

NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2015

This is the 16th 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 2014/5

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 to this report.

Meetings

The last Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 22nd October 2014. The next meeting will be held in Inverness on the 21st October 2015.

Board meetings took place on the 22nd October 2014, the 20th May 2015 and the next one will take place in Inverness on the 21st October 2015.

The second Annual Public Meeting was held in Ullapool on the 20th May 2015.

All meetings were notified to the public by posting on the NWDSFB website. This was done on the 2nd October 2014 and the 28th April 2015. The Scottish Government received a copy of the notices on the 2nd October 2014 and 28th April 2015. In addition a notice for the Annual Public Meeting was 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 2014 Annual Report and Accounts for the year to the 28th May 2014 were submitted to the Scottish Government on the 29th April 2015 following consideration at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on the 22nd October 2014.

Complaints

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

Members' Interests

Board members are 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 the WSFT as a part of their Juvenile Survey within the District.

WILD FISH REVIEW & PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

Wild Fish Review

In October 2014, the Wild Fisheries Review panel reported to Scottish Ministers. 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

In February 2015 the Clerk was invited to attend a meeting of the Rural Affairs Committee at Holyrood to discuss the Review Panel's report along with other representatives of DSFB's and Fishery Trusts. The Clerk has represented the DSFB at subsequent meetings of the ASFB and the Board has responded to all supplementary requests for information or consultation sought by either the Scottish Government or the ASFB.

Under discussion is and will continue to be the possible number and geographical reach of the DSFB replacement organisations, known for now as Fishery Management Organisations. The aim is that existing DSFB's and Trusts will be able to find for themselves a suitable reduction in their number by consensus.

In late September 2015 the Scottish Government issued their revised proposed approach to the ban on the killing of salmon except under licence. This is a consultation now under consideration by the Board but brings the real possibility of mandatory catch and release requirements to many of the Districts fisheries together with the requirement to complete a conservation plan for the creation of sustainable stocks. The proposals under consultation and as issued by the government are:

- The killing of salmon to be managed on an annual basis by categorising fishery districts and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in relation to their conservation status;
- Fishing outwith estuary limits to be prohibited for a period of three years followed by a review;
- Steps to reduce killing of salmon to be required in areas where salmon are in moderate conservation status;
- The killing of salmon to be allowed in areas in good conservation status;
- Conservation plans to be required in areas where salmon fail to meet good conservation status;
- Fishing to be restricted to catch and release only, ending deliberate killing, in areas where salmon are in poor conservation status. To put this in context, 93 per cent of rod caught spring salmon were released in 2014, as was 82 per cent of the annual rod catch.

Reay Forest Estate

The Reay Forest Estate 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 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 were approved by the Highland Council on the 3rd, 4th and 7th September 2015

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. 12 catchments were sampled. These were: Gleann Leireag, Sandwood, Achriesgill, Loch Innis, Badna Bay, Oldshoremore, Culag, Kirkaig, Garvie, Polly, Loch nam Brac and Rhiconich. The reports on these surveys have now been produced and circulated to the proprietors.
2. Broodstock Netting – there were no requests for assistance during 2014.
3. Education – much of this was detailed in the Interim Report. The 2015 Ghillies Seminar took place on the 24th April 2015. This was attended by several of the Ghillies within the area and appeared to be well received.
4. Sweep netting surveys report. The full report has now been completed, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website. Sweep netting for the 2015 season started in April.
5. Biosecurity. 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. Tracks were found on one of the rafts, but trapping failed to catch any animal.

We 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 as required, providing advice on different matters.

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.

The Clerk attended the Ghillies Seminar on the 24th April 2015 to discuss the work of the Salmon Management Groups

LOOK AHEAD TO 2015/6

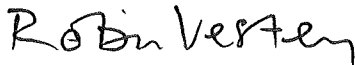
Looking ahead to next year the Board will continue to monitor and make representations on developments that may affect salmon or salmon fisheries within the District in fulfilment of its statutory brief.

The Board will continue its close working relationship with the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust (WSFT) 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. It will also be in close touch with the Scottish Government, the ASFB and the WSFT as the requirements on fisheries in respect of the ban on the killing of salmon, except under licence are finalised and rolled out.

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 2015)

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.
