



COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday 14th March 2018, 10:30 -13:00

Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, Pitlochry
DRAFT MINUTES

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies: Simon McKelvey, Alan Wells

Attendees: Alistair Duguid*, Simon Dryden*, James Hunt (Chair)*, Jackie Graham*, Joanna Girvan*, Pamela Esson*, John Armstrong *, Sean Dugan, Iain Malcolm (*committee members)

2. Minutes of previous meeting, review of action points and matters arising

Due to the wide ranging discussions at the last committee meeting, JH went through the previous minutes in detail to ensure they were accurate.

Actions carried forward

SD to organise a meeting or teleconference on snorkelling.

JA to contact Chris Todd regarding a meeting of scale readers from Trusts and MSS to reconcile methods. The priority is to first draft a terms of reference for the meeting. Due to current work pressures within MSS this action may have to be progressed later on in the year. There is a need for SFCC members to link in with international standards and the Marie Curie initiative to bring together staff on topics such as scale imaging.

AW to speak to Fish Legal about electrofishing training and possible liabilities
SD to invoice SEPA early for annual subscription

Salmon distribution mapping

The salmon distribution map will not be opened up broadly this year as there is no resource in place within MSS to deal with updates. However, there is an exception for the Ugie DSFB who had I.T. related trouble contributing updates last year.

ACTION: SD to assist where required.

A meeting was held to reconcile the MSS salmon distribution map with the SEPA Obstacles to fish passage map. This work is currently with the respective GIS teams.

Co-ordinated approach to electrofishing training

In reviewing the previous minutes, JH took the opportunity to discuss delivering electrofishing training on a joined-up basis between SFCC and MSS and promoting national standards.

ACTION: SFCC electrofishing trainers to visit the Girnock Burn to observe MSS electrofishing and report back to the review group.

ACTION: The SFCC electrofishing review group to consider the full process of electrofishing data collection from site selection through to database entry and report back to committee. JGi, JA, AW and SD to then discuss how to move forward for national standards and training.

Fish Counters

ACTION: SD to meet with new Montrose group leader to take forward mapping of potential counter locations.

Matters arising

Salmon Liaison Group

ACTION: SD to meet with Stuart Middlemas to discuss bringing in local data such as fecundity and sex ratio for conservation regulations.

The December meeting minutes were agreed as accurate and were approved

3. **Chairman's report**

JH reported the following activities since the December committee meeting:

- General day-to-day line management of SFCC Manager
- Met with JGi to hand over chairmanship and discuss SFCC priorities going forward.
- Contributed to the SFCC article in the FMS annual review.
- Conducted SD's appraisal with Alan Wells
- Organised the annual biologist's meeting with SD
- Facilitated the SFCC accounts transfer over to FMS
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4. **SFCC Manager's report for December-March**

SD provided a written summary for discussion with key work areas including:

- Joint working with FMS including news items and contribution to FMS annual review
- Service provision to SFCC members including mapping and database support
- Delivery of a mapping training course at Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust for 7 attendees
- Organising the biologists' meeting with JH
- Contributing to the development of the Fisheries Management Plan Template
- Facilitating the supply of SFCC electrofishing data for national assessment
- Collating information on fish counters
- Facilitating data contributions by SFCC members for the following: ICES sea trout working group, Adaptive Management of Barriers in European Rivers and Queen Mary University of London.
- Facilitating the trial of the MSS FishObs data entry tool for 4 SFCC members
- Administering the Wild Fisheries Forum

ACTION: SFCC committee to continue to use and publicise the forum

ACTION: SD to encourage members to contribute regularly

5. **SFCC 2018 objectives**

An objectives discussion document was circulated prior to the meeting. Committee provided positive feedback on the suggested objectives for the year with all objectives being agreed. SDr and SD are holding a FMPt meeting with SEPA on 27th of March. Thereafter the aim is to get 5 DSFB's to trial the salmon pressures tool.

Committee discussed the need for SFCC to aim for full membership coverage and in particular the need to get all Trusts contributing electrofishing data to the database. There are particular areas with a lack of electro-fishing data, particularly on the West Coast. Committee discussed the planned national electrofishing programme in summer 2018 and viewed this as a good opportunity to encourage non-member Trusts to contribute new data and become members.

ACTION: JGi to consider approaching Flow Country, Lochaber and Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust about membership.

6. **Finance**

Committee agreed that the annual membership subscription is maintained at £1200 and agreed the budget proposed by JH

7. **SFCC Electrofishing Review**

JGi introduced the aims of the review and is intending to commence the work next week with the bulk of the work carried out before the end of June.

Some actions can be taken forward by email and some require face-to-face meetings.

There may also be a need to liaise more widely with others beyond the review group at a later stage.

ACTION: SD to ensure that Inverness College and SFCC are using the same version of the electrofishing manual and that it is changes to white pages (not yellow).

Iain Malcolm (IM) (Marine Scotland Science) joined the meeting. IM suggested that SFCC should not have detail on survey design and power analysis in the training manual and suggested that it should only contain elements assessed in the exam.

ACTION: Text on the basic principles of survey design to be added to the manual.

ACTION: Further reading list to be updated within the manual with input from IM.

JGi encouraged Trusts to strive for excellence in electrofishing data collection and reporting. Trusts need to be able to compete with the likes of APEM and be in a position to comment on contractual work of others. IM mentioned that MSS could improve the insight and outputs from Trust's electrofishing work by providing model outputs and associated errors. MSS's juvenile models can be enhanced in future by the adoption of a rigorous survey design. These benefits are only available to SFCC members who have contributed data.

