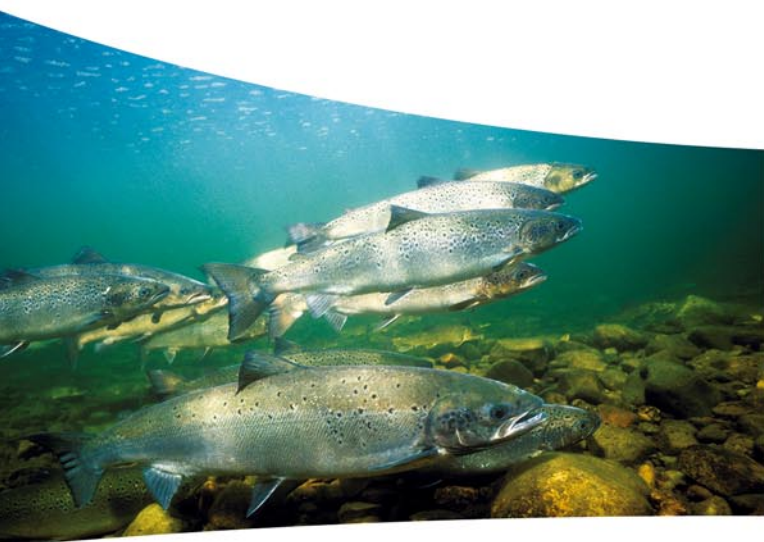




→ Let's adopt the Sélune valley



Dismantling of the Vezins and la Roche-qui-Boit dams:
At last, a new lease of life for the valley.



→ THE SELUNE VALLEY: AN EXCEPTIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION!

Like its neighbouring rivers, the Sée and the Couesnon, the Sélune flows into the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is a place of major importance for fauna, mainly due to the diversity of its migratory birds. The Sélune, Couesnon and Sée rivers hold migratory fish stocks, including the highly emblematic and protected Atlantic salmon.

→ A RIVER MADE ARTIFICIAL AND WITH POLLUTED WATERS

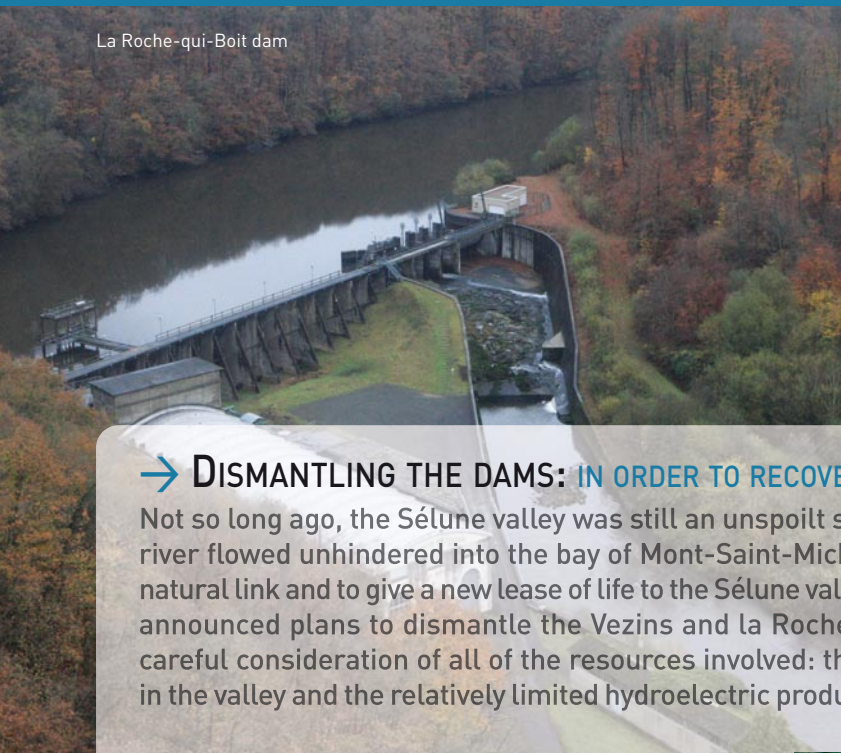
Contrary to the Sée, only the lower part of the Sélune river is accessible to migratory fish due to two insurmountable barriers: the **Veziens** and **la Roche-qui-Boit** hydroelectric dams built in the first half of the 20th century and operated by EDF, the French Electricity Board. Like all dams, they act as sediment traps and have thus led to the build-up of hazardous substances such as certain metals, mainly in the area around Yrande, a right-bank tributary of the Sélune. The same applies to potential pollutants such as nitrates and phosphates which encourage the development of cyanobacteria as the temperature of the water in the dams' reservoirs increases. These bacteria then die and decompose, resulting in a stark increase in organic matter. Toxins can then be released into the water and their dissemination sometimes results in a ban on aquatic activities (bathing, water sports...) due to the ensuing health risks.

