

ARGYLL DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**The Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray**

**TIME: 10.30am**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:** Roger Brook (RB, Chairperson), Robert Younger (RY, Clerk to the ADSFB), Jane Wright (JW), Tim King, Alastair Reynolds (AR), Alan Kettle White (AFT Director, AKW), David Stewart (DS), Jonathan Brown (JB), Caroline Fleming (via Team, CF), Alyssa Stewart (Alyssa, Secretary), Graeme Anderson (GA), Tuggy Delap (TD), Hugh Nicol (HN), Lucy Abel Smith (via Team, LAS), Rebecca Smith (RS, Forestry and Land), Finbarr Rose (FR, Forestry and Land), Callum Strong (CS, Forestry and Land), Duncan MacGillivray (DM, Dunoon Angling Club), Bill Rankin (BR, Dunoon Angling Club), Andrew Barker (AB)

**Apologies:** Jamie Gibbs, Stephen Austin, Gordon Stephens, Ian Tegner

**INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR**

RB welcomed all to the meeting.

JW and RB started the Trust 20 years ago, JW did 90% of the work and RB ended up as chairperson, which did not seem 'fair', but JW has put fantastic work in.

RB is looking forward to working with JW in the future.

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies were noted.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes were approved by DS and seconded by TK.

**BIOLOGIST'S REPORT**

AKW presented the Biologists report which will be circulated with the minutes.

***West Coast Salmon Tracking Project***

This is the second year of the project, the WCSTP identifies inshore marine migration routes of salmon smolts. The 2021 project tracked the smolts migrating from the Etive and Awe took two routes around the West and Sound of Mull, then seemed to spread out more widely.

There is a current that flows past Ireland to the North of Scotland, which seems to be where the fish are heading to 'speed' up their migration.

The map shows other fish migrating from areas such as the Clyde.

It will be interesting to know what happens to the fish from Loch Fyne, Arran, and Kintyre, and whether they migrate West.

RB suggested that if there was data to confirm that the fish from the Loch Fyne migrate west, there would need to be a focus on Clyde fish farm consultations. AKW stated that this year they changed the arrays, so there is a higher intensity of receivers picking up signals from the smolts, there will be more information from the Sound of Mull and Isle of Mull where there is a lot of aquaculture development.

The Awe, Orchy and Loch Linnhe fish seem to go to The Minch.

The data also provides data on how long the fish stay in an area and their likelihood of picking up a lice burden.

JW asked if there were any heads up on the marine renewables and where the projects will be. This is available online on the Scottish Government website, there is a lot of our coast, and have their negative and positives.

The WCSTP report will be updated and published by Atlantic Salmon Trust at Glasgow University around December/January.

HN asked for AK's opinion on the creating of Islands. This is mixed, we need renewables for climate change and the rising temperature of water, creating more habitat for other fish adding to marine life is fine, overall tackling climate change is positive, there may be some pinch points.

#### ***River Awe Downstream Fish Migration***

Identifies issues in relation to hydroelectric generation and is of national importance to demonstrate better ways of operating dams effectively.

Smolts are not the only concern, there are eels and ferox trout in the Awe. SSE and SEPA have to be convinced, as SSE fund the projects, if the barrage was operated effectively there would be more smolts in the Awe.

It is very much a pilot study, RY asked if SEPA understand the importance of the passage of fish during migration. AKW added that the situation has been exacerbated the last few years with drier springs where the fish were 'mulling 'around for 7 days.

There is a major hydro scheme at Loch Awe, HN asked if, because of the hydro schemes, would it be worth taking this barrage away considering that there are other schemes planned. AKW explained that the government schemes should have a no net loss, there is a reliance on the old school hydro schemes, as it stands there is very little 'wiggle 'room.

Government is pushing ahead with windfarms and solar power; the hydro schemes will be a reserve power source. They won't run it according to the seasons but there is a change in the way hydro schemes are seen, using storage of water as a power back up.

#### ***Habitat Improvement – River Goil***

This is a 5-year project, it will not last forever but will give time for the bank to regenerate and recover.

Techniques have improved with the use of a digger and dumper to avoid volunteer burnout, and this year they achieved regenerating 150m with a handful of people.

Forestry and Land Scotland were thanked for providing the brash which was desperately needed.

Thanks was given to the volunteers from the Loch Goil Community Trust and the funding from The Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

### ***River Ruel- Habitat Improvement***

AB has been working on this habitat work with the Trust, which is probably more impacted than the Goil.

Funders were thanked and include the Wild Salmonid Support Fund, River Ruel Improvement Association, SSE and Cruach Wind Farm Trust.

A lot of work has been done higher in the catchment and now concentrating on further down the stream. There is a lot of material ending up in the river.

Brush has been used and willow is there to enable the bank to resprout with new willow.

### ***River Eachaig- Habitat Improvement***

The Eachaig has a severely eroded bank due to the failure of a rock revetment.

Funders were thanked.

The costs of reinstating the bank is huge, the Wild Salmonid Fund was thanked.

AFT will be returning this winter to plant willow. The work completed will prevent further erosion and offer adult fish refuge.

Invasive plants are rife in Cowal.

### ***Dalvuie Burn – Habitat Improvement***

Although it is not a big burn, it is an important stream for spawning sea trout.

