

NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2014

This is the 15th annual report for the North and West District Salmon Fishery Board since it was formed by the North and West District Salmon Fishery Board Designation Order in May 1999.

BACKGROUND

The Board has a statutory role to play in the protection and improvement of fisheries within its district. The list of Board Members and Officers can be found in Appendix A. The Board does not employ any members of staff and therefore supports services or activities carried out by others which in its view are appropriate and appear to assist it to fulfil its role. The control of poaching and illegal netting activity is an activity which the Board endorses by the issuing of Warrant Cards to qualified Bailiffs within the district.

A REVIEW OF 2013/4

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The NWDSFB has adopted The Code of Good Practice for District Salmon Fishery Boards produced by the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards.

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 ('2013 Act') introduced a number of significant changes and obligations to the governance of Boards. According to Marine Scotland:

'The purpose of the obligations is to enhance openness, transparency and accountability of the management of salmon fisheries by DSFBs. The obligations seek to mainstream existing best practice by DSFBs to ensure that all Boards act in a manner consistent with bodies operating in the public sphere. It is not the intention that the obligations seek to micromanage the business of Boards.'

The NWDSFB has fully implemented changes and obligations to the governance of Boards introduced in 2013 by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 including a Complaints Procedure, a Register of Members interests and the commencement of the reporting of notices of meetings, annual reports and annual accounts to the Scottish Government.

A website, northwest.dsfb.org.uk, is maintained listing the Board Members, all notices of meetings, minutes of meetings, annual reports and audited accounts along with additional relevant publications.

The list of Board members and Co-opted members can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the report.

Meetings

The last Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 5th November 2013 with a supplementary meeting on the 20th May 2014 to complete a Triennial Election. The next meeting will be held in Inverness on the 22nd October 2014.

Board meetings took place on the 5th November 2013, the 20th May 2014 and the next one will take place in Inverness on the 22nd October 2014.

The first Annual Public Meeting was held in Ullapool on the 20th May 2014.

All meetings were notified to the public by posting on the NWDSFB website. This was done on the 11th October 2013 and the 30th April 2014. The Scottish Government received a copy of the notices on the 11th October 2013 and 30th April 2014. In addition notices for the Annual Public Meeting and Triennial Election in 2014 were placed in the Northern Times in line with statute.

Annual Report and Accounts

Once approved these will continue to be posted on the NWDSFB website and sent to the Scottish Government. The 2013 Annual Report and Accounts for the year to the 28th May 2013 were submitted to the Scottish Government on the 9th December 2013 following consideration at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on the 5th November 2013.

Complaints

At the time of preparing this report NO complaints had been received.

Members' Interests

Board members will now be expected to declare new/amend existing interests at the start of Board meetings and all such interests will be recorded in the minutes of those meetings.

INTRODUCTION OF YOUNGSTOCK

Consent from the NWDSFB for the introduction of salmon young stock to rivers within the District is a legal requirement and failure to secure consent is an Offence following the 2013 Act.

The Board consented to the introduction of salmon eggs into the Inver following an application by the Board of the River Inver.

ELECTRO-FISHING

Written consent from the NWDSFB to carry out electro-fishing in rivers within the District is a legal requirement.

In the last year the Board consented to electro-fishing work being conducted by SEPA on the Allt Ghisghil (c.4km south of Scourie) carrying out two single run/ semi- quantitative fish surveys. One site is close to a fish farm which SEPA surveyed in 2008, the other upstream of Loch Bad nam Mult. The surveys are part of SEPA's surveillance monitoring/ back ground monitoring, carried out as part of SEPA's commitment to the Water Framework Directive.

WILD FISH REVIEW & PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

Wild Fish Review

In January 2014, the First Minister announced that a Wild Fisheries Review would be undertaken during 2014. The aims of the review were to:

- develop and promote a modern, evidence-based management system for wild fisheries fit for purpose in the 21st century, and capable of responding to the changing environment
- to manage, conserve and develop our wild fisheries to maximise the sustainable benefit of Scotland's wild fish resources to the country as a whole and particularly to rural areas

The Board, through the Clerk, compiled and provided a detailed submission to the Review Panel. The Vice Convenor and the Clerk attended a meeting with the Chair of the Panel, Andrew Thin, in Ullapool on the 1st July to contribute further to the process.

The Panel are due to issue a report to Scottish Ministers during the week commencing the 6th October. The findings of the report are expected to form the basis for legislative change.

Pentland Firth

The Board continues to take an active interest in marine renewable projects in particular the Pelamis Wave Power project. The Board adheres to the view that any development must have as a core principle that the current and future fortunes of salmonid populations will not be affected and works closely with the ASFB and other groups to this end. The Board was represented by the Clerk on the Stakeholder group set up to inform the sector of the developing research strategy, which met at Faskally research centre on 2nd July 2014. The purpose being to identify knowledge gaps and information requirements in relation to the potential effects of offshore and marine renewable energy generation on Atlantic salmon and other freshwater fish that migrate to and from the sea.