The drainage of wetlands, the ploughing of grasslands and the elimination of hedges and embankments have disrupted the traditional bocage countryside (land criss-crossed by hedges and trees). These recent developments in farming practices have resulted in more hydro-ecological disruption: an increase in run-off water and soil erosion, a decrease in wetland areas... And yet these wetlands render a service to our society, free-of-charge; they support low-water levels, act as a buffer against high water and, above all, improve water quality, notably by their capacity to attenuate the concentration of nitrates. The bay of Mont-Saint-Michel, which, incidentally, is one of the leading shellfish farming regions in France, needs high quality freshwater which in turn requires the appropriate management of sediment transfers and agricultural inputs.

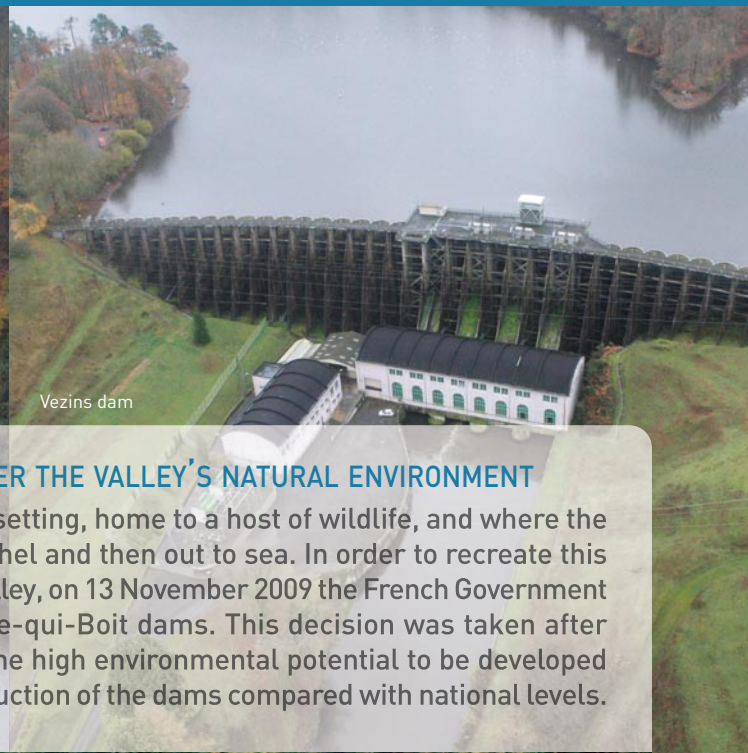


Deterioration of the water quality in Veziens and la Roche-qui-Boit

La Roche-qui-Boit dam



Vezins dam



→ DISMANTLING THE DAMS: IN ORDER TO RECOVER THE VALLEY'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Not so long ago, the Sélune valley was still an unspoilt setting, home to a host of wildlife, and where the river flowed unhindered into the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel and then out to sea. In order to recreate this natural link and to give a new lease of life to the Sélune valley, on 13 November 2009 the French Government announced plans to dismantle the Vezins and la Roche-qui-Boit dams. This decision was taken after careful consideration of all of the resources involved: the high environmental potential to be developed in the valley and the relatively limited hydroelectric production of the dams compared with national levels.

