

Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board

Annual Report 2017

Convener: Roger Brook

Clerk: Robert Younger

Board Members:

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

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2. Report on 2017

2.1 Catch Statistics for Salmon and Sea Trout

RIVER	Argyll Catch 2017				5 yr. Avg. Salmon	5 yr. Avg. Grilse	5 yr. Avg. Sea Trout
	Salmon	Grilse	Sea trout	Finnock			
ADD	2	10	1	6	4.0	4.2	2.4
ARRAN	6	6	46	0	9.0	8.2	49.8
AWE	55	54	0	0	149.2	97	4.8
BUTE	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0
CLYDE	0	0	14	3	0.2	2.2	32
CRERAN	0	1	0	3	1.6	2.4	2.2
FYNE	0	0	120	66	9.0	6.2	46.2
KINTYRE	11	0	27	0	5.8	13.4	43
NELL	6	6	2	18	8.0	11.6	4.8
RUEL	1	0	15	37	2.4	1.8	18.4
TOTAL	79	67	224	127	185.2	142.8	201.2
% of 5 yr. Avg	42.7	46.9	111.3	120.5			

The 2017 salmon fishing season was a poor one, with catches recorded at less than 50 % of the five-year average (2013-2017) for both salmon and grilse. The sea trout fishing was a little better than usual at 111 and 120 % of the five year average for sea trout and finnock respectively. The highest percentage of the Argyll Board catch is taken (& released) on the Awe catchment which averages some 75 % of salmon and grilse caught. The counter on the River Awe recorded the lowest annual total of fish counted (480) since records began over 50 years ago, a pattern which appears to have been replicated across Argyll, with lower numbers of salmon reported caught.

2.2 Conservation Policies

All Argyll DSFB policies comply with the Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2017 under which all our rivers were categorised at grade 3 which means mandatory total catch and release for salmon. While the Board recognises the shortcomings in the way that Marine Scotland carry out their evaluations it accepts the general conclusion that salmon stocks in all Argyll rivers are below safe conservation limits. The Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board also advocates catch and release for sea trout.

ADSFB has particular concern regarding declining 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 or lower than 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.

In addition, the Atlantic Salmon Trust has launched the Missing Salmon Project, which will investigate the mystery of declining marine survival for salmon. The project aims to work in partnership with

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other organisations because issues are so vast and varied that they cannot be tackled in isolation hence the Missing Salmon Project was conceived as a vehicle for collaborative and partnership working.

2.3 Enforcement Activities

There is one full-time Water Bailiff employed within the Argyll salmon fishery district, who covers the Awe sub-district.

Awe bailiff report 2017

Over 30 individual illegal fishers were put off the rivers Awe and Orchy by the bailiff. All river poaching is of illegal rod and line fishing which has a nuisance value but is unlikely to make a significant dent in the fish population.

The Bailiff found a fake news item on the Salmon Fishing Forum where someone had posted a photo of a large rainbow trout kill on the River Awe under the headline "Looks like the Awe has had another escape". He was able to establish that the photo was 10 years old and get a message onto the forum to prevent a fresh invasion of illegal fishers.

The bailiff provided hatchery assistance over winter 2016/17 to the River Etive. He is also an important member of the sweep netting team for monitoring sea lice on sea trout.

The bailiff monitors the fish counter on the Awe and collects data from the PIT tag reader and camera. This data is used in the management of the river on a week by week basis. As part of the PIT tagging programme assistance is given with installation of the smolt traps.

There have been instances of illegal camping and criminal damage to the fishing hut in Glen Orchy. The bailiff reported the incident and involved the police.

Rainbow escapes in Loch Etive and Loch Awe create significant issues for the bailiff. It leads to fishers coming to the river to fish for free for the trout. Such fishing needs to be controlled to remove as many alien fish as possible but also to keep the fishers under control such that legitimate salmon fishers are not impeded.

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 usually 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.argyllfisheriestrust.co.uk/publications/>).

Marine Survival: Probably the main impact affecting salmonid populations is the poor marine survival we are currently experiencing, as discussed above.

Aquaculture. 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

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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).

Forestry. In the freshwater habitat, historic poor commercial forestry practices have impacted on hydrology and habitat availability, and the historical removal of native broadleaf woodlands and over-grazing of livestock and deer in many catchments has reduced aquatic productivity. Several catchments have been impacted by modification, 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.

Hydro-electric. 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 Species 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.

Beaver. A recent Habitats Directive appraisal of the potential impact of a formal reintroduction of beaver into Scotland finds that there is the potential for the re-introduction to have a significant impact on the life-history on the Atlantic salmon. The impacts of beaver can be mitigated by management efforts but this is likely to be expensive the scope of what may be allowable has not yet been made clear by the Scottish Government.

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 2017, AFT received £23,100 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 assistance with the Marine Scotland Science Aquaculture Project, monitoring of the success of salmon spawning with fry surveys, modelling of the river to better understand the habitat requirements of fish, a climate change project, as well as advising SEPA, Forestry Commission and Scottish and Southern Energy on aquatic issues.

Outside of the Awe Catchment, juvenile fish sampling work was undertaken by the Argyll Fisheries Trust in the River Etive and a number of rivers in Loch Fyne in 2017. Plans were developed to implement habitat improvement work on the River Ruel, rivers in Loch Fyne.

2.6 Consented Salmon Stocking Activities

No hatchery-reared salmon were stocked into rivers in the Argyll DSFB area. In 2016, around 7,500 fry were consented by the Argyll DSFB to be released into two rivers. Stocking permissions are now controlled and authorised by [Marine Scotland Science](#).

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2.7 Consultations

The Argyll DSFB is a statutory consultee for planning applications for marine aquaculture, and a general consultee for 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 2017, the Argyll DSFB was consulted on nine applications for marine aquaculture, two applications for hydro-electric schemes, a wind farm and 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.

Argyll DSFB submitted a consultation response to the Consultation on Beavers in Scotland – Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report

Argyll DSFB submitted a written submission to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee investigation into the Environmental impacts of salmon farming and will make a submission to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's investigation into salmon farming in Scotland.

2.8 Meetings

Amongst other meetings, Argyll DSFB hosted Mike Palmer and Alistair Mitchell of Marine Scotland at Cherry Park in March 2018. Mr Palmer heads recreational fisheries at Marine Scotland. Mr Mitchell has long been known to be a strong advocate of aquaculture. The two were on a fact-finding mission and in the words of Mr Mitchell "to put right wrongs". Argyll DSFB were pleased to be able to give them the Board's perspective on the impact of the expansion of aquaculture on wild fisheries in Argyll and the perceived shortcomings in the regulation of aquaculture.

2.9 Complaints to the Argyll DSFB in 2017

The Board 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 2017.

2.10 Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)

The Board's interests are represented on the committee of Fisheries Management Scotland (formerly ASFB) by Roger Brook. FMS takes a leading role in advocating the key issues facing the wild fisheries sector with the Scottish Government and others.

3. Planned Activities for 2018

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 2018.

- Hold a Public Meeting in April 2018.

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- Hold an Annual General Meeting in April 2018.
- Hold a meeting for Argyll DSFB Board members in October 2018.
- 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 2018.
- The Argyll DSFB, in conjunction with the Argyll Fisheries Trust, will continue to review all salmon stocking activities and monitoring programmes with Marine Scotland Science.

3.2 Annual Accounts

The accounts for 2017 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 2018.

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 2018.

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.

Robert Younger

Clerk to the Argyll DSFB, Inveraray, April 2018