2016
ANNUAL REVIEW

ASSOCIATION OF SALMON FISHERY BOARDS
(ASFB)

RIVERS AND FISHERIES TRUSTS OF SCOTLAND
(RAFTS)

STRUTT & PARKER

Contents

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), which have a statutory responsibility to protect and improve salmon and sea trout fisheries. The Association and Boards work to create the environment in which sustainable fisheries for salmon and sea trout can be enjoyed. 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 the environment as well as enhancing the economic benefits for our rural economy that result from salmon and sea trout fisheries.

Formed in 2005, Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) is an independent freshwater conservation charity representing Scotland's national network of 26 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 river habitat restoration, fish and fisheries monitoring, research and education programmes. RAFTS is the membership organisation of the network of rivers Trusts operating in Scotland and is, itself, a charity and company limited by guarantee.

Cover: shoal of arctic char

Chairmen's introductions

ANDREW WALLACE - *RAFTS* / ALASDAIR LAING - *ASFB*

2015 was an extremely busy year for both ASFB and RAFTS, not only managing the ongoing business of both organisations, but also dealing with the increasing momentum of the Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR) process. In recent years, both organisations have endeavoured to work ever more closely to try and make best use of increasingly scarce resources. This jointly published Review, our annual conference and our shared office and staff resources bear witness to the success of those efforts. Last year saw that relationship develop further through the formation of the RAFTS/ASFB Joint Working Group (JWG), set up to provide a coordinated response to the very considerable demands of the WFR process.

We are both delighted to report that the JWG is working extremely well. By feeding informed, evidence-based ideas into the WFR we feel we have reached a position, as we move into the legislative period, where the sector has had a really constructive influence on proceedings. This collaboration has inevitably not always been an easy one and there have been occasions when it has been necessary to draw attention to some of the significant problems which WFR has created. Examples of this include the Conservation Limits exercise, during which we have welcomed the general principles but over which we have some remaining serious reservations about methodology, application and implementation.

Other areas of concern include the likely availability of funding to support the fisheries management requirements set out in the WFR agenda. It is becoming increasingly clear that, unless reliable additional funding sources can be found to augment the salmon levy, the proposed fisheries management organisation (FMO) network will be extremely hard to deliver. This issue is a matter of ongoing discussion with Government and we believe that we have a sufficiently constructive and influential relationship with them to be sure that they are both listening to and reacting to our concerns. Clearly this is not always perfect!

The draft legislation and accompanying consultation will now have been launched and, with the prospect of a Bill being published late this year or next, there remains a great deal of work to do to ensure that the legislation is technically sound and that the experience of stakeholders, at the coal face, is listened to. This has required a lot of travelling to meetings around the country which we both remain committed to continuing. We also now believe that the RAFTS/ASFB collaboration needs to be developed a step further and that some form of more formal joint working, under full time joint executive management control, is required – not only to conduct existing business more efficiently, but also to ensure that there is proper oversight of the legislative process and the transitional arrangements from the current Board/Trust system to the unitary FMO system. This will be discussed and hopefully implemented in the next few months.

We also need to mention the highly variable performance of Scotland's migratory fisheries last year – with a strong start to the year in some areas (in some places very strong), which tailed off rapidly in the summer and autumn. The 2015 catch statistics will be an improvement on 2014, but not overly encouraging, and there is, as ever, no cause for complacency. There are still no quick fixes to the salmon stock problem, however seductive the promises of some.

Finally, we owe a huge debt of thanks to the staff of both organisations, who have worked extremely hard throughout the year and who have stepped up to the challenge of dealing with all the problems created by extra workload and the high degree of uncertainty about the future. We must also thank our respective members who have faced similar problems at catchment level, sometimes with serious stock crisis problems on top of everything else. Our colleagues in Scottish Government and its agencies all deserve mention for continuing their routine work and the many productive partnerships we are all involved in, despite the ongoing downward pressure on their budgets. And our thanks must also go to our many other long term supporters, such as the Fishmongers' Company and the Atlantic Salmon Trust, with whom we believe there are some exciting prospects ahead.

We look forward to a challenging year and let us all hope for improving runs of migratory salmon and sea trout, which continue to be the economic engine for our management policies.

ASFB/RAFTS acknowledges and thanks the Fishmongers' Company for their support

Worshipful Company of Fishmongers

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Directors' reports

BRIAN DAVIDSON - *Director, ASFB* / CHRIS HORRILL - *Director, RAFTS*

The past year has been one of change and opportunity, due to the start of the Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR) process as well as the preparation of the second cycle of the River Basin Management Plans. There have also been a number of changes within RAFTS and ASFB but we have, through working more closely together, and with our respective members, undertaken a significant amount of policy and advocacy work, as well as project management and development.

Governance and staff

There were no changes to the composition of the RAFTS Board. ASFB welcomed Alister Jack, Chairman of the Annan DSFB, to its Management Committee during 2015. In terms of staffing, Alan Wells, the Policy Director of ASFB, has been seconded to Scottish Government to provide advice on the WFR process and Brian Davidson is now with ASFB full time as Director. Since the last Review, RAFTS recruited a Barriers Programme Officer (PO) and a Project Development Officer for the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative. We have also entered into service contracts for management of work on the Almond barriers and the evaluation of members' work on invasive non-native species. The Barrier PO was recently replaced through a secondment from the private sector. Severe public sector funding cuts resulted in the loss of the Scottish Mink Initiative (SMI) Coordinator post and the post-holder, Ann-Marie McMaster, which was very much regretted by RAFTS and its members. We wish Anne-Marie well in the future and thank her for all her hard work over recent years.

Policy and advocacy

In terms of policy and representing members, 2015 was another interesting and challenging year for ongoing work with: the WFR process; proposals for salmon conservation measures; and formulation and delivery of the second cycle of River Basin Management Plans.

River Findhorn.

Wild Fisheries Reform – Last year saw the Wild Fisheries Review change to Wild Fisheries Reform. This was initiated in Spring 2015 with an extensive consultation exercise. Both ASFB and RAFTS submitted responses formulated through discussions, meetings and extensive engagement with members and Scottish Government, Scottish Government also established the Stakeholder Reference Group in which both ASFB and RAFTS are active members. To better harness the expertise and experience of the network, RAFTS and ASFB established a Joint Working Group to provide technical input to the WFR process. The active involvement of RAFTS, ASFB and their members in the process has demonstrated that the input of the existing Board and Trust network has been critical to shaping the future fishery management landscape. We anticipate that 2016 will bring further clarity to the WFR initiative and the extremely important business of implementing an effective transition process to the new system. ASFB and RAFTS have issued a regular stream of briefings and bulletins on this process – to avoid replicating detail here these can be viewed on the WFR pages on both websites.

Salmon conservation measures – 2015 saw the launch of two consultation exercises on new regulations for salmon conservation. The first, launched in February 2015, would have made it an offence to kill wild Atlantic salmon without a licence granted by Scottish Ministers. A carcass tagging provision would have also required all fish lawfully taken to be marked with a numbered tag. Whilst ASFB, RAFTS and members fully support conservation, many challenged the workability of such a scheme (particularly in the rod fishery). In response to concerns the proposals were revised and issued for further consultation in October 2015.

The revised scheme proposed to establish conservation limits (CLs) for all rivers, using them to categorise all fisheries according to their likelihood of meeting or failing to meet those limits. It also prohibited, on a time-limited basis, all salmon exploitation outwith estuary limits. Whilst generally supporting the underlying principle of a 'conservation limit' approach, members were concerned about the quality of data that is informing the proposed limits, and thereby the river categorisations, as well the impact on management of fisheries. A working group, involving biologists from the network and Marine Scotland Science, has been established to improve the quality of the data informing the process. However, the current categorisation will have fundamental implications for Category 3 rivers, where statutory catch and release of Atlantic salmon will be introduced from 1 April. ASFB, RAFTS and members remain concerned about the pace at which these proposals are being introduced and the implications for rivers, resources to enforce these measures and how these might impact on anglers' confidence and perceptions in terms of the categorisations of rivers.

