

NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2019

This is the 20th 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 2018/19

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.

Meetings

A meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 10th October 2018. The next meeting will be held in Ullapool on the 6th November 2019.

Board meetings took place on the 10th October 2018, 16th May 2019 and the next one will take place in Ullapool on the 6th November 2019.

The fourth Annual Public Meeting was held in Ullapool on the 16th May 2019.

All meetings were notified to the public by posting on the NWDSFB website and where appropriate, they were advertised in the Northern Times. The Scottish Government have received a copy of the notices. 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 2018 Annual Report and Accounts for the year to the 28th May 2018 have been submitted to the Scottish Government.

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 are 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.

Despite there being an expectation that we would receive requests during the course of this year, this has not materialised. We do not anticipate a request during the 2019/20 year. In the event that a request is received, the details will be addressed in next years report.

ELECTRO-FISHING

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

In support of the National Electrofishing Survey, during the last year, the Board has consented to electro-fishing work being conducted by the WSFT.

WILD FISH REVIEW

Further to last year's report, there has been no further progress on this subject.

THE SALMON CARCASS TAGGING (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2016

It is important to remember 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.

The North West salmon fishery district has no active Net & Coble fisheries and the majority of the waters are currently category 3.

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.

THE CONSERVATION OF SALMON (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2020

At the time of writing the proposed Conservation Assessment for the 2020 season is out to consultation.

WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST

The Board made a financial contribution to the WSFT in 2018/19 to assist with the following work which supports the statutory role of the Board within the District:

The following work has been undertaken:

Juvenile surveys. We have concentrated on the National Electrofishing Survey this year, with some additional sampling undertaken. We have surveyed 10 catchments – Hope, Polla, Dionard, Oldshoremore, Sandwood, Laxford, Duart, Oldany, Inver and Polly. The production of reports on this work will be completed in the new year and circulated to proprietors, with a general report also produced, supplied to the Board and available on the Trust website. A wet summer affected our ability to complete the surveys and undertake additional work. Results from the 2018 NEPS survey are available at <https://data.marine.gov.scot/sites/default/files//SMFS%201002.pdf>

Broodstock Netting - this is yet to start but will be undertaken in November and early December together with the Estates, if requested.

Education – the Ghillies seminar will take place in April 2020. It has been agreed within the Trust to open this event to the wider public.

There have been a number of school days undertaken in conjunction with the Highlife Highland Rangers, focussing on rivers and coasts within the area. In the coming 6 months I will be helping the Rangers to develop a programme for 2020 centred on eels but including general river health and biology.

We attended the Assynt Highland Games, Highland Field Sports Fair, and Scourie Gala, discussing different aspects of fisheries management and the Trusts work with members of the public.

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 no recaptures during 2019. The full report will be completed in the new year, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website.

Biosecurity. The Trust continues to demonstrate biosecurity measures within its own work and promote the practice within the area while talking to members of the public.

The Trust was again involved in the pulling of Himalayan Balsam at Nedd and Clashnessie. The population in Nedd appears to be restricted to the host garden now, while that in Clashnessie is more focussed on the host garden.

The Trust continues to manage the mink project within the area. There was a report of a collapse in the mink population in Assynt during the summer, and a sighting at Nedd at the same time. With thanks to our volunteers, we managed to respond to this with additional rafts, traps and cameras but no further signs have been reported.

The Trust has treated 11 populations of Japanese knotweed within the area. During 2020 it was noted that 2 populations are now restricted to the host garden and a further 3 had no plants found.

The Trust has treated a population of Skunk cabbage within the area.

A smolt trap was installed in Badna Bay during April and May. This was during a time of very low flows and the trap did not fish for much of the period.

The Trust has worked with the Clerk to the Board as required, providing advice on a number of different matters.

PLANNING CONSULTATIONS ETC.

Loch Duart Salmon Farms have proposed modifications to a number of their production sites. We are aware of proposed Salmon farming developments in the area of Horse Island, within the Summer Isles, and Enard Bay.

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 2020

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.

AND FINALLY

It is important to record a 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 2017)

Convenor:	Mr Robin Vestey	
Upper Proprietors:	Mr Andrew Adamson	
	Mr James Allingham	
	Mr Robin Bradford	
(Vice Convenor)	Mr David Davies	
	Mr Gerald Osborne	
Lower Proprietors:	Mr Dougal Lindsay	
	Mr Alan Balfour	
Co-opted:	Mr Charles Marsham	(Rep. Salmon Angler)
	Mr Cathel Macleod	(Rep. Salmon Angler)
	Vacant	(Tenant Netsmen)
Clerk	Mr Robert Whitson MRICS, Bell Ingram LLP	
