

# Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board

## Annual Report 2024

Convener: Roger Brook

Clerk: Robert Younger

Board Members:

Board Members Elected in 2021 for 3-year period	Representing Sub-District
Mrs Caroline Fleming	Arran
Mr Edward Campbell-Preston	Awe
Roger Brook	Awe (Convener)
David Stewart	Creran
Mrs Beth Nicholson	Nell
Dan Edwards	Nell
James Mellor	Nell
Andrew Barker	Ruel
Tuggy Delap	Fyne
<b>Salmon Angling Representatives</b>	
Craig MacIntyre	Loch Fyne Angling Club
<b>Agency Reps</b>	
Rebecca Smith	Forestry Commission
Stephen Austin	Nature Scotland
Tim King	Anglers Representative

### 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 2023

#### 2.1 Catch Statistics for Salmon and Sea Trout in the district in 2023

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RIVER	Argyll Catch 2023				5 yr. Avg. Salmon	5 yr. Avg. Grilse	5 yr. Avg. Sea Trout
	Salmon	Grilse	Sea trout	Finnock			
ADD	8	7	0	0	5.8	3.8	4.2
ARRAN	1	0	14	26	2.6	2.6	14.6
AWE	48	31	0	2	82.2	58.2	15.8
BUTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CLYDE	0	0	0	0	0.2	1	4
CRERAN	0	0	2	0	0.4	0.2	1.4
FYNE	0	14	1	7	0.2	5	47.4
KINTYRE	0	0	4	9	1.6	0	3.4
NELL	1	10	5	9	2	4.2	1.8
RUDEL	0	0	5	12	1.8	2.6	10.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>96.8</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>103.2</b>

### 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.

### 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 is one part-time Water Bailiffs who cover the Ruel sub-district, 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: 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

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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 initiated the Missing Salmon Project, which will investigate the mystery of declining marine survival for salmon. The project aims to work in partnership with 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.

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 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.

## **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 2023 AFT received £24,016 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 West Coast Salmon Tracking Project, downstream Migration Study at the Awe Barrage, sea lice monitoring, adult scale sampling and water temperature monitoring, as well as advising SEPA, Forestry Commission and Scottish and Southern Energy on aquatic issues.

## **2.6 Consented Salmon Stocking Activities**

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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](#).

## 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 are set out in the Clerk's Report.

## 2.8 Meetings

There have been several meetings with Fish Farm companies under the EMP agreements and with Mowi concerning their purchase and plans for the Dawnfresh farms in Lochs Etive and Awe.

## 2.9 Complaints to the Argyll DSFB in 2023

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 2023.

## 2.10 Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)

The Board's interests are represented on the committee of Fisheries Management Scotland (formerly ASFB) by Robert Younger. FMS takes a leading role in advocating the key issues facing the wild fisheries sector with the Scottish Government and others in particular through participation on the Wild Fish Interactions Committee of which Roger is a member alongside Alan Wells.

## 3. Planned Activities for 2024

**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 2023.

- Hold a Public Meeting in March 2024.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting in March 2024.
- Hold a meeting for Argyll DSFB Board members in October 2024.
- 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 2024 in accordance with its budget.
- 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

# Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board

The accounts for 2023 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 2024.

## **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 2024.

## **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 2024**