Enforcement, training and associated partnerships – ASFB continues to lead and engage on a variety of activities relating to fisheries enforcement and associated training. The Bailiff Development Group has met regularly and has been focusing on issues around enforcement and future changes as a result of reform. ASFB is working closely with the Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) to develop ideas for a system of continuous professional development which will help map out roles, skill-sets and associated training provision for the future. The annual bailiff's examination has proved to be very successful in ensuring that individuals can demonstrate a basic level of knowledge and

competence to exercise powers of law enforcement. However, it is clear that the reform process presents a good opportunity to review how we assess competencies and one priority will be to consider how the bailiff examination might evolve and be refined to reflect the new management system. The Annual Bailiffs' Conference continues to be supported by ASFB and IFM, and we are grateful to the DSFBs for hosting this on a regional basis each year. The Ness Board hosted the 2015 event, and the 2016 conference will be hosted:y the Nith Board. ASFB is now a full member of the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAW). This will aid a more co-ordinated and inclusive approach to ensuring fisheries crime and associated enforcement are considered, with other wildlife crime, at the highest level in the Scottish legal and criminal justice system.

Consultations

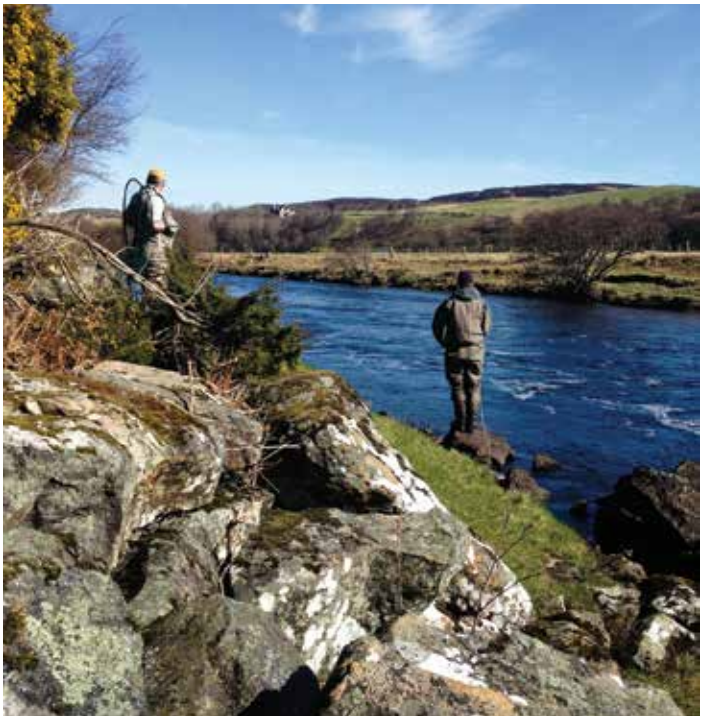
Over the course of the last year, RAFTS and ASFB have worked with members to submit consultation responses to the Scotland RBMP, the Solway Tweed RBMP, Wild Fisheries Reform proposals, salmon conservation proposals and also responded to a variety of local renewables proposals.

Programmes and projects

RAFTS continues to work with its members in the management of 12 medium-large scale barrier easement and removal projects, two of which are now managed by members with support from RAFTS. We are also developing a Guidance Document and Training Programme to support Fishery Trusts (and eventually Fisheries Management Organisations) in managing river restoration projects within their own catchments. More details of this work in given in a dedicated article on pages 12-13.

Invasive non-native species

Work on invasive non-native species continued in 2015 despite the withdrawal of funding for the Scottish Mink Initiative (SMI) as a result of the Scottish Government not approving the business case for its continuation. This was despite evidence that current levels of mink activity across the SMI area are at less than a third of those recorded in the first years of coordinated mink control. Analysis of long-term data in four test catchments shows decimated populations (circa 6% of original abundance) after 10 years.



Spring on the Naver. Image by Jack Elles.

Similarly impressive results have been shown for work on INN plant species (INNPS). Following treatment, reductions (including cleared sites) in coverage across Trust areas have been between 53%-75% for giant hogweed (GH), 19%-90% for Himalayan balsam (HB) and 42%-100 % for Japanese knotweed (JK). 38% (HB), 49% (JK) and 50% (GH) of infested sites achieved a minimal maintenance state (10 % coverage).

The work by Trusts on INNS was undertaken with the assistance of over 700 volunteers and also included dedicated awareness raising schemes and publicity events.

We are still working on securing past, present and future work on mink and invasive non-native plants through the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative. If our application is successful, this 4 year £3 million project aims to establish low cost, community-based and strategic INNS management over approximately 29,500 km^2 of northern Scotland. It will build on good practice from the SMI and other projects and will provide a blueprint for future INNS management in Scotland. We will also be seeking funding to continue work by Trusts on INNS outside of the SISI area.

Pearls in Peril

2015 saw the realisation of six large scale instream restoration works in the Dee and South Esk catchments and installation of small tree enclosures to provide shade, woody debris and bank stabilisation in the South Esk and Dee catchments continued. Although the project is due to end in September, there is the possibility of a short extension and this is being investigated by the project partners. The project officers are looking forward to continue their successful working partnerships with Fisheries Trusts and landowners. More details of work undertaken in 2015 are given on pages 14-15.

The future

2015 has been a year of significant challenges to both ASFB and RAFTS. There has been the crucial work associated with representing members' interests in, and providing technical information to, the WFR process, conservation limits and River Basin Management Planning. The landscape in which we are operating is not only being influenced by the WFR but also by changing funding conditions and opportunities. Funding cuts in the public sector have already been felt and there may be further changes, not only in the level of funding but also in how it is provided.

Despite these changes we have been able to maintain a significant project portfolio, increased the management of that portfolio by members and also provide extra funding to members. Furthermore, there are still project development opportunities that are yet to be secured and pursued. As reported last year, many of these opportunities are in fields such as river restoration, climate change mitigation and natural flood risk management. However, our success in securing these opportunities will also depend on the direction of the WFR process and, particularly, the scope of fisheries management.

We expect more of the same in terms of meeting the many challenges we face with increasingly scarce resources. As such, ASFB and RAFTS will endeavour to continue to work efficiently and, where appropriate, more closely with each other and our members in order to meet the challenges of 2016 and beyond.

Wild Fisheries Reform

DR ALAN WELLS
Wild Fisheries Reform Team, Marine Scotland

On 8th February Dr Aileen McLeod, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, launched the consultation on draft provisions for a Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill and a draft Wild Fisheries Strategy – the latest phase of the Wild Fisheries Reform programme.

The consultation reaffirms the Scottish Government's commitment to modernise our fishery management structures and to establish the foundations of a more secure and sustainable future for this vital sector.

The draft Bill has been developed following extensive collaboration and consultation with stakeholders. They have been informed by the Report of the Wild Fisheries Review Panel – our 2015 consultation on the management principles which underpin the design of the new system – and by extensive input from the Stakeholder Reference Group[1]. and National Wild Fisheries Strategy Development Group[2]. The work of these bodies has also been augmented by the valuable input of the Joint Working Group, which was established by ASFB and RAFTS.

