

# NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

## ANNUAL REPORT – 2023

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This is the 24<sup>th</sup> 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 Salmon 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 2022/23**

### **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The NWDSFB has adopted The Code of Good Practice for District Salmon Fishery Boards produced by Fisheries Management Scotland.

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.

### **Meetings**

Since March 2022, Board meetings have taken place by means of Zoom video conferencing and in person.

A meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The next meeting will be held via Zoom video conference on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Board meetings took place on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 by Zoom video conference on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in person. The next meeting will take place via zoom video conference on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The Annual Public Meeting was held in Ullapool on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The Annual Public Meeting was advertised in the traditional manner.

### **Annual Report and Accounts**

Once approved these will continue to be posted on the NWDSFB website and sent to the Scottish Government. The 2022 Annual Report and Accounts for the year to the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2022 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.

At this stage, the Board have received requests to introduce youngstock in to the system from Inver only.

## **ELECTRO-FISHING**

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

Work on the National Electrofishing Survey took place in 2023. The detail is undernoted.

## **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.

## **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**

The proposed Conservation Assessment for the 2022 season was published in August 2021.

## **WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST**

The Board made a financial contribution to the WSFT in 2022/23 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. The National Electrofishing Survey took place in 2023. We surveyed in 10 catchments (Hope, Polla, Dionard, Sandwood, Laxford, Maldie, Oldany, Clashnessie, Inver and Polly) as part of this programme or as contract sites for other companies. The full report will be completed in the new year, supplied to the Board and published on the Trust website.

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 took place in April 2023. This was opened to Trust volunteers as well as ghillies from the area. Well attended, it seemed to be well received with talks on the West Coast Tracking Project, Loch Duart Ltd, RLUP and NW2045 and SFCC. Notes from the seminar are available on the Trust website

We assisted Scourie Primary School with their project on land management - the impacts of developments on the environment and how to mitigate them.

We worked with the Ullapool High School Young Rangers to teach them about the riverine environment and freshwater monitoring.

Together with Assynt Field Club, we undertook an 'Explore your river' event

We attended the Moy Country Fair in August, sharing a stall with the Ness Fishery Board and the Beaully Fishery Board. This was an opportunity to meet the public, discuss the work of the Trust and promote the area, fisheries and biosecurity.

Sweep netting surveys were undertaken within the Laxford and Polla where possible from April to October. The Kyle of Durness was dropped due to lack of volunteers. A number of fish were caught, and lice and predator damage recorded. We had 2 recaptures during 2023, both tagged in 2022. 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, and volunteers, were 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 showed an unwelcome increase. Until the host garden is tackled however, this will be an on-going situation.

The Trust continues to manage the mink project within the area. We have had some sightings but no captures this summer. With thanks to our volunteers for their efforts in monitoring and reacting to sightings.

Smolt traps was installed in the River Laxford, River Polla and Clashnessie burn during April and May. The Laxford and Polla traps were run with the AST as part of the West Coast Salmon Tracking project, with salmon smolts acoustically tagged in both. Sea trout were also tagged in the Laxford. The Clashnessie trap was monitored for Loch Duart Ltd as part of their Environmental Monitoring Plan. All traps operated successfully, with useful information obtained.

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 continued to develop proposals to modify a number of their production sites.

## **LOOK AHEAD TO 2024**

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

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Appendix 1

**North and West District Salmon Fishery Board**

**Elected on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Upper Proprietors.

Mr R Vestey	(Mandatory for the EH Vestey Marriage Settlement Trust)
Mr D Davies	(Mandatory for Polly Estates)
Ms S Harkins	(Mandatory for SN Barr Trustees)
Mr T Kirkwood	(Mandatory for Braesgill Ltd)
Mr R Bradford	
Mr G Osborne	(Mandatory for G&R Osborne)

Lower Proprietors

Mr D Lindsay	(Mandatory for Fourth Duke of Westminster's 1964 Settlement Trust)
Mr A Balfour	(Mandatory for Scourie Estate)

Co-opted Members

Mr C Macleod  
Mr K Dunbar

Convener and Vice Convener

Mr R Vestey was elected as Convener  
Mr D Davies was elected as Vice Convener

**Clerk:** Mr R Whitson MRICS, Bell Ingram LLP

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