

ARGYLL DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

Annual General Meeting
Teams Online Meeting
23rd March 2022, 10:00am

Attendees: Roger Brook (RB), Robert Younger (RY), Alan Kettle White (AKW), Andrew Barker (AB), Jane Wright (JW), Alasdair Reynolds (AR), Virginia Sumsion (VS), Johnny Brown (JB), Jamie McGrigor (JM), Duncan Byatt (DB), Tim King, (TK), Tuggy Delap (TD), Ian Tegner (IT), Alyssa Stewart (AS)

Apologies: David Stewart, Jamie Gibbs, Wally Wales, Rosemary Campbell Preston, David Millburn, Anne Craig, Calum McFarlane, Charles Fforde, Ian Amory, David Sutherland, Hugh Nicol

RB welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were read.

Approval of the previous minutes, 3rd November 2021

The minutes were approved unanimously.

Declaration of Members 'Interests

None were declared

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Matters arising

No matters arising.

Finance & Clerk's Annual Report

Approval of Accounts 2021

Accounts were approved unanimously.

Page 3 is the important part, it is the operating costs which ADSFB have tried to contain over the year, operating costs are approximately £11,000.

The 'bad debt 'is recoverable and will be recovered, it is noted for accounting purposes.

Activities 2021

Circulated and self-explanatory.

Planned activities 2022

Circulated and self-explanatory.

Levy

The levy has been stable, what has changed with COVID is that we have learnt to reduce costs with online meetings and EMP'S are slowing up resulting in fewer meetings. ADSFB try to put £3,000 aside for habitat work annually, this is not a lot for the whole of Argyll but can help toward AKW's bids for projects work, plus ADSFB have running costs.

Taking this into consideration, RB proposes that the levy can be reduced to £0.65/£ for non-bailiff districts, with exception of the Ruel and Awe who have bailiffs, JB suggests £0.20p can be taken off the Awe levy, and a further reduction of £0.20 by ADSFB which takes the levy to £2.40.

AB questioned whether the Ruel bailiff being PT made a difference, it was discussed and Ruel will stay on the Awe rate.

The proposed levy was agreed.

RB is saddened to note that, apart from the Awe District, only 16 salmon were declared for whole of Argyll last year, something has to be done for the fish, although, it has been a strange year with unusual weather. There have been significant projects which AKW will cover in his presentation, the government is taking things more seriously. The Trust now have 4 staff, things are moving in the right direction, but it is still desperate times.

JB asked if the small claims would be an action that the ADSFB could consider, to be seen to enforce the debts. RY agreed that if the ADSFB wants to go ahead then that can be done, it is a relatively low input effort wise.

A final letter will be sent to proprietors if the Board is happy that this is the route to be taken, and the right paperwork will be put in action.

JB proposed that this should be done as there are levy proprietors who would like this to be seen. JB and BY will liaise on this.

FMS update

The annual conference is online next week, FMS have a film called 'Our Wild Salmon' covering all the threats to salmon, which should be available publicly after the conference. RB has privilege of an early viewing.

FMS are heavily involved with the Missing Salmon Alliance which involves most of the Salmon Charities, other than the Salmon and Trout Conservation, this has got us involved in the West Coast Salmon Tracking Project (WCST) and future funding.

FMS has also informed a Hydro Committee, which is good with the potential for more Hydro schemes on the Awe.

Further funding is through the Genetic Sampling through FMS.
FMS are looking for new Board members, RB has been a member since before they were FMS and it about to be 'timed out 'due to his length of service.

AOB

No A.O.B.

Argyll Fisheries Trust presentation

AK covered the main points; the presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

AK has been appointed as Director of the Trust.

AFT Work Program 21-22

After the disrupted work programme of 2020-21, AFT have moved into a fuller work programme.

More active in the field due to two new staff and also AFT are also involved in Nature Scotland Rivers Training programme with Tom Bonniwell, who will be with the Trust for 3 months, March to May.

NEPS and NIPS will not be going ahead in 2022, but hopefully more work will replace this contract.

Contracts from Renewable Energy are more flexible and harder to forecast for the year ahead.

West Coast Salmon Tracking Project

This project is to identify the migration route of smolts through inshore waters.

Fish were tagged and released further down the river.

AKW has been given confirmation that will go ahead in 2022. There were two traps, one in the Etive and one in the Orchy.

River Orchy

105 of 113 (93%) smolts detected leaving the River Awe. It took the fish approximately 2.2 days to migrate, some fish did this in 2 days, others in 10 days.