It is important to emphasise that we have taken the conscious decision not to consult on a draft Bill in its entirety. That position has been taken in light of the further work that still has to be completed on a number of areas, all of which are clearly identified and explained within the consultation document. What is clear, is that there remains considerable scope to influence and shape the process and we encourage all those with an interest in fish, fisheries and their habitats to continue to engage positively.

National Wild Fisheries Strategy

A key recommendation of the above Report was that the proposed National Unit should be required to produce and keep under review a National Wild Fisheries Strategy. This is a key component of the plan-based approach, which will form the cornerstone of the future fisheries management system. The draft strategy was developed by the cross-sectoral National Wild Fisheries Strategy Development Group.
The draft strategy has four overarching objectives:

- Providing comprehensive protection and improvement of Scottish freshwater fish and the habitats they depend on.
- Promoting effective, evidence-based fishery management through integrated data-gathering, research and dissemination.
- Identifying and maximising societal benefits from sustainable fisheries.
- The promotion of angling as a recreational and tourism activity.

To assist in the successful delivery of the objectives, we are developing a strategic framework around the themes of protecting and growing the resource, science and research, partnership and engagement and promotion.

The draft strategy will be developed further during the consultation process and part of this process will be to ensure that the strategy provides an effective operational planning framework for local fishery management organisations.

[1] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/refgroup
[2] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/nationalstrategy

Draft provisions for a Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill

The current Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation)(Scotland) Act has its roots in legislation from the 1860s and 1950s. The legislative framework predates the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive and has been extensively amended, most recently in 2008 and 2013, but is often considered to be inconsistent and challenging to enforce.

The provisions for a draft Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Act are the first steps in developing a management structure which adopts a consistent all-species approach. The draft provisions are split into four parts:

Part 1 – Administration and management of wild fisheries

Part 1 sets out the Scottish Ministers' powers and responsibilities within the new system, and explains the process by which local management bodies, Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs), will be established, in addition to a series of good governance requirements. It also sets out detail of the proposed plan-led approach, through local fisheries management plans and a National Wild Fisheries Strategy, and sets out powers to finance the new fisheries management system in relation to a wild fisheries levy.

Part 2 – Regulation of wild fishing and fisheries

Part 2 prescribes the methods of fishing which are allowable, and includes powers to create conservation measures for all species of freshwater fish, controls on fishing, and a licensing scheme. Technical issues – such as offences and authorisations for introductions and activities which would otherwise be illegal (such as electrofishing) – are still under development.

Part 3 – Enforcement

Part 3 will set out the appointment process and powers of water bailiffs and fishery wardens – we are consulting on a limited number of sections relating to the former, while the latter are still under development.

Part 4 – General

Part 4 defines certain terms for the purposes of the provisions. You are encouraged to consider these before you comment on the specific questions. An important aspect of any new legislation is the transitional arrangement in moving from the current to the future system. Additional work on this will be progressed by a group reporting to the Stakeholder Reference Group.

Vital aspects of the draft legislation, which is still under development, are the various offences (Part 2 of the draft provisions) and the powers to enforce these offences (Part 3 of the draft provisions). We want to ensure that the regulatory framework is clear, fit for purpose and enforceable. We will look at the powers of enforcement officers in parallel with the work on offences. We recognise that enforcement is a significant aspect of the legislation and we are committed to develop our thinking in partnership with practitioners and the wider sector, to ensure legislation with long term value.

Next steps

The consultation closes on 2nd May. Up to then we will continue to develop our thinking, including through online topic-specific mini consultations. In addition, we intend to establish a number of Technical Advisory Groups to inform specific areas of policy, including the crucial issue of change management/transitional arrangements and the development of a fisheries management plan template. Following the Scottish Parliamentary elections, we will continue to develop the legislative provisions before a Bill is introduced in the new Parliamentary session.

We encourage everyone to continue to play an active part in the discussions, either directly with the wild fisheries reform team and/or through your representatives in the various stakeholder groups.

If you wish to receive news and updates, please send your contact details to SalmonandRecreationalFisheries@gov.scot

The Atlantic Salmon Trust – a new beginning

ALASDAIR LAING
Chairman, ASFB

In 2017 the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) will be celebrating its 50th birthday and, in response to this significant milestone in the history of one of the most enduring and independent charities devoted to the conservation of the King of Fish, it has undergone some significant changes in personnel and is conducting a thorough review of its objectives, partnerships and priorities.

New AST CEO, Sarah Bayley Slater

Robbie Douglas Miller, a businessman and owner of fishings on the Oykel and Shin, has taken over the chairmanship and has appointed an impressive new Board with a wide range of experience and skills. As of April of this year, Sarah Bayley Slater will be taking over as full time Chief Executive of the Trust. Sarah is well known to the Scottish salmon management scene, having worked at Inverness College UHI and having played a key role in the development of Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS). She brings with her a wealth of experience, excellent contacts and a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject.

In 1967 it was concerns over an unsustainable level of domestic exploitation, combined with large numbers of wild salmon being killed by commercial fisheries in Greenland and the Faroes, plus the devastating impact of UDN, that provided the incentive to form the AST. The control of both high seas and coastal nets, over subsequent years, bears testament to the importance of that work and it is therefore both appropriate and timely that the AST should now be embarking on a new beginning.

The 'Three Pillars' strategy is the conclusion reached by the AST board after discussion within the Trust and with its various partners. These pillars cover the whole range of the salmon's life history: the ocean, the coastal zone and the freshwater environment. Each pillar focuses on key issues affecting salmon and sea trout and what scientists, governments, regulators and fishery managers can do to address them. Details of the Trust's policies in fresh water, coastal and estuarial waters and the ocean can be found on the AST website: *http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/*.

But the world in which the AST now operates is a far cry from that which existed when it was founded – long before the emergence of modern Fishery Boards, the Fisheries Trust network and a complex web of NGOs. As a consequence, AST is sensibly conducting a 'gap analysis' to try and identify where its staff, resources, experience and reputation can most usefully be applied to complement the vast amount of work being conducted by both public and private sector bodies in most parts of the salmon's range. Its focus on these gaps and its reputation for securing and developing effective partnerships will be the key to its success.

It is widely recognised that the freshwater and catchment management part of the salmon's life in the UK is now a crowded field – some might say too crowded. The Trust still has a significant role to play in that arena, particularly with its focus on the development of high quality science.

However, it is both logical and welcome that the AST is prioritizing the area where there is currently an absence of information, a paucity of understanding and a gaping need for co-ordination. Why is the Atlantic salmon getting into such trouble when they leave our rivers? Where is this mortality happening, why is it happening and what can we do about it?

While in 1967 the Trust focused on the biggest issue of the day – high seas and coastal net fisheries – now it is focusing its efforts on the even more daunting challenge of understanding what is, without doubt, currently the biggest factor affecting salmon abundance.

Over 49 years AST has organized conferences, symposia, seminars and workshops to raise awareness and mobilize the scientific and fishery management communities. It has spawned the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) and has assisted the growing network of fishery biologists that now run most DSFBs in Scotland and the network of Rivers Trusts throughout the UK. This aspect of the Trust's work is arguably the biggest contribution it has made to salmon conservation.

Its strategy has been to use public discussion to identify issues, agree plans for action which then lead to research projects and ultimately to hard evidence to influence and inform management decisions. It is therefore very reassuring that the Trust is now bringing its talents, resources and reputation to bear on what is unquestionably the biggest ticket issue of the salmon story today – the fate of our salmon when they leave our rivers.

Dusk on the River Tweed.

Enforcement evolves

JIM HENDERSON
Chairman, ASFB Water Bailiff Development Group

In the wake of the Wild Fisheries Reform process, those involved in fisheries enforcement have taken an inward look and are seeking to evolve so they can play a participative role in future fisheries management. So how is this being achieved?