→ AN EXEMPLARY DISMANTLING PROJECT

The Government and State services have pledged to dismantle the structures in accordance with best professional practices. The success of the dismantling project will rely on the use of levelling techniques which have been tried and tested on other rivers in France and abroad. On the **Léguer** river in the **Côtes d'Armor** department, the **Kernansquillec** dam has been dismantled, resulting in the return of salmon stocks, and part of the structure has been retained as a reminder of the site's past. In the Loire basin, the **Maisons-Rouges** dam, located at the confluence of the Vienne and Creuse rivers, was dismantled in 1998. The results of these dismantling operations are astounding from both a biological and sedimentary perspective and there has been a spectacular rise in shad and lamprey stocks, which in the space of less than 10 years have increased from almost zero to **more than 10,000 and 90,000 individuals** respectively. The recovery of the sedimentary transit regime has enabled restoration of the river bed over several kilometres downstream, at a rate of 2 km/annum.



Kernansquillec dam before dismantling



Kernansquillec site afterwards



Maisons-Rouges dam before dismantling



Maisons-Rouges site afterwards

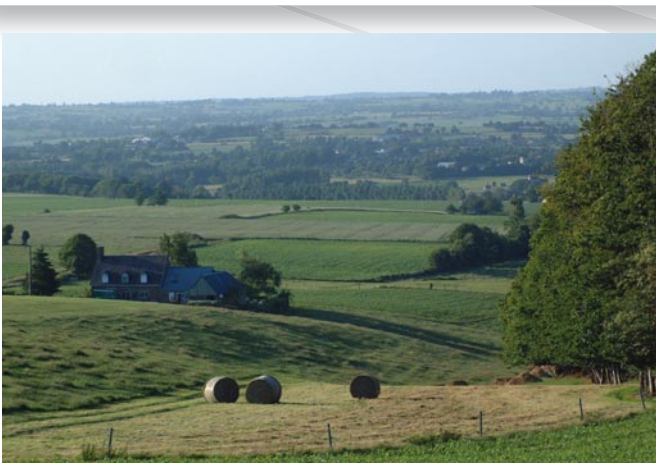


→ JOINING FORCES TO CREATE NEW SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITIES

When the stagnant water disappears and the old Sélune riverbed is recovered, the river will once more be able to wend its way through the unspoilt valley again. This opening in the valley will make it a natural entry point leading to the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel and will provide the perfect setting for more environmentally-friendly economic activities.

→ SUSTAINABLE FARMING

In collaboration with local farming organisations, it will be possible to implement a programme focused on the development of sustainable farming which is more **respectful of the natural environment and more profitable for the stakeholders concerned**.



Bocage and multiple grassland crops – ploughing land



Yellow Iris



Northern Lapwing



Marbled Newt

→ NEW TOURIST ACTIVITIES

New tourist and leisure activities based on both existing and other structures will be possible. Far from threatening the current economic activity in the valley, the dismantling of the two dams will provide **an extraordinary opportunity to develop eco-tourism**. The new tourist appeal of the Sélune valley, which, along with that of the Sée, will become a life-size testing ground for sustainable tourism, will offer **great potential for the expansion of the rural economy**. Many animal species will benefit from the dismantling of the dams which should attract countless nature lovers to visit the valleys. This will provide opportunities to **create specialised services and activities relating to nature observation and sports**: nature walks and horse-riding circuits, canoeing down the river to the bay, mountain bike circuits between the Sée and the Sélune... Offsite theme-based activities could be organised in the tourist offices and the various hospitality structures coordinated between these two valleys and that of Couesnon, related to fauna and flora, relations between man and nature, salmon.... with the implementation of a tourist route **along the three coastal rivers**.



Educational walk



Lambs grazing on the Céaux saltmarshes

→ REGAINING THE SALMON RIVER OF YESTERYEAR

The Sélune could recover its salmon-breeding capacity and, once restocked, could thus assert itself as one of France's leading salmon fishing rivers alongside the Sée.

