



**Association of
Salmon Fishery Boards**



News Release

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ASFB and RAFTS call for a greater focus on climate change adaptation strategies for salmon and sea trout

As widely predicted the Durban UN Conference on Climate Change (COP17) has failed to reach a legally-binding global agreement on pollution, with talks on a new legal deal not due to end until 2015 and with a further delay until 2020 before the implementation of any agreed emission limits. The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) believe that this highlights the need for a greater focus on the needs of species sensitive to climate change, such as Atlantic salmon and sea trout, and their requirement to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Dr Alan Wells, ASFB Policy and Planning Director said "Clearly, the first priority in mitigating the effects of climate change is to control atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. While we must continue our attempts to mitigate the impacts of climate change, we must now put more focus on the development and implementation of robust strategies to help us adapt to those impacts which are now inevitable, and indeed are now becoming apparent. There is widespread agreement that a key strategy for managing adaptation of species sensitive to climate change, such as Atlantic salmon and sea trout, is to minimise *additional* man-made pressures."

Alan Wells continued, "In the specific case of Atlantic salmon and sea trout, this involves concentrating on those factors which fishery managers and the Scottish Government jointly can address. These include the improvement of degraded freshwater habitat, removal of barriers to migration, reduction in exploitation where necessary¹, ensuring marine and terrestrial renewables are deployed in an environmentally sensitive and well-informed manner and addressing the negative effects of salmon farming."

Callum Sinclair, RAFTS Director said, "In addition to the more obvious suite of environmental pressures, climate change is likely to encourage and hasten the spread of invasive non-native species across Scotland to take advantage of more favourable climatic conditions and lead to the extension or shift of species ranges. This increases the risk of impact to our important native species and habitats from these invaders".

Callum Sinclair added, "The individual river and fishery trusts and district salmon fishery boards are taking a range of practical fishery and catchment management actions to improve the lot of the Atlantic salmon, our rivers their habitats and native species and to control both the invasive species already present and halt the spread of new invaders. From the development and implementation of Fishery Management and Biosecurity Plans to the development of large control programmes such as the Scottish Mink Initiative the wild fish sector is recognising and playing its important role in species, habitat and catchment management in Scotland."

ENDS

¹ District Salmon Fishery Boards have voluntarily adopted 'catch and release' practices, which in some cases are made mandatory by the introduction of Salmon Conservation Regulations. In 2010, the overall catch and release rate for salmon was 70%, rising to 86% for spring salmon.

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Editors' Notes

The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards is the representative body for Scotland's 41 District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs) including the River Tweed Commission (RTC), who have a statutory responsibility to protect and improve salmon and sea trout fisheries. Conservation of fish stocks, and the habitats on which they depend, is essential and many DSFBs operate riparian habitat enhancement schemes and have voluntarily adopted 'catch and release' practices, which in some cases are made mandatory by the introduction of Salmon Conservation regulations. ASFB create policies that seek where possible to protect wider biodiversity and the environment as well as enhancing the economic benefits for our rural economy that result from angling.

www.asfb.org.uk

Formed in 2005, Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) is an independent freshwater conservation charity representing Scotland's national network of 25 Rivers and Fisheries Trusts and Foundations. Our members work across over 90% of Scotland's freshwaters to protect and develop our native fish stocks and populations by undertaking a range of activities including freshwater, river habitat restoration, fish and fisheries monitoring, research and education programmes. RAFTS is the membership organisation of the fisheries and rivers trusts operating in Scotland and is, itself, a charity and company limited by guarantee.

www.rafts.org.uk

Scottish Mink Initiative (www.scottishmink.org.uk)

The Scottish Mink Initiative is a partnership led by RAFTS on behalf of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the University of Aberdeen, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and 15 other organisations. It is the result of a £920,000 investment in native wildlife conservation from organisations including; SNH, Tubney Charitable Trust and the Scottish Government LEADER 2007 - 2013 Programme and builds upon the success of previous mink control projects in the Cairngorms National Park, Highlands and north east Scotland. The project aim is to secure multiple adjacent river catchments as areas free of breeding mink, protecting native wildlife, such as water voles, ground nesting birds and economically important populations of game fish and birds, to help protect local economic stability for the benefit of local communities.

The effects of climate change on river ecosystems are now becoming apparent. River temperatures have increased over the last 20–30 years in upland Scotland by up to 1°C per decade in ways that reflect global trends in air temperature. The developmental rate of Atlantic salmon is directly related to water temperature, and increasing temperature in freshwater may result in smolts developing more rapidly and entering the ocean at a suboptimal time in relation to their planktonic food sources. It is clear that survival of salmon and sea trout during their marine migration phase has fallen over the last 40 years. Some of this reduced survival can be explained by changes in sea surface temperature and subsequent contraction of feeding grounds.

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