

MINUTES

**of the MEETING of the
NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT
SALMON FISHERY BOARD
held on Wednesday 8th May 2013
at 1.00pm at CKD Galbraith,
Old Edinburgh Road, INVERNESS**

Present:

Mr R Vestey (Convener)
Mr D Davies
Mr G Osborne
Mr C Marsham
Ms C Acheson

Mr D Lindsay

Mr Jack Watson

In attendance:

Mr C Cook (Clerk, Bell Ingram)
Dr S Marshall (WSFT)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from; Mr A Balfour, Mr R Bradford, Mr C Macleod, Mr J Allingham

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25th OCTOBER 2012

There being no comments the Convenor signed the Minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. NORTHERN AND NORTH & WEST SALMON MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Mr Cook updated Members on the activities of the two groups. He explained that both groups had not reached the quota allocated to them in the last licence. He added that both groups had secured licences for the 2013/4, the NWSMG had an identical quota and the NSMG Grey Seal quota was reduced to 30. He reported that he had attended the recent ghillies seminar at Scourie and had offered to attend similar events in the WADSFB area to make sure all ghillies and marksmen were up to date. He warned that with effect from the 7th May 2013 the Information Commissioner had required the Scottish Government to make public details of the locations of where seals are shot under licence. Mr Cook explained that the return of information to Marine Scotland endeavoured to restrict details to the minimum and thus far the use of 2 figure grid references was accepted. He finished by saying that he had not received any requests for information from anyone in respect of the work of the two groups.

4. WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST - REPORT

Shona Marshall talked to the following report covering the work undertaken by the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust in line with the funding proposal approved by the Board for 2012/3

Report to North & West District Salmon Fishery Board Work undertaken between 1st May 2012 – 30th April 2013

This report covers the work undertaken by the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust in line with the funding proposal approved by the District Fishery Board for May 2012/13.

The following work has been undertaken:

1. Juvenile surveys – 11 catchments were sampled. These were: Oldshoremore, Badna Bay, Loch nam Brac, Bhadaidh Daraich, Geisgeil, Culag, Kirkaig, Garvie, Hope, Loch Innis and Achriesgill, as reported in the Interim Report. The reports on these surveys have now been produced and circulated to the proprietors.
2. Broodstock Netting – there were no requests for assistance during 2012.
3. Education – much of this was detailed in the Interim Report. The 2013 Ghillies Seminar took place on the 12th April 2013. This was attended by many of the Ghillies within the area and appeared to be well received.
4. Sweep netting surveys were detailed in the Interim Report. The full report has now been completed, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website. Sweep netting for the 2013 season started in March.
5. The issue of a new sea trout project is progressing. The Trust is heavily involved in the development of a project to look at the movements of sea trout in the estuaries, and finance is being sought. Partnership with the CEC and AST, along with other Trusts, is being developed.
6. Biosecurity. This was reported in the interim report.

The Trust continues to work with the Scottish Mink Initiative to monitor mink populations within the area. No physical signs have been found in traps or rafts.

7. Smolt traps were installed in Badna Bay and Bhadaidh Daraich during April. They will remain in place until mid may, depending on weather conditions.
8. The Trust has worked with the Clerk to the Board as required, providing advice on different matters, including planning applications.

This report, together with that from October 2012, indicates the parts of the programme proposed for funding in 2012 that have been completed.

Dr Shona Marshall
Fisheries Biologist

Members considered the report. Mr Cook asked the Board, based on this report and the October report for its permission to pay the donation to the WSFT for the 2012/3. Mr Osborne proposed and The Convener seconded the proposal.

Shona Marshall then presented the WSFT funding proposal for 2013/4:

The assessment and improvement of migratory salmonid populations in West Sutherland.

Established in 1995, the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust aims to restore salmonid populations within west Sutherland towards their 1970's level. This is undertaken through the provision of advice and assistance on the populations within the area and restoration policies. As part of this the Trust undertakes a variety of activities aimed at monitoring present stocks and assisting with improvement activities where requested.

The following work is proposed for the period May 2013 to April 2014. This forms a part of the overall work undertaken by the Trust, which also includes work on other species as well as administration. However, the funding requested here is purely for work on migratory salmonids.