River Etive

Had a lower detection rate. 66 of 87 (76%) smolts detected leaving the River Etive. One smolt took 1.2 days, other took 11.3 days.

About 50% of smolts were detected in the marine arrays. Figures show the detection rate, not survival rate.

One fish travelled 380km's.

R. Orchy Juvenile Fish Surveys 2021

The Electrofishing surveys in the River Orchy show a decline in fry numbers. 2014 was last good adult runs. Although there is a small decline in the smolt runs, it won't be as catastrophic as what we might see in the fry populations.

Data does not show a healthy picture.

Invertebrate Sampling

Partly in response to the reduction in juveniles in catchments, there has been discussions with Marine Scotland and SEPA about adding nutrients to the rivers to help compensate the survival numbers.

This is a baseline survey.

The invertebrate biomass is higher in the River Awe compared to the Orchy. There was no significant issue with water quality itself, but there was a high number of snails and invertebrates like waterlouse and lack of flat bodied mayflies, who would be competing.

This will be repeated in the spring and will include more catchment areas.

JM asked if the increased number of Roach fry will affect feeding prospects for other fish, AKW explained that the balance of fish species in the loch will change. Pike will do better, Roach and Perch will compete with Trout and Char, it will change the fish community of Loach Awe. Fewer brown trout are also being caught on the loch due to a lack of available food resources.

Stone Loach is also colonising some of the rivers, which compete with young salmon.

Fish Habitat Improvement

The major projects are the River Goil Green bank revetment and the river Ruel woody debris project, using techniques such keeping the tree root systems intact and using debris to protect riverbanks from erosions, the results have been positive, and have improve spawning and stabilisation in areas that work has been done.

Applying for funding from the Wild Salmonoid Support Fund which is managed by Foundation Scotland. Funding will be used on the Dalvuie Burn restoration which flows into the Loch Etive. The project was delayed last year due to requirement for a SEPA CAR licence which was allocated too late and will be started next week.

More funding has been applied for from the Wild Salmonoid Support Fund to join three projects, the River Ruel, Goil and Eachaig, to create three times more funding. Hopefully we will hear by the end of May is the application has been successful.

Riverwood raise awareness of stream temperature and the reliance on shading to keep the rivers cool with shade. There should be films available publicly. AKW has been working on larger scale projects to increase number of riparian woodlands activities, no projects over the line yet.

2022-23 River Work Programme

AST West Coast Salmon Tracking Project

In its second year, also intending to look at behaviour of smolts around the barrage.

Sea Trout Netting Surveys/EMP

Will continue through Marine Scotland or EMP funding.

Juvenile Surveys

Based around Argyll and the Islands and hope to get the Carradale Genetic Sampling Survey over the line.

Habitat Improvement

Will continue even if no funding allocated and hopefully more work on the Eachaig through the National Park funding.

Argyll DSFB Consultations

AFT will continue to support ADSFB with consultations.

Contract Funding

Renewable Energy Funding.

Smolt tracking in Orchy will catch smolts for WCSTP focusing on the Marine Environment. There are additional questions relating to smolts and salmon counts and the migration downstream past the barrage, there will be a pilot project to assess whether smolts can be tagged and put them into the outflow of loch awe with receivers placed upstream and downstream to gather data on how the fish may be delayed in some scenarios. This will support SSE's work on helping the smolt passage through the barrage.

DB asked if there was funding for including other sea trout burns, AKW explained that funding tends to be on specific areas as there is historical data and can supply information to regulators and sea farms. DB will contact AKW regarding work.

The Wild Salmon Support Fund is available for bids and managed by Foundation Scotland, they ask ADSFB/AFT to annually apply for project so please contact AKW if there are any suggestions. Funds will increase once WCSTP ends.

JM asked if there is any way it can be known what bids have been submitted, AKW explained that there were bids for restoration of sea trout burn, the deadline was Monday and the project for Cowal to bring together work on Goil, Ruel and Eachaig. The upper limit is £35k. The next funding round is March next year. RB declared an interest of being on the Allocation Board, application submitted are not in the public domain, but all bodies in Scotland affected by aquaculture can apply, the allocation is based on worthiness of project and eligibility.

Aquaculture update and discussion

EMP's monitor the effect of fish farms on wild fish, AFT has agreed EMP'S with MOWI and Carradale.

Monitoring is also done for SSC but there is no formal agreement as terms could not be agreed, however the Trust are being used a sub-contractor/consultant to collect data.