Reay Forest Estate

The Reay Forest Estate has made three applications to the Highland Council:

1. 13/02382/FUL – Construction of a "run-of-river" hydroelectric system with intake structure, buried pipeline, borrow pits and powerhouse etc. at Allt A' Chraois, Gobernuisgach.
2. 13/02384/FUL - Construction of a "run-of-river" hydroelectric system with intake structures, buried pipelines, borrow pit and power house etc. at Abhainn Strath, Gobernuisgach.
3. 13/02385/FUL - Construction of a "run-of-river" hydroelectric scheme with intake structures, buried pipelines, access tracks and power house etc. at Allnabad Strath, Gobernuisgach.

Controlled Activity Regulation approval to abstract water for the above purposes has been granted by SEPA.

The Board have been consulted on the applications by the Highland Council. The Board have objected to the three schemes on the grounds that they could represent a threat to the passage of migratory fish and harm to migratory fish if their interests are not covered by the proper construction of the intakes and tail races and access to spawning ground is lost. The applications have not yet been determined and the Board remains in contact with the developer and the Highland Council.

Cowrie Associates Ltd

The Board considered a planning application in the Kyle of Durness for a Marine Shellfish Farm - Native and Pacific Oysters - New Site consisting of up to 3800 steel trestles supporting plastic "Ortac" baskets in a site area of 1.98 ha. access by boat and by existing unmade track which forms part of site area. Following consultation with the WSFT and SAMS the Board did not find grounds to object. The application is 'pending consideration' at this time.

WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST

The Board made a financial contribution to the WSFT in 2013/4 to assist with the following work which supports the statutory role of the Board within the District:

1. Juvenile surveys – 7 catchments were sampled. These were: Duart, Laxford, Inver, Polla, Bhadaidh Daraich, Loch na Thull and Clashfern. The reports on these surveys have now been produced and circulated to the proprietors.
2. Broodstock Netting – there were no requests for assistance during 2013.
3. Education –The 2014 Ghillies Seminar took place on the 11th April 2014. This was attended by many of the Ghillies within the area and appeared to be well received.

The school projects were very well received by all attending. The Trust undertook 3 field trips, giving the children a good oversight of the environment, its organisms and potential threats.

Scourie Detectives went well, with a mix of demonstrations and guided walks. All who attended appeared to enjoy themselves and learn about the Scourie area.

4. Sweep netting surveys were undertaken within the Laxford and Polla where possible. A number of fish were caught and tagged, and lice and predator damage recorded. In addition sampling was undertaken in the Kyle of Durness during May, June and July, although no fish were captured. There were 8 recaptures during 2013, one of which, J77, was first tagged in 2005.
5. Biosecurity. The Trust was again involved in the pulling of Himalayan Balsam at Nedd and Clashnessie. The population in both areas has been significantly reduced.

The Trust has taken over the management of the Scottish Mink Initiative within the area, working with the volunteers as well as monitoring some rafts. No physical signs have been found in traps or rafts. However a mink carcass has been found on the shore at Achiltibuie.

The Trust continue to promote, and exercise, biosecurity at all times, particularly the 'Check, Clean and Dry' campaign.

6. A smolt trap was installed in Badna Bay during April. It will remain in place until mid May, depending on weather conditions.
7. The Trust has worked with the Clerk to the Board providing advice on different matters, including planning applications over the past 2 years.

NORTH WEST SALMON MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Board continues to collaborate in the North and West Salmon Management group and operate the Northern Salmon Management Group, the function of both being to apply for licences to shoot seals. The application for licences to shoot seal, in the absence of realistically economic and workable alternatives, is the only means available in law that a Board has to try and protect wild salmon and fisheries from predation and damage by seals.

LOOK AHEAD TO 2014/5

Looking ahead to next year the Board will continue to monitor and make representations on developments that may affect salmon or salmon fisheries within the District in fulfilment of its statutory brief.

The Board will continue its close working relationship with the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust in respect of its salmon and sea trout related work.

The Board will work to ensure the best outcome for the protection and management of salmon and salmon fisheries as the outcome of the Wild Fish Review progresses towards legislative change.

AND FINALLY

Once again in a turbulent year with much set to change in the salmon fishery world it is important to record the Chairman's vote of thanks to Board members who are all unpaid volunteers and whose role covers a vital aspect of the Scottish regulatory framework in the protection salmon and the improvement of wild salmon fisheries. The participation of the Board members now and going forward into legislative change is and will continue to be of considerable importance within our District with the ripple effect on hotels, suppliers and so on in this otherwise fragile economic area.



R Vestey
Convenor
North and West District Salmon Fishery Board

Appendix 1

North and West District Salmon Fishery Board

(Correct at 1st October 2014)

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|---------------------------|--|
| Convenor: | Mr Robin Vestey |
| Upper Proprietors: | Ms. Clare Acheson Mr James Allingham Mr Robin Bradford Mr David Davies Mr Charles Marsham Mr Gerald Osborne |
| (Vice Convenor) | |
| Lower Proprietors: | Mr Dougal Lindsay |
| Co-opted: | Mr Cathel Macleod (Rep. Salmon Angler) Mr Jack Watson (Rep. Salmon Angler) Mr Alan Balfour (Tenant Netsmen) |
| Clerk | Mr Crispian Cook MRICS, Bell Ingram Limited. |
