



RAFTS



Richard Lochhead MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

May 27th 2011

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

We are writing to both you and Richard Benyon in advance of this year's NASCO meeting to urge the UK and Scottish governments to address the threat to salmon management and conservation posed by coastal mixed- stock net fisheries.

The advice from ICES to NASCO and its contracting parties is clear: 'fisheries should only take place on maturing one-sea-winter (1SW) salmon and non-maturing 1SW salmon from rivers where stocks have been shown to be at full reproductive capacity. Furthermore, due to the different status of individual stocks within the stock complex, mixed-stock fisheries present particular threats to stock status.' UK mixed stock fisheries target both maturing one-sea winter and multi-sea winter salmon and despite consistent advice from both ICES and NASCO on the risks posed by mixed stock fisheries, not enough has been done in the UK to reduce the scale of these threats.

In England last year the total net catch was around three times higher than the catch in 2009, almost double the average of the last five years and the highest declared catch since 2002. Because of high levels of catch and release in rod fisheries, coastal mixed stock fisheries were responsible for some 60% of the total fisheries mortality in England. Almost 90% of the net catch was accounted for by the North-East coast mixed stock fisheries. While the use of drift nets in these fisheries is being phased out, there are currently no plans to phase out the coastal fixed engines (T and J nets), which account for well over half the catch.

Many of the salmon taken in the North East coast fisheries will have been returning to Scottish rivers, which are also affected by continuing Scottish mixed stock fisheries. The 2010 statistics are not yet available. However, in 2009, mixed stock fisheries were responsible for almost 35% of the total fisheries mortality. The remaining mortality arising from rod catches, overwhelmingly from single stock fisheries, is being dealt with on a river by river basis through local fishery management structures, consistent with the ICES advice. Where exploitation of these single stock fisheries are being shown to be excessive, voluntary and mandatory catch and release schemes are being successfully implemented. Following the report of the Scottish Mixed Stock Salmon Fisheries Working Group in March 2010, there has still been no response from the Scottish Government.

C/O Atlantic Salmon Trust, Suite 3/11, King James VI Business Centre, Friarton Road,
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In these circumstances, we believe that it is imperative that both governments act now on mixed stock fisheries. If this is not done, the Greenland and Faroese governments, which are already under pressure from their fishermen to resume commercial salmon fishing, will be increasingly reluctant to resist this pressure. There is a very real risk that unless the UK and Scottish governments are seen to be taking more effective action to control catches, there will be a resumption of distant water fishing for salmon on a significant scale, and this could have significant impact on stocks within UK rivers which are struggling to reach conservation limits. This would undo the progress that has been made over the last twenty years to reduce the exploitation of salmon, which in turn has been critical in limiting the impact of lower levels of survival at sea on the number of salmon that survive to spawn.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Knight'.

Paul Knight
Salmon & Trout Association

Ivor Llewelyn
Atlantic Salmon Trust

and on behalf of:

Mark Lloyd - Angling Trust
Arlin Rickard - Association of Rivers Trusts
Alan Wells - Association of Salmon Fishery Boards
Andrew Wallace - Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland

Cc: Richard Benyon