Following the initial review, the Scottish Government has consulted widely on the subject of Wild Fisheries Reform with all key stakeholders and the Water Bailiffs continue to have their say on reform proposals via their representative organisation, the ASFB Water Bailiff Development Group.

It's fair to say that Scottish bailiffs met the Wild Fisheries Review with some suspicion and trepidation, fearing for their future within the new Fishery Management Organisations (FMOs) that were proposed. But, despite those initial fears and the concerns that inevitably accompany any form of change, the sector has since engaged positively with the Government and looked at the potential for the reform process to bring about benefits and opportunities for those currently employed and for future career developments.

So, do Bailiffs still have a role to play? Most certainly! Many of the plans and initiatives proposed to manage fish in the future will require policing and it is widely accepted that a failure to enforce regulations will result in a loss of fish. Proposals such as banning the taking of salmon in nets beyond the estuarial limits of rivers will require policing. In the recent categorisation of rivers, anglers will be required to comply with 100% catch & release regulations on some systems and new regulations require the presence of Bailiffs to ensure compliance.

The examples given above are relatively straightforward to police, but other initiatives intended to conserve salmon stocks are more subtle in nature and require the specialist knowledge of the Bailiff to ensure compliance.

Removing illegal gill nets.

It is possible that there may be fishing tackle restrictions as Scotland moves away from a traditional "catch & kill" to a more modern "catch & release" ethos. As this system evolves, it may be the case that some traditional baits and lures may not be permitted and it will be for the Bailiffs to ensure that compliance is achieved.

The original Wild Fisheries Review, which acknowledged Bailiffs for the job they fulfil, only suggested minor amendments to their roles. The sector did not rest on its laurels, however, and, via the Water Bailiff Development Group, looked inwardly to see where improvements could be made. The Group wanted to instigate continued professional development for all practising Water Bailiffs. The old system dictated that all had to pass the Institute of Fisheries Management Bailiffing and Legal exam prior to receiving their warrant card. The exam informs the pupil what they, "can and cannot do". The practical course tells the participant "how to do it".

The Bailiff Development Group wants to extend the requirement for training to include attendance at vocational training events, delivered by practitioners with the experience to lead by example. Training is delivered in the field when possible, an ethos of shared experience is encouraged, and new techniques and evolving theories are discussed. This new innovative approach to training was first trialled at the netting training course, delivered by the Bailiff Development Group in the summer of 2015, which was hosted by the River Tweed at Drygrange. This course was considered highly successful and will be used as a template for future training events.

So what is the future for Water Bailiffs? A new title to start with – "Bailiff" has so many negative connotations and does not accurately reflect the multitude of tasks involved by those engaged in the position. "Fishery Officer" has been suggested, the jury is still out on future terminology, but it is clear that the sector is willing to evolve and engage constructively. We would like to see more young people and women entering the profession.

From an initially cautious approach to Wild Fisheries Reform the Bailiffs have been afforded opportunities to engage with the Government at Development Group meetings, hosted and very well attended by officials. This has helped in no small way to dispel concerns and the sector can now look forward to investigating ways in which they can be part of the reform process, as opposed to defending sometimes untenable traditional opinions.

The forthcoming fisheries legislation is vitally import for all who are involved in Scottish fisheries enforcement and the Bailiff Development Group continues to be consulted. The Group's general response has been that it is important to preserve the core powers that permit the staff on the ground to do their job effectively whilst not becoming burdensome. The new legislation is awaited with anticipation and will be considered carefully by the Group.

In conclusion, at this time when salmon and sea trout stocks are under pressure, it is vital we protect those that remain – making the task of fisheries enforcement more important than ever before. Is there a role for the Bailiff going forward? Absolutely, yes!

Data sharing & mapping: integrating science & management

SEAN DUGAN - *SFCC Manager*

The Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) continues to promote data sharing and digital mapping using Geographical Information System (GIS) technology, which offers efficiency savings and integration opportunities for local and national fisheries organisations in Scotland. GIS technology is continually evolving, allowing fisheries-related data to be brought together and shared in better ways, revealing fisheries management opportunities and areas of improvement.

Scotland's draft National Wild Fisheries Strategy

The recently published draft strategy recommends a memorandum of understanding defining the relationship between national and local science, the establishment of research and data collection priorities, and national standards for data processes. It also sets out a number of associated activities including:

- Principles of information archiving.
- Principles of access to information.
- Principles of science coordination and planning.
- Ensuring data is publicly available and accessible.

The following four themes are important components for progressing these aims:

1. Common data infrastructure

Collection, storage, access and analysis infrastructures are required to ensure that fisheries information is kept up-to-date and has the potential to evolve. In principal, shared databases allow consistent collection standards and remove the requirement to extract and collate data across multiple organisations to gain a Scotland-wide picture. Fisheries databases continue to be developed and refined, with Marine Scotland Science having developed a fish recording database (Fish Obs) and the recent input of SEPA electro-fishing data for 549 sites into the SFCC electro-fishing database.

Collation of fisheries data is also increasingly important with regard to work such as national electrofishing analysis, Water Framework Directive classifications, field data collection, communication with stakeholders and engagement. One data infrastructure already shared across all national fisheries organisations and 19 Trusts is the ESRI ArcGis mapping software, which is accessible to all Trusts through a non-profit programme. To raise the competency of users in Scotland, over 25 staff members for the Trust network have attended GIS training courses organised by the SFCC since 2013.

2. Sharing meta-data

The draft Wild Fisheries Strategy plans to set out principles of information archiving. Meta-data provides information about raw data, such as the geographical location or how the data was collected rather than the raw data itself. Over the last few years there has been a proliferation of meta-data sharing in Scotland, with a particularly good example being Scotland's Environment Web (http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/). Web technology now enables the overlay of data between organisations such as SEPA, Marine Scotland, SNH and Fisheries Trusts, with this approach already identified as a tool to inform fisheries management planning and communication.

Basic mapping of the current fisheries data resource in Scotland using meta-data will support future planning, minimise duplication of collection efforts and encourage prospective organisations such as universities to innovate and develop links and utilities between datasets.

3. Open data

Open data, rather than 'public data' is defined here as fisheries data to be shared for specific purposes, with use strictly audited and recorded by organisations within the fisheries management system. As an example, there are currently around one million government open datasets in the USA. In England, the Rivers Trusts have been very successful in securing the use of Open Data through their Data Share Programme. The SFCC is looking to replicate this through the One Scotland Mapping Agreement to gain access to Ordnance Survey data for Trust members.

SEPA are developing open data access through SEWEB and as part of 'Scotland's Digital Future', Scottish Government have published an Open Data Strategy. A recent example of this progress is the online publication of raw data from the Dee catchment fish traps by Marine Scotland Science. SFCC member Trusts have also shared their electrofishing and smolt data with Scottish Government in 2014 and 2015 for national analysis. This sharing will likely be formalised within the WFR proposed memorandum of understanding between local and national organisations.

4. Linked data

The theory of 'linked data' was coined to develop streams of disparate data into a linked data landscape. For example, fisheries data can be linked between SFCC members and SEPA using geographic location; or, if a SEPA waterbody code is added to Fisheries Trust data, then it can be associated with SEPA processes. The use of linked data (such as that of the Ordnance Survey Linked Data Project) supports easier sharing and integration of data across organisation boundaries.

Looking forward

When taken together, the processes of common data infrastructures, sharing meta-data, encouraging open data and linking data will improve integration of fisheries management across sectors, with the SFCC being well placed to assist with this process. The future is one of the digitalisation of fisheries management data processes, from field data collection through to communication of management actions.