1. Juvenile surveys – it is proposed to continue with the current programme of juvenile surveys. Juvenile surveys are a useful technique to determine the status of the stock and its fluctuations with time. They give the Biologist the opportunity to identify issues within the catchments, both in terms of fish numbers and also physical changes to the burns. They can also be used to monitor the impacts of different restoration policies, such as habitat management and stocking, in order to determine their effectiveness or otherwise. This information is then fed into management plans in those and other catchments within the area. Field work relating to this survey must be undertaken between July and October in order to minimise damage to spawning populations and also give the most accurate measure of population structure and dynamics.
2. At the request of the appropriate Estates, the Trust assists with the capture of broodstock for re-stocking purposes.
3. Education forms an important part of the work of the Trust, helping to raise awareness of the different issues and promote sustainable management of the fisheries. During 2013/14 a variety of events have been planned, including the Ghillies Seminar in April, assisting with courses in KLB High School, work with P4 - 7 pupils from the area in cooperation with the Highland Ranger Service and the undertaking of Guided Walks in conjunction with the HC Ranger Service and as part of 'The Scourie Detectives'. Field trips will give the pupils a chance to monitor the habitat, invertebrates and fish populations within the area and learn about their ecology.
4. Sea trout form an important part of the fisheries within the Sutherland area. The Trust has been undertaking a survey of the fish in some of the estuaries, work previously fully funded by the Crown Estate Commission. While this funding has now been reduced, the Trust considers the work to remain important. Sweep netting will be undertaken in the estuaries of the Polla and Laxford monthly from March to October. Length and weight will be measured, sea lice counted, and predator marks (including nets) recorded. The fish will also be tagged to provide additional information on growth rates and movements.

This work feeds into the management of the systems, particularly where net marked fish have been identified, enabling the Estates to target bailiff activities. In addition, within this work we are able to identify other issues relating to the sea trout populations and any changes in population dynamics. It also forms part of a wider study into the potential impacts of Aquaculture on wild fish and the proposed development of sensitivity models to assist in marine planning.

5. Biosecurity is an important aspect in the conservation and restoration of the fish populations. In 2009 the Trust produced a Biosecurity Plan for the area. As part of this plan the removal of several non-native plant species was identified as important. The Trust proposes to undertake this work over the coming year with the pulling of Himalayan Balsam and the injection of Japanese Knotweed with pesticides. In addition, the Trust is involved in the monitoring of American Mink within the area by checking some rafts and acting as a conduit for information between gamekeepers, crofters and the North Area Mink Officer. This practical work will assist in the management of the area and its fish populations.

Education is also seen as an important aspect of Biosecurity and as such the Trust will continue to promote biosecurity within the area and to provide advice and assistance where required to Estates and other users on biosecurity and the prevention of the spread of non-native species.

6. While we now have an indication of the juvenile abundance within the catchments of west Sutherland, and also adult abundance through catch records, the translation of this into the number

of smolts produced is still relatively unknown. As such, the Trust plans to operate 2 smolt traps within the area. These will give further information on the systems and assist with their management. In addition, it is hoped that the data can be translated into the wider area by identifying the bottlenecks to freshwater production.

7. The Trust would request that a further £1000 be set aside, to support the provision of better informed responses to aquaculture planning applications made by the Board. This money will only be drawn in the event of this advice being required. This will enable the Biologist to spend time on the applications and enable an assessment of the available GIS models.

The Trust would like to approach the North & West District Salmon Fishery Board for assistance with the completion of the items 1 - 6 listed above.

The West Sutherland Fisheries Trust requests a contribution of £12000 from the DSFB towards the completion of the above work. The West Sutherland Fisheries Trust also requests that an additional £1000 be made available for the undertaking of item 8 above.

Members considered and unanimously approved the 2013/4 funding proposal.

5. ASSOCIATION OF SALMON FISHERY BOARDS - REPORT

Due to Mr Allinghams absence a report was not presented this time.

Mr Cook gave Members a copy of the 2013 ASFB Annual Review. He reminded Members of the continuing need for the good standards of the Board to be maintained especially given the contents of the recent letter emailed to all Members by Mr Cook on May 2nd from the Chairman of the ASFB entitled Review of Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Management in Scotland.