→ DEVELOPMENT CENTRED ON THE RIVER AND FISHING

The traditional tourist season is particularly short in France. The restoration of the Sélune would lead to an increase in fish stocks and thus boost the appeal of the river outside the traditional tourist season. The fact that salmon swim back up the Sélune from April to October and that a growing number of fish arrive in September and October could **result in an extension of the tourist season**, both before and after traditional holiday dates. During the mating season, **salmon observation** could attract interest from schools and universities from Normandy and beyond. The same applies to other migratory species. For example, May is a good month to observe the spawning of the **Sea Lamprey**.

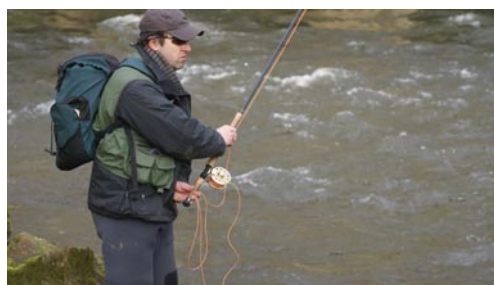
Fishing should be authorised, as long as any fish caught are released back into the water, through the organisation of fishing circuits for fishermen but also for schools, leisure centres and passing tourists. A **spring festival to mark the return of migratory species** and a fly-fishing school could be envisaged...



→ Jean-Claude Lefeuvre. Emeritus Professor at the French Natural History Museum, President of the standing committee of the National Nature Conservation Council and of the scientific committee of the Coastline Conservation Agency

"During the last land reclamation operation which was to change the structure of the bay and expose the Mont-Saint-Michel to the dangers of the land, Edouard Le Héricher, who was concerned to see the first containment work carried out amidst total indifference, was the first person to draw attention to the fact that without the bay, the Mont-Saint-Michel and all of the small surrounding villages would lose their aura. We are now paying a heavy price for failing to take heed of his warnings or those of Victor Hugo, who, some years later, engaged in a battle to stop the construction of the causeway stating: "the Mont-Saint-Michel should remain an island, we should protect this combined work of nature and of art." UNESCO took good note of this message, inscribing the Mont-Saint-Michel and its bay on the World Heritage List, against the background of the major work designed from the nineteen-seventies onwards in order to restore the maritime nature of the area surrounding the Mount. Although the bay and the Mount form an indissociable whole, we should not forget the other messages voiced by Le Héricher: "If the bay disappears, the towns around the bay will lose their character, their history, their coat of arms; it will be tantamount to erasing the silver salmon from the Avranches coat of arms." By referring to the salmon, Le Héricher offered another key to enable further understanding of this exceptional territory: without its healthy rivers that enable free movement of all migratory fish which give them their pedigree, the bay loses its meaning and specific interest. The dismantling of the two dams in the Sélune valley is a parallel to the work currently underway around the Mount: in both cases, the aim is to erase the errors of the past."*

* Illustrious figure of the 19th century Avranches archaeology society.