A plan for the water environment: 2015 to 2027

ROY RICHARDSON- *River Basin Planning Manager, SEPA*

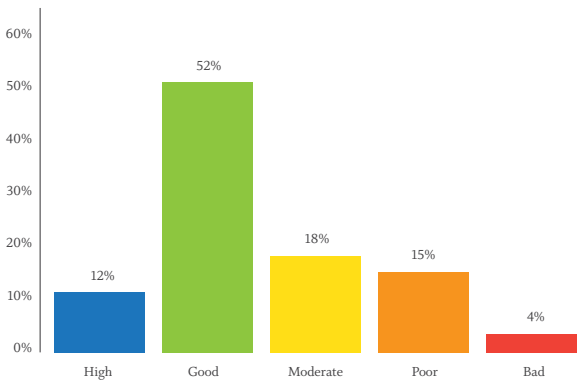
Scotland is renowned worldwide for the quality of its rivers, lochs, wetlands and seas. They are some of the country's greatest natural assets – attracting visitors, contributing to our health, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and providing for the sustainable growth of Scotland's economy. Maintaining this enviable reputation is important for Scotland's continued economic success and wellbeing.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) recently published Scotland's second set of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). The plans are available on SEPA's website alongside a new interactive webtool, the Water Environment Hub, which provides the detailed data and information. The plans are a route map for protecting and improving the water environment of Scotland. As you would expect, many waters are in a good or excellent condition. However, others are under significant pressure. The plans set out what the Scottish Government, SEPA, Scottish Water, local authorities and all Scotland's other public bodies will do to tackle these pressures and improve the condition of the affected rivers, lochs, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater. The plans are also about the major contributions others – including businesses, land managers and voluntary groups and organisations – will make by working together and strengthening the partnership approach established over the last few years. Working together will also help identify, and make use of, opportunities to contribute to wider goals, including those for fisheries, flood risk management, improved resilience to climate change, biodiversity, forestry and sustainable land use.

Current condition of the water environment

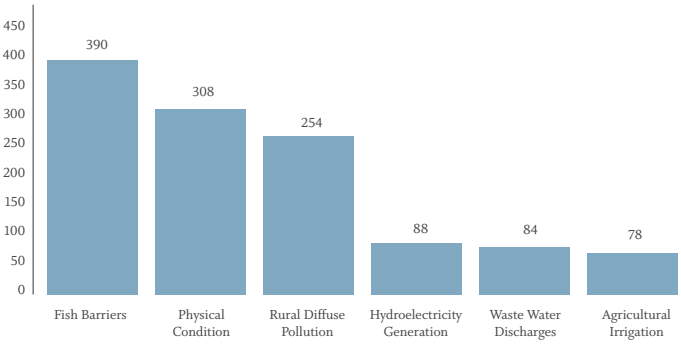
There are 3,650 river, loch, estuary, coastal water and groundwater bodies in Scotland, and over 1,500 protected areas that are associated with the water environment. Dividing surface waters and groundwater into water bodies allows us to show where the water environment is under pressure and where it is in a good or excellent condition.

At present, 64% of Scotland's water bodies are assessed as being in a good or better condition.



The current condition of Scotland's water bodies

Since the first RBMPs were published in 2009, the condition of over 200 water bodies has improved. However, a wide range of pressures is continuing to impact on the condition of the water environment. Most types of pressures affect relatively small numbers of the water bodies. However, a few – particularly fish barriers, impacts to physical condition and rural diffuse pollution – affect very large numbers.

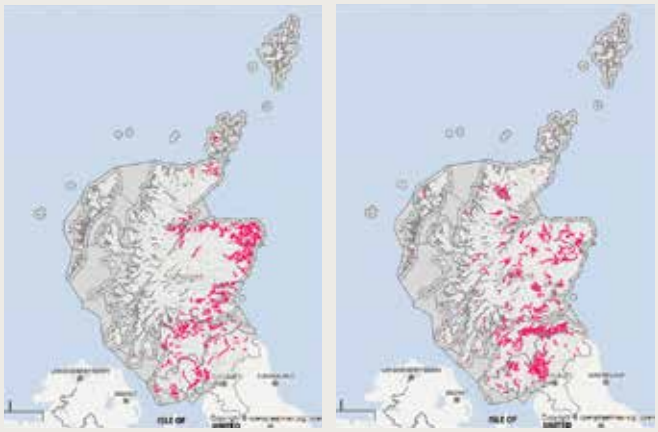


Number of water bodies affected by different types of pressures

Some of these pressures pose significant challenges which we need to address if we are to achieve the goals set out in the plans. The two biggest challenges are in tackling fish barriers and modifications to the physical condition of water bodies. Reducing these impacts requires very different approaches to those used to tackle other pressures on the water environment, such as waste water discharges or water abstractions. Land managers, public bodies and voluntary organisations will need to work together to develop and refine approaches to meeting these challenges.

Maps of water bodies affected by:
Modifications to physical condition

Fish barriers



Tackling barriers to fish migration and modifications to physical condition

Fish barriers can affect the migrations of long distance migratory fish, such as salmon and eels, as well as the shorter distance movements of resident species, such as brown trout. In addition, modifications to the physical condition of water bodies have reduced the area, diversity and quality of habitats, which in turn has affected the abundance, richness and health of aquatic plant and animal communities.

Some of these modifications date back centuries. The most common types of modifications responsible for impacts are:

- Structures such as weirs, dams, culverts and bridge reinforcements.
- Straightening, deepening and narrowing of rivers and estuaries for land drainage, flood water conveyance, navigation, or to increase land area.
- Reinforcement of, or the construction of, walls and embankments on banks and shores to help control erosion of adjacent land or contain flood waters.
- Removal or degradation of natural bankside vegetation due to over-grazing, urbanisation or conversion of land for agriculture or forestry uses.

Although some of the modifications no longer serve the purposes for which they were originally intended, and so in theory can be restored, many still provide important benefits, such as helping reduce the risk of flooding, helping drain farmland, generating hydroelectricity or enabling navigation. Any improvements in these water bodies must be balanced against the important benefits being derived from these uses.

Where improvements are made, this will provide a range of wider benefits, including:

- Restoring salmon runs to parts of rivers that have been inaccessible for generations.
- Improving the quality and resilience of fisheries by restoring fish access to natural spawning and nursery habitats.
- Helping conserve populations of the globally threatened freshwater pearl mussel, which depends for part of its lifecycle on salmon and trout populations.
- Access to better quality landscapes and amenity for communities and businesses, with associated benefits for health, wellbeing and the economy.
- Improved health and range of populations of wild plants and animals.
- Contributions to flood risk management, especially when integrated into natural flood risk management schemes.
- Improved bank-side vegetation, helping reduce the risk of diffuse pollution.

How we are going to build on what has been done?

Over the next 12 years, the RBMPs set out the goal of restoring the physical condition of all 308 affected water bodies. They also aim to secure removal of over 300 barriers that are preventing or restricting fish migration in 367 water bodies. Removing barriers and restoring the physical condition of the water environment on this scale over the next 12 years will be a significant challenge. To help meet it:

- The Scottish Government will increase the sums available through the Water Environment Fund for supporting improvements to the physical condition of water bodies and actions to secure the removal of fish barriers.
- SEPA and local authorities will continue to work together with voluntary organisations (such as RAFTS – see Pluscarden example below), land managers, local communities and businesses to deliver improvements and maximise associated social and economic benefits.
- Public bodies will take action to reduce the impact of structures that they own or maintain, such as culverts and bridges.
- Local authorities will encourage developers to incorporate action to improve the physical condition of the water environment in development proposals.
- SEPA will increase its work with businesses responsible for dams and weirs to ensure appropriate action is taken to provide for fish migration.

