

# NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

## ANNUAL REPORT – 2016

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This is the 17th 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 1. 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 2015/6

#### 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](http://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 21st October 2015. The next meeting will be held in Inverness on the 26th October 2016.

Board meetings took place on the 21st October 2015, the 17th May 2016 and the next one will take place in Inverness on the 26th October 2016.

The second Annual Public Meeting was held in Ullapool on the 17th May 2016.

All meetings were notified to the public by posting on the NWDSFB website. This was done on the 1st October 2015 and the 26th April 2016. The Scottish Government received a copy of the notices on the same dates. 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 2015 Annual Report and Accounts for the year to the 28th May 2015 were submitted to the Scottish Government on the 9th December 2015 following consideration at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on the 21st October 2015.

#### 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**

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

During 2015/6 the Clerk has represented the DSFB at meetings of the ASFB on this matter, notably in respect of the draft provisions for a Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill and Draft Wild Fisheries Strategy and the Board has responded to all supplementary requests for information or consultation sought by either the Scottish Government or the ASFB.

The ASFB/RAFTS have compiled a report to Marine Scotland recording at the start of October 2016 the extent to which thinking has developed amongst Boards and Trusts in the formation of future Fishery Management Organisations. The Board through the efforts of the Convener, Clerk and Board members have considered some different options on this point and sought to develop collaboration through normal channels, to date unsuccessfully, with the Kyle of Sutherland, Fleet and Brora districts.

### **FUTURE OF ASFB/RAFTS**

The ASFB convened a Special Meeting on Wednesday 14th September 2016 to discuss and decide on future arrangements for ASFB and RAFTS in light of the current Wild Fisheries Reform process. The Clerk attended the meeting which failed to secure a resolution promoted by the ASFB that membership of the ASFB should be offered to Trusts for the transitional period between now and the formation of FMO's and in the likely event that RAFTS is mothballed. The decision was made that the matter would be revisited at the ASFB AGM on the 17th October 2016.

### **THE CONSERVATION OF SALMON (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017**

In late September 2016 the Scottish Government issued their proposed approach for 2017 to the ban on the killing of salmon except under licence. The 2016 approach categorised fishery districts or areas and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in relation to their conservation status which led to the majority of the NW district achieving a category three status and a mandatory requirement to release all caught salmon in those districts. The proposed approach for 2017 has separated a number of the rivers within the districts for separate categorisation. Marine Scotland has been inconsistent however and has inexplicably excluded some rivers and grouped together others. The approach means that a number of rivers have been upgraded to category one or good conservation status with no apparent change in their circumstances and the balance of their districts left in category three.

The quality of the data and methodology in 2016 was much criticised by the scientific community and the same holds true for 2017 calling in to question the reliability of the 2017 categorisation just as it did in 2016. In view of this, the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, with the support of the Board, have requested the assistance of proprietors by the collection of data to help improve the modelling and decision making which places a river in one of the three categories created by Marine Scotland. This year the data sought was salmon fish scales. Both the Board and Trust agree that it is very much in the proprietors interests to ensure that the models are as accurate as possible, and therefore the data used is as accurate as possible.

## **THE SALMON CARCASS TAGGING (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2016**

The Board collaborated with the WSFT and Police Scotland in the production and distribution of leaflets to update proprietors and the wider public of the changes covered by this regulation. The only source of wild Scottish Atlantic salmon which may be purchased are those caught from net and coble fisheries in Category 1 or 2 waters. It is an offence to sell rod caught wild Scottish Atlantic salmon.

It is now a legal requirement that any wild Scottish Atlantic salmon killed at a net and coble fishery is tagged with a carcass tag as soon as it is brought to the shore.

## **BIO-SECURITY**

The Board once again collaborated with the WSFT in the production and distribution of leaflets to remind proprietors and the wider public of the danger of allowing certain alien species, for example *Gyrodactylus salaris*, in to the country.

## **PLANNING CONSULTATIONS ETC.**

The Board was consulted by SEPA on a non-aerial herbicide spraying application for the control of rhododendron with Glyphosate in the vicinity of the River Laxford.

## **WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST**

The Board made a financial contribution to the WSFT in 2014/5 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: Hope, Polla, Laxford, Bhadaidh Daraich, Geisgeil, Duart and Inver. The production of reports on this work was circulated to proprietors, with a general report also produced, supplied to the Board and available on the Trust website.
2. Broodstock Netting - undertaken in November and early December together with the Estates, as requested.
3. Education – the Ghillies seminar took place in April 2016. It was agreed within the Trust to open this event to the wider public.

The school project was very well received by all attending. The Trust assisted with the Seashore Day for Primary 5 – 7 from Durness, Kinlochbervie and Scourie.

They also carried out an electrofishing demonstration at the Assynt Fishing Feis.

They attended the Assynt Fishing Feis, Scourie Gala, Highland Field Sports Fair, Clachtoll Seashore Day and the Scottish Salmon Festival, discussing different aspects of fisheries management and the Trusts work with members of the public.

4. Sweep netting surveys were undertaken within the Laxford, Polla and Kyle of Durness where possible. A number of fish were caught and tagged, and lice and predator damage recorded. There were 54 recaptures during 2015, several relating to the Badna Bay smolt trap.
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, although still present in small numbers.

The Trust continues to manage the Scottish Mink Initiative project within the area. Despite several sightings, and some tracks within the rafts, no mink have been captured.

The Trust has started to survey Japanese knotweed populations within the area, and have undertaken some control measures.

6. A smolt trap was installed in Badna Bay during April and May. This worked well, with a number of salmon and sea trout smolts trapped. Many of the sea trout were tagged to provide additional information to the sweep netting survey.
7. The Trust has worked with the Clerk to the Board as required, providing advice on a number of 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 manage seals. The application for licences to manage seals, 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 2016/7**

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.

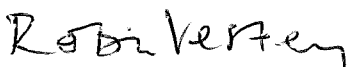
The Board will continue its close working relationship with the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust (WSFT) in respect of its salmon and sea trout related work.

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.

Many readers of this report will have known Jack Watson who died earlier this year. He was a long standing Board member and members of the Board would like to record their thanks and appreciation for the contribution that Jack made.



R Vestey  
Convenor  
North and West District Salmon Fishery Board

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Appendix 1

**North and West District Salmon Fishery Board**

(Correct at 1st October 2016)

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

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