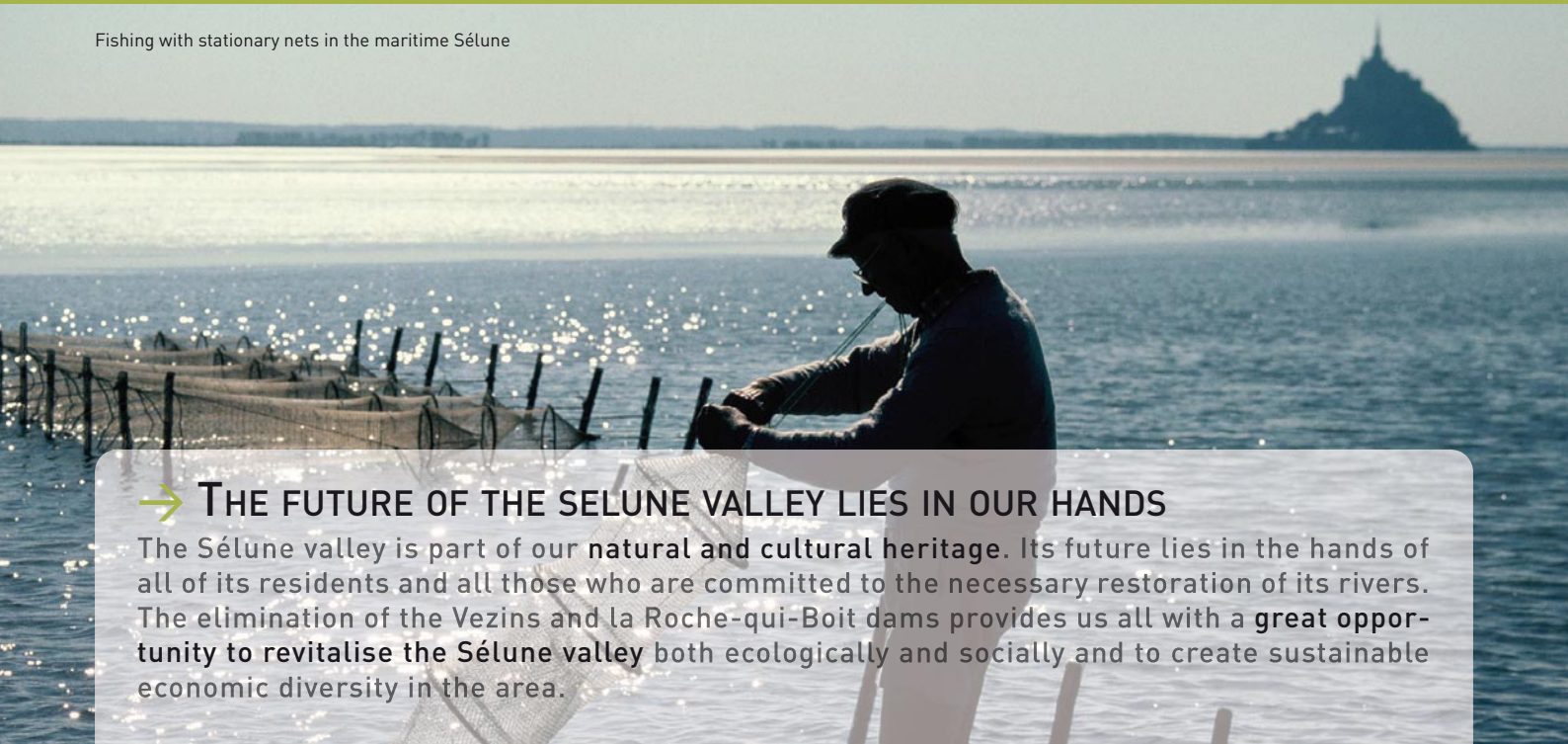
Salmon fly-fishing



Atlantic salmon being released back into the water



Sea lampreys at Ducey



→ THE FUTURE OF THE SÉLUNE VALLEY LIES IN OUR HANDS

The Sélune valley is part of our **natural and cultural heritage**. Its future lies in the hands of all of its residents and all those who are committed to the necessary restoration of its rivers. The elimination of the Vezins and la Roche-qui-Boit dams provides us all with a **great opportunity to revitalise the Sélune valley** both ecologically and socially and to create sustainable economic diversity in the area.

We have been lent this magnificent little corner of France to live in, relax in and take pleasure in. As residents, farmers, fishermen, hunters, nature lovers, professionals in the tourist industry or simply enthusiasts passing through the valley, we are all collectively responsible for its future. We have the possibility to **return it to its wild state** and to turn it back into a natural gateway to the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel and from the bay to the catchment basins, all too often unknown to visitors to the Mount. We will take pride in revealing it to our fellow citizens, our children and foreign tourists. It is up to us to take care of it and, therefore, **we cannot afford to miss this opportunity!**

→ LET'S ADOPT THE SÉLUNE VALLEY!

Each of us can help showcase the valley on the basis of **sustainable development principles** by "adopting" it and receiving an "adoption certificate". All funds raised, managed by the HUMUS Fund for biodiversity, will be exclusively devoted to producing information and communication materials on sustainable development initiatives for the valley.



Meander of the Sélune at Céaux



Pollard willows



"Bois d'Ardennes" protected forest and Sélune floodplain at Ducey

→ TESTIMONIES



→ Isabelle Autissier.