Removal of a barrier to fish migration, Pluscarden

Before:
Abandoned structure preventing fish migartion

After:
Structure removed and with it, the barrier to fish migartion

This work has been divided across two RBMP cycles, the first covering work up to 2021, and the next up to 2027. During the first period, 52 water bodies have been prioritised for improvement to their physical condition and a further 206 water bodies for removal of fish barriers. In selecting these water bodies, the river basin plans took into account the benefits improvement could provide to local communities, the quantity of habitat made accessible, the sequencing of barrier removal in river systems, as well as the feasibility of delivery, including how far we have got in building the necessary partnerships over the last six years.

Over the same period, the necessary preparatory studies for the remaining improvements will be carried out so that we are ready to plan and deliver the required works by 2027. If progress on any of the water bodies we have prioritised for improvement by 2021 proves slower than anticipated, progressing with these studies will help us bring forward action on other water bodies if appropriate.

What the RBMPs will achieve overall

We expect that, taken as a whole, actions tackling the whole range of pressures on the water environment over the next 12 years will achieve good or better condition in 93% of water bodies, up from 64% now. It will also safeguard the quality of drinking water sources in drinking water protected areas and achieve our improvement objectives for bathing waters, shellfish waters and the water bodies that areas protected for the conservation of internationally important wildlife depend on.

The main task now is to turn this plan into action, reversing the damage of the past and regenerating a healthy water environment teeming with wildlife and providing the high quality, high amenity waters that Scotland's businesses and communities need to thrive.

But it is also important we monitor progress towards achieving our objectives. As we implement the actions in this plan we will update and re-target our programmes of environmental monitoring and assessment to check that the actions taken have been effective and identify if and where we may need to do more.

We will publish a full report on progress in implementing measures at the end of 2018. In the meantime, we will also publish annual reports on the condition of the district's water environment.

For further information

- Visit *www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water*
- Contact us at: *rbmp@sepa.org.uk*

Large scale mink control in northern Scotland (2006-2015)

Dr Matt Oliver

Large-scale coordinated American mink control has been underway in northern Scotland since 2006, initially through the activities of a series of pilot projects. The first phase of the Scottish Mink Initiative (SMI), which was launched in 2011, demonstrated that mink control could be coordinated on a very large scale, incorporating the majority of river catchments north of Gruinard in the west and Tay in the east, using a project-based approach.

The second phase, initiated in 2013, demonstrated that mink operations could also be successfully coordinated locally on the ground by Fisheries Trusts, rather than Project Officers. The initiative currently covers an area of c. 29,500 km^2 – from northern Tayside across Aberdeenshire, Moray, and the Cairngorms National Park to the north and east, while the southerly boundary runs from Lunan Bay, Forfar, Cupar Angus, Dunkeld, Aberfeldy, and out to the west end of Loch Rannoch.

With coordinated American mink control activities now in their tenth year, the aim for the next phase of the process is to investigate and implement the mainstreaming of cost-effective approaches developed in the previous phases within the framework of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI). This article summarises an evaluation of the SMI's activities and outcomes, assessing the current status of the SMI's coverage and activity, impacts on American mink population levels, and ways in which the evidence accumulated can inform and optimise the future mink control strategy.

Summary of main findings

Overall, evaluation of the work undertaken shows that the SMI has been successful in negatively impacting American mink numbers and in sustaining a network of mink rafts, which are being actively monitored. There is also anecdotal evidence that native species hitherto affected by mink predation now have the opportunity to recover.

In addition, we now also possess the knowledge to biologically and cost-effectively optimise mink control and monitoring.

In general, analyses of the raft network data, together with mink detection and capture records, indicate that across the SMI area current levels of mink activity are at less than a third of those recorded in the highest years in the history of coordinated mink control, whilst the numbers of active rafts and raft checks are strong and comparable to those years of high mink activity. These indicators of the success of the SMI are discussed in further detail below.

Annual trends in the mink raft network

2,020 mink rafts have been deployed (Fig. 1, left) since the start of the project, although the number active at any one time has varied annually. However, the number of active rafts showed a general increase through the duration of the project, with the highest numbers in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (Fig. 1, centre). Over 600 rafts were confirmed active in 2014, and 538 have been confirmed in the 12 months preceding July 2015. Decreases in the raft network during phases of reduced funding (2009 – 2010 & 2013 – 2015) were relatively small and demonstrate that efforts to sustain the raft network at these times have been successful.

The number of raft checks recorded each year have generally been high (Fig. 1, right), at above 1200, and in the 12 months from July 2014 2,776 raft checks were recorded from 300 rafts (note that an additional 238 rafts were confirmed active, but did not record checks).

The successful implementation and promotion of the MinkApp online recording system is also clear, with broad scale usage of the MinkApp coming through from 2013 there has been a strong surge in the recording of raft check data, with the highest numbers yet recorded in 2014, and it was also looking positive for 2015, where > 1500 checks had been submitted in the first seven months (Fig. 2, right). This highlights the utility of the online data recording system as a way of maintaining a strong and accessible evidence base for assessing the SMI's activities and impact.

Trends in mink detections and captures

It is of primary interest to understand whether large scale coordinated mink control is having a substantial, biologically significant, impact on mink population levels. The best (least biased) data available to examine this are mink raft check records. A total of 16,544 raft checks were recorded since 2006 across the entire SMI area. Considering all raft check records submitted in a calendar year, there has been a steady and substantial decline over the last few years, from a positive check rate of around 0.14 in 2011, to an all-time low of around 0.02 in 2015 (Fig. 3, left).

Of 2,776 raft checks submitted between July 2014 and July 2015, mink footprints have been recorded in 86, and these have been primarily concentrated down the east coast, from the Tay catchment (as is expected from a frontier catchment receiving an influx of dispersing mink from outside of the control area) to far north east Aberdeenshire. A scattering of positive checks have also been recorded in more northern and western areas including the Oykel, Kylesku, Runie, Ness and Beauly.

A detailed analysis was carried out on the data available for three 'test' rivers: the Dee, Spey and Ythan. These catchments represent the longest consistent available data; in each catchment mink control started in 2006/2007 and an active raft network has been in place and monitored since. A statistical model shows a clear and statistically significant ($P < 0.0001$) negative effect on mink detection rate. The analysis predicts that, in an average scenario, mink abundance will be reduced to c. 40% of the starting abundance in 4 years, and further to around 6% of initial levels after 9 years (Fig. 3, centre).

The analysis highlighted that overall trends are also very strongly influenced by a small number of rafts. Whilst a majority of rafts never detect any mink footprints, a few record many, revealing a high level of redundancy in the raft network. This variation in the relative importance of individual rafts (or locations) is highly relevant to improving the control strategy. Of the 994 rafts that recorded at least one raft check, 637 (64%) never recorded mink footprints. Therefore, all of the information on mink presence came from a relatively small subset of the raft network (357 rafts, 36%). In fact, a mere 59 rafts – only 6% of all rafts to have recorded a raft check – were responsible for 637 (53%) of the 1,307 positive checks recorded.

The trend in mink captures follows that of the detection rate of mink on mink rafts. Around 1,600 mink have been trapped since the large scale coordinated mink control effort on mainland Scotland began in 2006 and there has been a substantial decrease from over 280 in 2012, to only 98 mink captured in the 12 months to July 2015 (Fig. 3, right). Generally speaking, mink have been captured in most areas of the raft network. The areas with the highest numbers of captures reflect both productive habitat for mink and, in some areas, a long history of control effort. In agreement with the mink raft detection data, nearly all of the captures in the 12 months to July 2015 were from lowland or coastal areas, indicating an overall contraction of the mink population.