The reconfigured condition will be monitored ongoing.

### ***Riverwoods – Habitat Improvement***

Really important piece of work showing water changes in temperature, tackling land that has been grazed for too long and as a result has no shade.

BY asked if beavers become prevalent, will that impact planting. AKW stated that there would have to be a really high number of beavers, if you look at Norway there has not been any big impact from beaver, deer are more of a concern in Argyll.

AFT can't afford to stop this type of work, in 40-50 years there may be no salmon.

RC stated that there is a focus on more work up-stream, however land in Scotland is often leased for 40-50 years, gaining access can be challenging if tenants are reluctant.

It's a case of 'wait and see' to what happens with incentives.

TK added that Loch Goil Trust are working with Riverwoods and landowners to investigate projects ahead of incentives.

The Rain Forest grant should help, managing the deer and pigs is a problem.

There is a lower density of young fish in those areas, the productivity of the habitats, mature broadleaf and leaf litter would result in a larger number of insects, resulting in more invertebrates, which is all food for fish.

These projects need to be embraced.

There was a worthwhile television programme on this week, Riverwoods: Scotland, The Big Picture.

<https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com/riverwoods>

### **Commercial Contract**

A big part of the Trusts contracts is tied up with aquaculture through EMP's.

Thanks was given to AKW. RB added that the work AKW used to do was to help us fish the rivers, now the work is to help the fish in the rivers.

### **DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON AQUACULTURE**

#### **Loch Long Salmon Farm**

The Loch Long Salmon Farm semi-contained fish farm application was rejected last week, those in attendance were impressed by work the Loch Lomond National Park had done.

Arguments discussed were:

The risk of smaller escapes.

Sea Lice was not part of the arguments.

Scenery was the big killer, that really hit home.

Decision making body was the Board of the National Park and was not a political decision.

The Community Councils were split in their notion of for or against.

This may go to appeal with the Scottish Government, as this has been a big expenditure for the fish farmer.

AB asked the views on the semi closed containment, RB explained that the technology is interesting and worthwhile but is not going to be used widely across Scotland. It is not possible to convert existing farms.

The footprint is larger than a 'normal' fish farm.

Dawnfresh went bankrupt and are putting the farms and farm sites up for sale as rainbow trout farms. Loch Etive is unsuitable for salmon farming.

The Upper Clyde is not in the aquaculture zone, and once one farm is there it will be harder to stop others.

RY is going to find out if the options are time limited.

EMPS's came into force 2-3 years ago, whereby AFT monitor the impact of the farm on the surrounding area and its environment. Following the work done by the Salmon Interactions Group, SEPA will take over the role for the planning consent, approving and monitoring and would be responsible for the work they are doing on the EMP's. RB stated that we need to not only be in position to do the monitoring but also show competence in doing the EMP's.

WSSF funding is under question, which wouldn't necessarily affect the profitability of the Trust but may affect the habitat projects. Smaller rivers do not generate enough income to fund habitat improvement.

TK asked if contracted EMP's run into next year. AKW explained that it is not a multiyear contract however AKW does not anticipate that MOWI will go to the third party.

Aquaculture death reports has increased due to climate change, and poor health of the fish.

DS asked why Loch Creran is being closed down for two years, AKW stated that this may be due to a bacterial load, but he has not heard anything officially.

AK presented a report on aquaculture which will be circulated with the minutes.

### ***Loch Etive***

Some data is missing for the sea lice counts as the fish lice numbers are so bad, the farms don't touch these fish. Sampling is not all year round, the red line on the chart indicated what the fish farmers should be aiming for.

### ***Dunstaffnage***

2022 is reasonable, but this is the first year of production.

### ***Loch Creran***

There is a new EMP, haven't been there since 2010.

Lice related mortality is when they are coming back to the river to rid of the lice, which has an impact on reproduction. There are variables that we can't say why all the fish have died.

### ***Firth of Lorn***

Crossover of lice from other farms, which could be affecting Dunstaffnage and the sea lice burdens.

Not a great result for smolts.

### ***Sound of Shuna***

Trialing fyke net as a seine net is not suitable for this area. The fish go in and can't get out, 2nd year of use, better results this year with it whereby 133 trout were sampled.

### ***Loch Fyne***

Really low numbers of fish, which may be because they are behaving normally, not coming back to relieve themselves of lice. AKW expected that numbers will increase next year when it's the second year of farming.

### ***Loch Riddon***

Significant challenge this year. The red bars indicate a large number of fish returning to get rid of the lice.

### ***Carradale***

No challenge for the fish this year, although it was the first year of production.

### ***Firth of Clyde***

Difficult to say what the relationship was however the numbers may relate to the Ardyne.

#### **SUPPORT FOR LOCH LONG FARM**

Discussed earlier in the meeting.

#### **CLERKS REPORT**

The Clerk's report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Seal licencing, no river other than the Nith has seal licenses. There is a lack of understanding on the impact seals have on the river.

RB thanked RY for all his hard work and his contribution to the Board.

#### **LEVY 2023**

The reassessment will not be ready for next year's levy, RB anticipates the levy will remain the same next year.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

RB thanked attendees for all coming/joining online.

RB thanked JW for doing a great job.