

# 2015 Annual Report

Convenor: Roger Brook

Clerk: Craig MacIntyre

Board Members:

Board Members Elected in 2015 for 3 year period	Representing Sub-District
Stephen Gibbs	Arran
Mrs Caroline Fleming	Arran
Mrs Rosie Campbell-Preston	Awe
Roger Brook	Awe (Convenor)
David Stewart	Creran
Mrs Tuggy Delap	Fyne
Mrs Beth Nicholson	Nell
Hugh Whittle	Nell
Andrew Barker	Ruel
<b>Salmon Angling Representatives</b>	
Richard McKenzie	Loch Awe Improvement Association
William Duff	Dunoon & District Angling Club
<b>Tenant Netsmen's Representative</b>	
James Middleton	Loch Fyne

## 1. Introduction

The Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board encompasses mainland Argyll and the Isles of Bute and Arran, from the West shore of Loch Long in the East, to the Mull of Kintyre in the South and Glen Creran in the North. It does not include the Isles of Islay, Jura or Mull, nor the Eachaig District near Dunoon. There are 41 river catchments contained within the board area, with 68 separate salmon netting rights identified and 127 salmon rod fishing rights.

## 2. Report on 2015

### 2.1 Catch Statistics for Salmon and Sea Trout

District	Salmon	Grilse	Salmon Total	Sea Trout Total	Salmon C&R rate	Sea trout C&R Rate	5 Year Average Salmon	5 Year Average Sea Trout
Add	NR	NR	NR	NR			18.9	4.2
Arran	18	0	18	41	72%	68%	21.8	47.0
Awe	197	154	351	10	87%	100%	411.7	7.6
Clyde	0	3	3	35	100%	100%	2.5	37.3
Creran	1	5	6	4	83%	100%	5.0	4.4
Fyne	21	16	37	35	100%	100%	20.3	36.3
Kintyre	4	15	19	67	63%	15%	38.9	49.2
Nell	7	6	13	1	54%	100%	18.0	7.2
Ruel	3	4	7	22	100%	91%	6.4	24.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>543.3</b>	<b>217.6</b>

Generally 2015 was a difficult year for angling, with heavy rain in the early part of the season, followed by a very dry spell in late summer/early autumn. Most areas were below their 5 year average in 2015, although the River Awe managed to buck the trend with a 95% increase in salmon catches from 2014, with almost exactly the same number of salmon recorded over the fish counter.

## **2.2 Conservation Policies**

The Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board advocates catch and release during these current periods of very poor marine survival. Marine survival rates do fluctuate from year to year, however the Argyll Fisheries Trust has estimated that current return rates for salmon may be as low as 2% of migrating smolts. This compares very poorly with marine survival rates of around 25% that were reported in the 1960s. Marine Scotland Science are currently undertaking research that will hopefully provide a more accurate figure of smolt survival in Argyll.

## **2.3 Enforcement Activities**

There is one full-time Water Bailiff employed within the Argyll salmon fishery district, who covers the Awe sub-district. There are three part-time Water Bailiffs who cover the Ruel and Awe sub-districts, and eight volunteer warranted Water Bailiffs covering the other sub-districts.

The majority of enforcement activities involve preventing illegal fishing, which do not require police intervention. The Argyll DSFB corresponds with police wildlife officers, local police officers, as well as Marine Scotland Compliance.

## **2.4 Main Issues Affecting Salmon in Argyll**

There are a range of issues that have the potential to impact on the abundance of wild migratory salmonid populations, as identified in the Argyll Fisheries Trust's Fishery Management Plan (<http://www.argyllfisheristrust.co.uk/publications/>). Probably the main impact affecting salmonid populations is the poor marine survival we are currently experiencing, as discussed above. Other marine issues that have impacted salmon and sea trout are poorly managed aquaculture that can lead to harmful infestations of sea lice as smolts are heading out to sea, and general low levels of marine productivity that affect sea trout in particular (sea trout tend to remain in coastal waters, while salmon will migrate to the North Atlantic for their feeding grounds).

In the freshwater habitat, historic poor commercial forestry practices have impacted on hydrology and habitat availability, and the historical removal of native broadleaf woodlands from many catchments has reduced aquatic productivity. Several catchments have been impacted by agriculture, which has resulted in many straightened rivers, unstable river banks due to livestock accessing the river, spawning burns being straightened to improve drainage, and diffuse pollution entering watercourses.