Sailor, President of WWF-France and the ECOLE de la Mer

"There are no healthy men and women without healthy rivers. The ecology of our watercourses must be repaired and restored as a matter of urgency. We know what has to be done for the Sélune. It is high time we dismantled the dams which are now of little use, and we must return the wildlife back to its natural environment and restore the water-courses to their previous healthy and productive state for the benefit of those who live there."



→ Jacqueline Rabic.

National Committee for Professional Freshwater Fishing, Vice-President of the Association for Eel Restocking in France

"The bay of Mont-Saint-Michel is an extraordinary feeding ground for many species of fish. This marine ecosystem, which is so productive and yet fragile, relies on the existence of a subtle physicochemical balance made possible thanks to the arrival of freshwater, largely from the Sélune river. To preserve its essential functions, this ecosystem must receive and conserve high quality water. For this reason, ecological continuity must be re-established in this catchment area, through the destruction of the Vezins and la Roche-qui-Boit dams and treatment of the sediments that they contain."



→ Olivier Roellinger.

Head of Maisons de Bricourt in Cancale and Vice-President of the Relais & Châteaux association

"I have been watching the Sélune conservation issue very closely from my vantage point in Cancale. The extraordinary heritage of the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel is very dear to me. It is a unique ecosystem, which is extremely fragile. It is a nursery for fish, shellfish and seafood which is unparalleled the world over and unfortunately we know that the danger comes more from the land than the sea. The crops grown in this area are of inimitable wealth. I fully support the initiative launched by the Amis de la Sélune group, from both an environmental and human standpoint. I am very keen for the people who live in the valley and those who discover it for the first time to be able to enjoy the magic of this place, of this fragile yet crucial balance between land and sea."



→ Orri Vigfússon.

Founder and Chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund

"In the past, Atlantic salmon could be found in abundance in the Iberian peninsula and right through to the Arctic Ocean and North America and the northernmost tip of Russia. The Rhine and its tributaries boasted the richest salmon stocks in the whole of the North Atlantic. However, in the 20th century, the vast empire of Salmon, in the past known as the King of Fish, started to decline. The building of dams on rivers, overfishing, pollution and the degradation of habitats took a significant toll on nature. At the end of the 20th century, Iceland and the Kola peninsula were the only places where wild salmon reserves were still relatively vigorous. The dismantling of the two dams near to the prestigious bay of Mont-Saint-Michel will send an important message to European nations, encouraging them to restock wild salmon in their territories."



→ Alain Passard.

Michelin-starred chef at the Arpège restaurant in Paris, creator of vegetable-based cuisine using organic produce grown notably in Genêts, in the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel

"Over time and with experience, I have noticed that the intervention of man has gone too far. The world's greatest cookery book was written by the hand of nature. It is nature which, every day, offers us the magic of the seasons and enables us to cook with the finest produce. I cook with tomatoes, courgettes and aubergines for three months a year... This rigour requires a great sense of precision in our every gesture. The same applies to nature: it is nature that designed our watercourses, planted trees and shaped embankments and hedges. All of these supporting elements enable the development of animal life and form an ecosystem. I fully support the "Les Amis de la Sélune" group. It's an area that I particularly love for its beauty, its wealth and its stock of sea-food, shellfish and fish which should be given free rein to make their natural journey."

→ WHO ARE "LES AMIS DE LA SÉLUNE"?

The "Les Amis de la Sélune" (Friends of the Sélune) group unites inhabitants of the valley, whether fishermen or not, and other citizens from a range of backgrounds, all of whom love the valley and have been won over by its beauty, either through their long-standing knowledge of the place or who fell under its spell when passing through.

→ THEY HAVE ALREADY ADOPTED THE SELUNE VALLEY

ANPER-TOS, Association Bretonne pour la Pêche à la Mouche, Association Internationale de la Défense du Saumon Atlantique, Club des Saumoniers, Comité National de la Pêche Professionnelle en Eau Douce, Eau et Rivières de Bretagne, European Rivers Network, Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers, Fondation GoodPlanet, Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme, HUMUS – fonds pour la biodiversité, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, Manche Nature, Mayenne Nature Environnement, North Atlantic Salmon Fund, SOS Loire Vivante, WWF-France.

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Atlantic Salmon



Herring gull



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THANK YOU

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