The most effective way to reduce population growth rates is to remove breeding females. Therefore, to reduce mink numbers to near zero requires that all female mink are located and culled before being able to breed. Of all rafts ever located, 268 (only 13%) accounted for all of the 489 adult female mink ever captured. Moreover, 111 of these raft locations were the closest to 2 or more female captures. In fact, these 111 raft locations were the closest for 332 (68%) of female capture locations. This is a relatively small number of rafts, equivalent to about 20% of the current raft network and 5% of all rafts ever deployed. The maintenance, retention (or reinstatement) and monitoring of these rafts should be a top priority for the mink control strategy in future.

Future directions

With mink population levels now severely depleted following ten years of active large scale mink control, the challenge and opportunity for the future is to protect the investment and achievements of past work and to optimise the impact and cost-effectiveness of future mink management. The information gained about how mink abundance decreases following control, together with the data on the relative importance of different raft locations and the breeding locations of female mink, can now be combined to guide our approach.

To this end, a new three-stage strategic framework will be implemented, which graduates from initial raft saturation through to coverage of only a subset of female capture locations for low cost, long term monitoring. Each stage of the strategy will be guided by the information collected through earlier stages of the process, and ultimately the aim is to target the most important areas for mink population control, whilst minimising redundancy in the mink raft network and wasted effort. In this way we will ensure the long term legacy of the SMI, whilst reducing costs, and maximising the impact on the mink population and the benefits for native biodiversity.

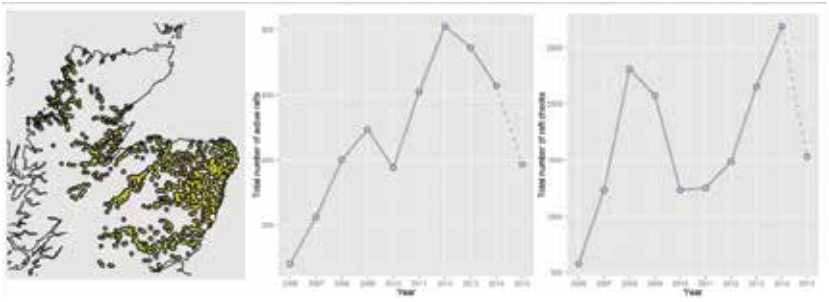


Figure 1: Illustrating (left) the coverage of the SMI raft network and the location of all rafts deployed since 2006; (centre) the number of active rafts in each year from 2006 – 2015; (right) the number of raft checks recorded in each year from 2006 – 2015. Note the dotted lines (2014 – 2015) indicating that the values for 2015 are incomplete and only include the first seven months of the year.

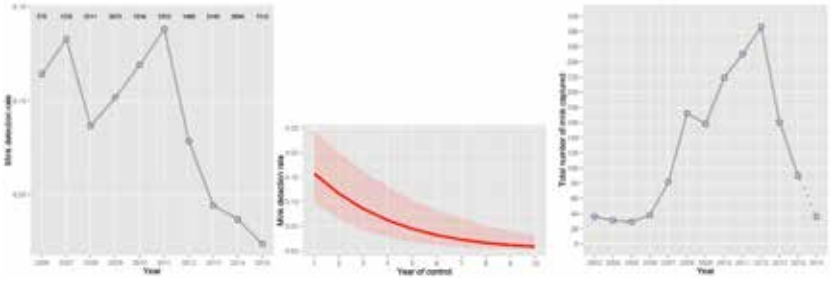


Figure 2: Illustrating the impact of the SMI control effort on mink population levels: (left) changes in the detection rate of mink on mink rafts between 2006 – 2015, highlighting the substantial decrease since 2011; (centre) the effect of mink control on mink population levels estimated from a statistical model, showing that population levels are reduced to less than 40 % and 5 % of initial levels after 4 years and 10 years of control, respectively; (right) the number of mink captured each year between 2006 – 2015, the trend reflects the expansion of the project area until 2012 and then the rapid decrease in mink captures as the population was depleted by comprehensive coordinated control.

Illustrating the mink raft used for mink monitoring and control. Left – rafts are anchored to the river bank and a smoothed clay detection pad is placed inside the tunnel. Centre – the clay pad is checked periodically for mink footprints. Right – if mink footprints are detected a trap is set on the raft to capture the mink.

Successful capture of mink.

River restoration and barrier easement update

Carina Agnew - *Barrier Programme Officer*

RAFTS has been implementing barrier easement projects for a number of years and continues to be involved with managing this type of work. It has, however, begun a process of increasingly passing project management responsibilities to members – in part to build their capacity to undertake barrier easements and river restoration projects. This article presents the work being undertaken on capacity building as well as an update on existing barrier easement projects which RAFTS is involved in.

How fisheries management actions will be delivered will change significantly over the next few years, due to the Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR) programme. There will also be opportunities for current Boards and Trusts, as well as their successors, to deliver measures identified in the second cycle River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Both of these processes are opportunities to develop the capacity of the sector to undertake complex projects for the easement or removal of fish barriers and instream and riparian restoration works. There are also significant changes taking place in Government funding and the requirements for the use of that funding when implementing these types of management actions.

In response to the above changes, RAFTS is developing a Guidance Document and Training Programme to support Fishery Trusts – and eventually Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs) – to manage river restoration projects within their own catchments. This will help to equip organisations with the necessary tools for the governance and management of riverine projects, particularly those that utilise public funds.

The aim is to promote good practice amongst those managing Scottish river restoration projects, eg. barrier easements. The guidance is focused on the management of projects rather than the practical measures that may be implemented on the ground to improve the health of rivers. In addition, it may be that Wild Fisheries Reform introduces requirements for FMOs and it is therefore important to be proactive, increasing capacity for project management across the network. The guidance will cover all stages of the management of projects – from the development of the initial concept and gathering site survey information right through to the implementation of physical works, and the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of these projects.

The management of projects – ranging from small-scale schemes in the rural environment to large-scale urban river restoration – will be included within the guidance. However, the document and subsequent training are not intended to provide a definitive management guide but will provide project managers with a range of options for consideration, highlighting the essential requirements for an organisation managing these types of project and providing links to sources of guidance that can be referred to for further detail where appropriate.

The creamery weir, on an important tributary of the Tarff water in Galloway, cut off about 10km of spawning habitat.

The document will comprise a series of guidance notes with a 'front end document', including a glossary, to introduce how the guidance should be used and what it contains. Each guidance note within the series will be laid out in a similar template for ease of understanding. Guidance and tools relevant to each topic will be presented to guide project managers through a project, following an introduction to the topic. The guidance notes will also provide a list of the most common risks and benefits for each topic and the essential and desirable requirements for organisations managing projects of this nature. The document will build on, and refer to, guidance already published by organisations such as SEPA, the River Restoration Centre, The Rivers Trust and Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). It is intended that, once complete, the guidance document will be freely available for download from the RAFTS website. The document will be reviewed and updated as and when there are legislative or policy changes, to ensure that the most up-to-date information is reflected.

The following topics will be covered within the series of guidance notes:

1. Project Planning and Set Up – sets the scene for the other notes within the series as it considers what is involved in the planning and set-up of a project: from the formation of an initial concept through the feasibility, optioneering and design, to its implementation on the ground and subsequent monitoring and evaluation. The note covers the following aspects of project planning and set-up: project identification, project justification, potential funding streams and project phases.

2. Project Management – considers what a manager of a river restoration project should be aware of and provides guidance, focusing on communication and risk management to keep projects on time and in budget.

