

**MINUTES**

**of the ANNUAL MEETING of  
QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS of  
SALMON FISHERIES in the NORTH  
AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON  
FISHERY BOARD held on  
WEDNESDAY 25th OCTOBER 2012 at  
1.30pm at Reay House, 17 Old Edinburgh  
Rd, Inverness, IV2 3HF**

**Present:**

Mr R Vestey (Convenor)  
Mr C Marsham (Polla)  
Mr D Davies (Inverpolly)  
Mr G Osborne (Rhiconich)  
Mr J Allingham (Dionard)  
Ms C Acheson (Hope)

Mr D Lindsay (Laxford)

Mr C Macleod (Tenant Angler)  
Mr A Balfour (Tenant Netsman)

**In attendance:**

Mr C Cook (Clerk, Bell Ingram)  
Dr Donna-Claire Hunter (RAFTS)  
Mr Callum Sinclair (RAFTS)

**Apologies:**

Dr J Balfour (Duart)  
Mr R Bradford (Inver)  
Mr P Rex (Badentarbat)  
Mr J Watson (Tenant Angler)

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25th OCTOBER 2011**

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 25th October 2011 were considered by Proprietors and signed by the Convenor as an accurate record.

**2. MATTERS ARISING**

Mr Cook reinforced to Proprietors the importance of Proprietors, Ghillies, guests and tenants providing him with data on Seal sightings, seal marked or damaged fish including dates and photographs. Some Proprietors were making an effort but those who have not yet responded – even with a ‘nothing seen’ declaration must understand the need for the development of a full picture in helping with future applications to the Scottish Government. There were no other matters arising.

**3. ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2**

Proprietors considered the Annual Report which had been prepared by the Convenor and who led a general discussion on the points raised. Proprietors expressed satisfaction with the Annual Report which was signed by the Convenor.

There were no further comments.

**4. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28th MAY 2012**

Proprietors considered and accepted the audited accounts. There being no questions the accounts were signed in approval by the Convenor.

**5. MANAGING INTERACTIONS AQUACULTURE PROJECT - RAFTS**

The Convenor welcomed Donna - Claire Hunter and Callum Sinclair of RAFTS (River and Fisheries Trusts Scotland) to make a presentation.

The Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project was initiated and is managed by RAFTS and its member Fishery Trusts and partner District Salmon Fishery Boards on the west coast of Scotland to support the better coordination and management of wild fisheries in areas where the aquaculture industry operates. ASFB have also taken a keen interest in this work and sit on the project Steering Group. The project was developed to continue, but refocus, some of the useful aspects of the previous Tripartite Working Group programme whilst also starting new areas of work. The scheme was developed by RAFTS with the involvement of all the participating Fishery Trusts and Boards and at the request of these Trusts and Boards. The project is funded by a grant from Marine Scotland following consideration and development of the proposal with Marine Scotland Policy and Science staff.

The project is split into three main areas:

- Attempting to ensure that future growth of the industry occurs in appropriate locations via the provision of **locational guidance** focused on the health of wild fish and fisheries. This guidance may, by extension, also identify current aquaculture operations in sensitive locations where relocation to new locations would be most beneficial from a wild fish perspective;

- Assessing the risk to the environment by continuing and refining the sweep netting programme of **sea lice monitoring** initiated by the Tripartite Working Group and reporting this strategically;
- Developing **genetics tools** which allow genetic material of aquaculture origin to be identified in wild fish populations and through a strategic sampling programme identify when, or if, such genetic introgression takes place in selected and sampled catchments.

RAFTS have recently completed a report on the sea lice monitoring study which is available on our website.

## **Key Concerns**

### **1. Locational Guidance**

The objective of this work is to provide a tool for Trusts and Boards, in dealing with applications for aquaculture developments, to identify the most sensitive *coastal areas* where aquaculture development is inappropriate. The focus of this will be to protect coastal areas from inappropriate development (existing or planned), *not* to facilitate the expansion of the industry. Clearly the catch and characteristics of the rivers flowing into each area will be factors in this analysis to identify sensitive coastal areas. The suitability and characteristics of the coastal water body for aquaculture development will also have a large bearing on any such combined assessment. Progress in this area must be viewed within the context of Scottish Ministers commitment to aquaculture expansion. However, the project aims to ensure that Fishery Trusts and Boards can contribute more effectively to marine spatial and development planning in particular to try to ensure that any expansion occurs in a sustainable manner and properly and robustly recognises development sensitivities in respect of wild fish and fisheries. Ideally this will extend to relocation of aquaculture from particularly sensitive sites.

This area of work has been started but was always recognised to be the most sensitive and difficult to progress. The tool is incomplete and is not ready for use. If continued there will be significant effort invested in working and consulting with Fishery Trusts and Boards and other interested parties, including the aquaculture industry, to hear and resolve concerns and to work towards a useable and acceptable model and system.

### **2. Project Cost and Structure**

The total project budget is £225K. Of the total project budget less than half is allocated to staff and associated costs and the locational guidance tool and more than half is allocated and distributed to Trusts to undertake sampling as part of the sweep-netting and genetics programmes, to provide local information to test and populate the locational guidance tool and to pay for specialist genetic analysis and laboratory costs.

There is no underlying or other agenda for RAFTS to centralise this project. The majority of the budget is allocated to support local delivery activities and the project itself was initiated in response to requests made by members of RAFTS to do so, following completion of the Tripartite Working Group.

## Conclusion

It is the intention of RAFTS, with the support of west coast Trusts and Boards to continue all aspects of the Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project for a second year and beyond.

Whilst good progress has been made on developing the locational guidance, there is a great deal of work still to be done. RAFTS and ASFB will continue to work with Trusts and Boards directly to explain, develop and revise the tool and a number of legitimate concerns have been raised that will be addressed within this process. All interested stakeholders should be assured that there is no intention to release any system for use at the present time and that this would not happen without discussion with Trusts, Boards and others.

RAFTS and ASFB genuinely believe that such a tool, in conjunction with guidance for dealing with the planning process, has the potential to be of considerable help to Trusts and Boards in engaging with the aquaculture planning process in a more effective manner. Whilst no one can guarantee that no aquaculture developments will receive planning consent in sensitive areas, we believe that this tool will allow the wild fisheries sector to highlight to planners the most sensitive coastal areas for aquaculture development from a wild fisheries perspective in a sensible and systematic way, respond to proposals for new or expanded aquaculture development in these locations more robustly and, by extension, inform discussions as to the potential to relocate production in particularly sensitive areas.

Proprietors discussed the presentation with the RAFTS representative and the Convener thanked them for the attendance and asked that they might return to update Proprietors in the future.

A copy of the Presentation will be issued along with the Minutes for interest.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business the Convener thanked the Proprietors very much for coming. The meeting closed at 2.30pm

Robin Versey

Convener

5th November 2013