8. National Electrofishing Programme 2018

MSS have a long-term aim of developing a national juvenile assessment tool to complement the current adult-based conservation status assessment.

SDr outlined plans for a funded national electrofishing programme in summer 2018, with up to £192,000 potentially available for electrofishing in the next financial year. SNH have agreed in principle to provide £66,000 and there is an outstanding bid to SEPA to match with £66,000. Up to 27 geographical regions could be funded, within which there will be a strategic sampling design with 30 sites in 2018 (10 multi-pass and 20 single-pass) and up to £12,000 available per region. Potential funding would be based on 15 days of work at £800 per day including database entry. There may also be further sites to survey in SAC rivers.

Committee welcomed these proposals

Database entry

Committee then debated where best to enter and store this new data with the options being the SFCC database or the MSS Fish Observations (FishObs) database. Biologist members of committee felt that this project presented a potential opportunity to encourage non-members (such as Lochaber and Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust) to input data into the SFCC database and become members.

Flow Country Fisheries Trust, being a non-SFCC member will be asked to input the data into the MSS FishObs database. Most importantly, the data is entered into one of the two databases. Currently, the main impediment to the use of FishObs is that Trusts cannot access the database directly due to network restrictions to export their data back out. Data export would have to be done through MSS. AD and JG stressed the value of the SFCC database to its members in terms of the automated access to a range of outputs. Ideally in future FishObs would have an online login developed for SFCC members.

Freedom of Information

Committee also debated issues around SFCC data held by MSS potentially being subject to Freedom of Information (FOI). If an FOI request was made, then it is up to Trusts to demonstrate that the data has a commercial value to prevent its release.

ACTION: IM and AD to reconcile guidance provided to MSS and SEPA respectively on FOI.

ACTION: SFCC members to input data into SFCC database for 2018 national electrofishing programme.

ACTION: Committee to further consider how non-SFCC members could best contribute data.

ACTION: SD to circulate IM electrofishing talks from the biologists meeting to the membership.

Strategic Electrofishing Survey Design

IM shared draft survey design maps with the Spey and Dee for comment. Some issues were identified such as very high altitude sites that are impractical to sample. The design is currently weighted by wetted areas and IM is now looking to weight it towards areas where salmon are present using the juvenile density model. By the end of March MSS plan to have draft sample

designs available for all regions. A map (potentially using the SFCC online map), Google Earth link, and spreadsheet will be provided.

ACTION: IM to work with SD to put the points onto a web map with the Ordnance Survey basemaps.

The following process is intended:

- Trusts would then respond identifying any sites that cannot be accessed or fished safely, or sites that are above a barrier not currently identified in SEPA dataset.
- By end April/May consultation about designs is to be concluded.
- Data collection protocols and data storage requirements will then be issued by MSS

The design for each region is intended to include 130 sites in total over a 10 year period. Within the 10 year cycle there will be a 3 year rotation. Trusts can add additional samples to the 30 to meet local needs where local resources are available.

ACTION: IM to consider circulating multiple years of designs so Trusts can see further ahead.

Committee agreed upon the need to sell this approach to the Trusts and Boards and to approach them as soon as possible. It is unlikely that there will be scope for any major changes to the design. Implementing these new approaches to electrofishing site selection will provide more robust juvenile population assessments. A report is to be produced by the end of the current year around how juvenile models could be brought in to conservation status assessments.

AD noted that if SEPA are part funding then they may wish to have some input on the design such as coverage of baseline waterbodies.

ACTION: Electrofishing sub-group to be re-convened to update on this work and to provide a progress update on the national juvenile models. The SFCC electrofishing review group could also be scheduled to meet on the same day.

9. 2018 Biologists' Meeting Feedback

Committee provided positive feedback on the 20th annual meeting including the following key points:

- Very positive atmosphere.
- Good attendance from the Lab.
- Correct balance achieved between local and national contributions.
- Local 5 minute updates were again a highlight with good humour and tone.
- SFCC Members continue to value and appreciate the chance to come together each year.
- Invitation of Norwegian guest speaker was commended

10. Date of next meetings:

20th June, 10th October, 4th December

11. AOB (SD left the meeting for these discussions)

A request was made to committee from SD in writing to join the NASCO West Greenland Salmon Sampling Programme in 2018. Including travel time, this would amount to around 20 days. When not working on the sampling programme, SD could continue SFCC administration and general work through internet access and the use of the SFCC laptop. Committee discussed the allocation of days to SFCC as work time and as leave. The proposal to SD from committee (which he has agreed to) is that for the 20 day period, potentially 6 days cover weekends, leaving 14 working days, 10 of which will be registered to SFCC and 4 taken as leave. Within the 10 days registered to SFCC, SD will carry out SFCC working activities when not carrying out sampling and will maintain a blog. JGi to let members know about this arrangement closer the time.

SFCC Manager Pay Review

JH summarised to committee the arrangements to-date using the Scottish Government pay review system and the importance of perception from the membership regarding the wage for SD. Committee discussed whether to continue with the SG system or follow a system whereby the employer, Fisheries Management Scotland, reviewed SD's pay on an annual basis and makes a recommendation to the SFCC committee. Committee agreed that the pay review is now carried out by Fisheries Management Scotland making a recommendation to the SFCC committee on an annual basis. For the next year (starting April 2018), the FMS recommendation is for a 2% wage increase, with the respective increase in pension contribution, which committee endorsed. This system of pay review is consistent with SD's contract.