Hydroelectric schemes abstract water from rivers to generate electricity, and therefore the potential is there to impact on salmonids. There are several examples of poor practice from hydro schemes dating back to the 1960s that do impact on salmon and sea trout, however most schemes nowadays are better engineered and managed, and minimise any impact.

Invasive non-native species also have an impact, and in Argyll we have a range of invasive plants including Japanese knotweed, *Rhododendron ponticum* and Giant hogweed. American mink predate on salmon and trout in rivers, however their numbers are falling due to trapping schemes by most estates in Argyll.

## **2.5 Funding of the Argyll Fisheries Trust**

With poor salmon and sea trout catches, the level of funding that the Argyll DSFB is able to provide to the Argyll Fisheries Trust for conservation and improvement is low. In 2015, AFT received £29,000 for work in the Awe Catchment from money received from Scottish & Southern Energy as part of their commitment to mitigate for loss of spawning grounds in the River Awe due to the hydroelectric scheme. The money funded monitoring of the success of salmon spawning with fry surveys, improvements to the river habitat by making new areas of the river accessible for salmon spawning, modelling of the river to better understand the habitat requirements of fish, and removal of invasive non-native Japanese knotweed, as well as advising SEPA, Forestry Commission and Scottish and Southern Energy on aquatic issues.

Building on work undertaken in 2013 and 2014, AFT used money received through the salmon levy for work on the River Goil. AFT continued with a project part funded by the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park with assistance from the Forestry Commission, Loch Goil Angling Club and the farmer to improve the riparian and in-stream habitat, through livestock fencing and bank stabilisation. A river bank revetment was built on a section of the River Goil which will protect the bank, slowing the rate of erosion and preventing excess silt entering the river.

## **2.6 Consented Salmon Stocking Activities**

In Argyll in 2015 hatchery reared salmon were stocked into two rivers suffering from poor numbers of returning adult salmon. The Argyll Fisheries Trust recommends that salmon are stocked out as unfed fry, to minimise the adverse effects of introducing hatchery reared fish (see Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) policy on hatcheries at <http://www.rafts.org.uk/rafts-stocking-policy-and-technical-paper-now-available/>). In 2015, around 27,500 fry were consented by the Argyll DSFB to be released into rivers.

## **2.7 Responding to Development Consultations**

The Argyll DSFB is a statutory consultee for planning applications, such as aquaculture, wind farms and hydro schemes that have the potential to affect salmon and trout fisheries in Argyll. Responding to development consultations is an important part of the DSFB's work to protect salmonid populations. Details of the latest developments can be found on the Argyll DSFB website (<http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/consultations-2/>).

In 2015, the Argyll DSFB was consulted on 21 applications for marine aquaculture, 17 applications for hydro electric schemes, 12 wind farms, along with numerous consultations on road crossing streams and rail upgrades. The Argyll DSFB will only object to these developments if there is evidence of a significant potential impact on wild salmonid populations.

## **2.8 Complaints to the Argyll DSFB in 2015.**

The Board has maintains a complaints procedure which can be viewed at the Argyll DSFB website (<http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/>). The Argyll DSFB received no complaints in 2015.

## **3. Planned Activities for 2016**

**3.1** To meet our responsibilities under the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013, the Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board will undertake the following activities in 2016.

- Hold a Public Meeting in April 2016.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting in April 2016.

- Hold a meeting for Argyll DSFB Board members in October 2016.
- The Argyll DSFB does not intend to amend its conservation policy of recommending Catch and Release.
- The Joint Executive Committee of the Argyll DSFB and Argyll Fisheries Trust will decide on habitat improvements to be undertaken in 2016.
- The Argyll DSFB, in conjunction with the Argyll Fisheries Trust, will continue to review all salmon stocking activities and discuss the implementation of monitoring programmes to assess the effectiveness of hatcheries in the district.

### **3.2 Annual Accounts.**

The accounts for 2015 will be published on the Argyll DSFB website (<http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/>), and are prepared by Simmers & Co, Oban. A copy will be sent to the Scottish Government when approved at the Argyll DSFB Annual General Meeting in April 2016.

### **3.3 Annual Report**

This annual report will be published on the Argyll DSFB website (<http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/>). A copy will be sent to the Scottish Government when approved at the Argyll DSFB Annual General Meeting in April 2016.

### **3.4 Members' interests**

The register of members' interests is held by the Clerk to the Argyll DSFB at Cherry Park, Inveraray. We have included a standing item at each Board meeting inviting Board members to declare new/amend existing interests and all such instances are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.

**Craig MacIntyre**

**Clerk to the Argyll DSFB, Inveraray, April 2016**