



Association of
Salmon Fishery Boards



News Release

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Wild fishery bodies express deep concern over beaver impasse

Scotland's leading wild fishery organisations, the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) and the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS), have re-iterated their opposition to the continuing presence of feral beavers in Tayside. This follows today's announcement (on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme) by Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, that he will not – at this time – sanction their removal.

Dr Alan Wells, Policy and Planning Director for ASFB, said: "As the Minister has accepted, the beavers in Tayside have been introduced or released irresponsibly, and almost certainly illegally, in contravention of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines for species introductions. It is highly regrettable that these animals – of unknown origin and disease status – were not removed as soon as their presence was identified".

Dr Wells continued: "We do appreciate however that the failure to take swift remedial action has placed the Minister in an invidious position. We will, to the best of our ability, support him and his agencies in monitoring and managing the Tayside beaver population".

Andrew Wallace, Chairman of RAFTS, added: "It must be recognised that the current situation undermines the credibility of the Knapdale trial. We support the idea that the feral population within the Tay catchment should be managed as suggested but believe that any animals detected outside the catchment should be removed forthwith and without prevarication to prevent any further spread and thus any further damage to the Knapdale trial".

Dr David Summers, Director of the Tay District Salmon Fishery Board, said: "The Tayside beaver saga highlights the importance of ensuring that the law is strengthened to ensure that animals kept in captivity are traceable and that the highest standards of containment are adopted to prevent escapes".

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Notes for editors

1. The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) 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 creates policies that seek where possible to protect wider biodiversity and our environment as well as enhancing the economic benefits for our rural economy that result from angling. www.asfb.org.uk
2. 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. Its 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