Discussed after the meeting but worthy of recording under this item was the requirement for Proprietors NOT to introduce young stock to rivers etc. without having secured the consent of the Board first.

Also discussed after the meeting with the Convener was the reduction of the number of card holding Bailiffs to those who had achieved the IFM Bailiffs exam only (this was something previously circulated to Members by Mr Cook as an email earlier in the year). This has resulted in 8 Bailiffs being removed from the list. 7 others should also be removed unless they intend to sit the next Bailiff exam and this will be discussed with them or their employers. 2 so far have agreed to take the exam.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr Cook presented the financial report. He explained that all Assessments for the current financial year had been received and anticipated that all expenditure budgeted for would be made, possibly with an under spend on Consultancy. He reminded Members that the current years pledge to the WSFT had still to be paid. After payment of this amount Mr Cook said the Bank Balance would be in the region of £16,000 at the year end.

10 BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT – YEAR TO 28th MAY 2014

Members discussed the budget for the year to the 28th May 2014. Expenditure was approved and the Assessment rate was agreed at **48p/ £1RV**.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Cook updated Members on the proposals to develop wave and tidal energy production in the Pentland Firth. He reminded members that Pelamis hoped to create a 50Mw Wave energy development off the coast at Farr Point near Bettyhill. He explained that both he and Shona Marshall attended an event hosted by the Crown Estate at Thurso during April at which the matter of salmonids at sea was discussed by the Crown Estate, Marine Scotland, SNH and DSFB, Fishery Trust and other wild fishery scientists. Shona Marshall explained her view that the paper produced by the Crown Estate ahead of the meeting was flawed in many ways. Mr Cook supported this but added that in listening to a presentation by Marine Scotland it seemed very clear that the idea of a phasing of the developments (starting small initially and then getting larger) was designed to be a way of allowing them as the licence provider to be compliant with European environmental legislation, the inference that it was their way of getting around the legislation because of the lack of knowledge about salmon and sea trout at sea. Mr Cook explained his view that the stance Boards and wild fishery interests should be taking was to try and ensure that Developers, the Landlord and the Regulator accepted not just that they must show the developments will not harm salmonids before they are licenced BUT that that they accept they must ensure that harm will not be done. The prospect of Boards and Trusts – or worse (depending on the outcome of the forthcoming review) – Proprietors on their own being left with the burden of proving that harm is being done (and that the Developer, Landlord or Regulator must do something about it) does not bear thinking about. He said he was encouraged that the Caithness DSFB appeared to have secured funding from the Crown Estate for electro-fishing and genetic sampling and hoped this might be widened out to the Northern and N & W districts too. The accumulation of baseline data, something that is a standard requirement with on shore windfarms, was missing and was one of several examples that show a lack of coordination which could only benefit the developer. The Board agreed Mr Cook should approach the CDSFB with a view to widening out the survey area to include the N&W district but to liaise with the ASFB to ensure they are kept up to date with developments.

Shona Marshall reminded Members of the on-going need for awareness of Bio-security and agreed that Mr Cook should re-issue the Bio-security paper sent to all Proprietors in 2012.

12. DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING

The date of the next Board meeting and the Annual Proprietors meeting was set as Tuesday 5th November 2013. Mr Lindsay offered to host the meeting again at CKD Galbraith, Old Edinburgh Road, Inverness. The Annual Proprietors meeting to start at 1.00pm with the Board meeting to follow on from it at about 1.30pm.

There being no other business there was a vote of thanks to the Convener and the meeting closed at 3.15pm

Bell Ingram
Chartered Surveyors
Bonar Bridge
Sutherland IV24 3EA

CRWC/NW/1/3
May 2013

Robi Vestey

Convener

5th November 2013

ACTION PLAN

Issue approved Budget	CRWC
Pay £12,000 to the WSFT for 2012/13 period	CRWC
Discuss with CDSFB/Crown Estate extending 2013 electro-fishing etc. baseline survey to N&W district too and liaise with ASFB	CRWC
Liaise with Dr Marshall Bio-Security paper for Proprietors	CRWC/SM
Organise November's meeting	CRWC/DL

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