Loch Linnhe EMP will not go any further until SSC learn the result of planning applications for increasing tonnage.

FMS and Marine Scotland have provided funding for Sea Trout monitoring on Loch Riddon and Loch Linnhe.

Carradale Genetic Sampling Programme results are not available yet and has been at the expense of MOWI.

NIPS (National Integration) was carried out in 2021 for Marine Scotland looking into genetic integration into our wild populations, however there is no NIPS for 2022.

The Trust supports the ADFSB with consultations, the main consultation is SEPA's on Sea Lice Framework.

A programme was developed based on a Norwegian risk assessment relating to the risk to sea trout from lice numbers, taking lessons on board and providing a traffic light system, detailed on slide headed *Lice Related Risk to Sea Trout*.

Loch Riddon

Post smolt sea trout <150 g have only been in sea for a few weeks, >150g are harder to find. Fairly low impact from sea lice, but there has been high impact in previous years.

Loch Fyne

For smaller trout, 2021 was relatively good year in terms of Lice Burden. The larger trout had a relatively good year in 2021 in terms if lice burden.

Carradale

Moderate risk to small and larger sea trout in 2021.

Sound of Shuna

Not many fish caught in 2021, employed a fyke net which did catch fish but not very many, the risk was moderate to high based on samples collected.

Firth of Lorn

Dunstaffnage is monitored every year, no large sea trout caught in 2021, small trout had a high level of lice burden with is In line with high lice numbers on sea farm.

Loch Etive

Low risk to small trout, and moderate for larger trout.

Sea Lice Forecast 2022

Based on sea lice data from sea farms, red dotted line is the code of good practice, the farms should be below this line. There will be a fallow in Autumn, resulting in a low level of lice and numbers will be under control in fish farms, not expecting any impact in 2022 for lice numbers.

AKW has an EMP meeting at the end of month and will take data to look for improvement in next cycle.

JW asked if the Norwegian traffic light system would benefit from having a first- and second-year production on them, AKW explained that the graphs detail a prediction for each year.

Farmed Salmon Introgression

In recent years the EMPS's have given an opportunity to monitor affects on wild fish of the salmon farming process. The government has now changed tact and has announced that SEPA will be responsible for sea lice, planners still decide the location of farms. SEPA have consulted on how they want to do this, and plan to be in a position to take control in a year. All being well, this will be the beginning of 2023.

The Sea Lice Regulators produced a map of high-risk areas and will judge new farm locations, the focus will be on the existing CAR licence system. This will be similar to EMP's, and will introduce consistency, this is a step in the right direction. SEPA rarely get anything done, they will be concentrating on new farm applications, will not be looking into existing farms, or be introducing new controls.

Considerations will be for salmon only and not sea trout, who are there all year round, SEPA will look into sea trout in the future.

FMS and ADSFB/AFT have put in a submission, hopefully SEPA will take account of concerns.

The Loch Long Salmon Farm was objected to and is with planners at the moment.

Dawnfresh have gone bust, four new planning applications for Clyde are on hold as the future is uncertain, the fish farms are presently on the market.

AR updated on the Loch Long planning application, which ADSFB have objected to, looks as though the planning application will be passed to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs committee, AR will observe online one of the planning consultation meetings for a little foresight into how the consultation is handled.

RB thanked AR and asked if he would continue to monitor the situation.

AR also noted that the SEPA interactive map of protection zones appears to show gaps, which have been commented on in AKW's response to the consultation.

AKW explained that it relates to catch returns and conservation limit programme, if rivers haven't put in catch returns there is no data, and don't exist as far as Marine Scotland are concerned.

JM spoke of the rumours regarding escaped fish from Dawnfresh farms at the Braevallich site, AKW has reported it to the Fish Health Inspectorate.

JM and AR questioned whether the Dawnfresh trout farms may be changed to salmon farms, RB explained that a new application will need to be submitted. RY added that CAR licences will be transferrable to a buyer, dependent on what is being sold.

TD asked if hatcheries are no longer being frowned on as much as they have been and questioned if the Fyne should go back to running a hatchery. AKW explained that it was Marine Scotland Science who provide licences to stock, AKW will look into this but is not aware of any changes in the rules that prohibited hatcheries. Hatcheries are a toll. JM asked if hatcheries were useful, AKW explained that they might be a tool in certain set of circumstances that might be useful, however taking natural environment selection into consideration, it is not something you want to be doing long term.

Date of next meeting

TBC