3. Procurement – looks at the buying of services or goods from a consultant or contractor to deliver a defined project scope. It considers the things that project managers need to be aware of to ensure that the procurement process is clear, fair, transparent and auditable.

4. Stakeholder Engagement – considers the engagement of individuals and/or organisations that could affect and/or be affected by a project. It provides guidance on how to deliver effective stakeholder engagement depending on the size, location and type of project and details why it is vitally important to the successful delivery of river restoration projects.

5. Consents and Licensing – addresses the topic of the permissions, consents and licences that may be required to be sought from a range of organisations to deliver projects in the riverine environment.

6. Legal and Insurance – covers the legal and insurance requirements for organisations managing this type of work to help project managers limit exposure to risk.

7. Health and Safety – considers health and safety in the context of a project setting, not in the general workplace environment.

We appreciate that there is a diverse range of expertise and experience in managing river restoration projects across the network. With this in mind the emphasis on the development of this project management guidance and training programme will be on a collaborative process so that the wide range of existing knowledge and experience can be built in to producing the most comprehensive and valuable guidance possible.

The guidance notes are currently being developed and the training programme designed for roll-out in 2016. RAFTS would like to give member Trusts the opportunity to engage in this process and provide feedback and input on the guidance notes. If you are interested in getting involved and helping us to shape the guidance to make it as useful as possible to those that will be using it in the future, please do not hesitate to contact RAFTS.

Barriers projects – update

RAFTS is currently working with its members in the management of 12 medium-large scale barrier easement and removal projects. The following summary gives a brief flavour of the current state of play and future work for some of these RAFTS-led projects:

- Almond Barriers – these six barriers on the River Almond combine to create a significant migration problem for fish. Outline design for four barriers and detailed design for two barriers will be completed by May 2016.

- Avon Water Barriers (tributary of the Clyde) – Two very large disused weirs, situated towards the lower end of the Avon Water, combine to cut off around 200km of excellent spawning habitat; in effect almost the entire Avon catchment. Design of rock ramps at each weir is almost complete, and it is hoped to begin works at each site this summer, with completion before the end of September.

- Creamery Weir – a substantial structure on an important tributary of the Tarff Water in Galloway, this weir cuts off around 10km of spawning habitat. Design work for the full removal of the weir has been completed and, subject to funding approval, the works will take place summer 2016.

- Morsgail Barrier – a stone-faced structure crossing an important spawning burn on the Isle of Lewis, the culverted nature of this obstacle prevents salmon from accessing the upstream habitat at all flows. Design work for full removal is near completion, and works are due to take place this summer.

- Tullynessle Weir – this barrier to migration cuts off in excess of 10km of prime spawning habitat in the Esset Burn, a tributary of the Don. A design for a bypass channel has been completed and the procurement/ management of construction of the bypass work will be taken on by the Trust and its partners in the summer of 2016.

- Diebidale Dam – this very large structure lies midway up the Diebidale River on the Carron system in Kyle of Sutherland. An artificial lochan and associated dam renders around 5km of top quality spawning habitat inaccessible to salmon and sea trout. The Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust, supported by RAFTS, has managed a feasibility and optioneering phase, and it is hoped that design work for the preferred option (a bypass channel) can commence in the near future.

RAFTS is looking forward to the coming year as it will hopefully see the commencement of physical works on up to seven barriers that will see the fruition of many months, and in some cases years, of preparatory work.

The Millheugh Weir, River Avon, South Lanarkshire.



Pearls in Peril update

LORNA WILKIE, FLORA GRIGOR-TAYLOR and STEFF FERGUSON
Pearls in Peril Scotland Project Officers

This is the final year of the Pearls in Peril (PiP) project, which concludes in September. The project aims to leave a legacy of improvements to save the freshwater pearl mussel, a fascinating and important part of our biodiversity and cultural heritage, from extinction. The PiP project's remit in Scotland is widespread and varied, with ambitious targets for facilitating riparian improvements across five catchments; implementing in-stream habitat restoration in four catchments; and raising awareness of wildlife crime and other threats against mussels throughout the 19 Scottish SACs included in the project. 2015 was a particularly busy year for the project, both for riparian and in-stream works.

Last year saw the implementation of 14 SRDP agri-environment schemes for diffuse pollution mitigation in the middle River Dee area, facilitating ~20km of new water margins. Installation of small tree enclosures to provide shade, woody debris and bank stabilisation on Upper Dee tributaries continued during 2015, with support from the Woodland Trust. SRDP funding for 33.5ha of riparian native woodland creation at National Trust Scotland Mar Lodge on Upper Deeside was approved and will be implemented in 2016.

In the South Esk catchment, a demonstration site for riparian tree and woodland planting along 1600m of watercourses was identified at Rottal Lodge, while water margin buffer fencing and riparian tree planting along over 6km of water course in the Quarity catchment was carried out, funded by the Angus Environmental Trust.

To improve in-stream habitat for the threatened freshwater pearl mussel and for Atlantic salmon and trout, 25 croys, constructed from large boulders taken from the riverbed, were removed from the River Dee between Banchory and Aboyne in the summer of 2015. The croys were broken up and the boulders re-distributed randomly in the river to provide habitat for freshwater pearl mussels as well as lies for adult salmon.

Elsewhere on the Dee, 31 cars – along with several tonnes of concrete and railway sleepers – were removed from the bank near Mar Lodge. This work raised a lot of media attention, featuring on BBC radio and television, and in numerous publications including Classic Cars magazine.

In the River South Esk SAC nearly 900m of boulder bank protection, put in place during the 1990s, was removed from sections of river in Glen Clova and Glen Doll. The bank protection inadvertently led to a reduction in habitat quality as it prevented the bank material, sand, gravel and cobble eroding into the river, to sustain in-stream habitat. In the past the river channel actively moved across the floodplain, and three of these previously in-filled channels were also re-opened to provide habitat for juvenile fish.

Although changes to the river environment are immediately noticeable, an increase in the mussel populations won't occur for many years. Freshwater pearl mussels are very slow-growing – they don't start breeding until they are 15-20 years old and can live for up to 120 years.

Other work included the launch of River Watch schemes on the Naver, South Esk, Kerry and Moriston, and in Lochaber at Fort William. As in previous years, evidence of poaching was found at a number of sites and the information passed on to the relevant Police Scotland wildlife crime officers.

The Woodland Trust have provided grants for riparian tree planting along several Upper Dee tributaries, including Glen Gairn.

In the River Dee large croys have been broken up. Following guidance from fisheries managers and ghillies, many of the boulders were re-distributed in stream to create salmon 'lies' and habitat for freshwater pearl mussels.

Before

After

Before

After

The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust and the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust completed another year of artificial encystment – where freshwater pearl mussel larvae are "introduced" to their juvenile salmonid hosts in an aerated tank. The Trusts' biologists have become skilled in forecasting when mussels are ready to spat, using water temperature and by carefully examining mussels for the tell-tale signs of glochidia. During the following spring encysted fish have been captured in areas with very few pearl mussels, suggesting that artificial encystment works.

Pearls in the Classroom has been delivered in over 100 schools, as well as to Guide and Scout Groups and wildlife clubs in participating catchments in Scotland, England and Wales. Although primarily aimed at 7-12-year-olds, the material can be adapted to suit high school pupils and university students. Project partners have also taught people of all ages about freshwater pearl mussels at game fairs, festivals and local events. In the Outer Hebrides, Pearls in the Classroom has been delivered in both Gaelic and in English.

Storm Frank caused extensive flooding at the end of December 2015 in several catchments where PiP has been working. Further flood events in early January 2016 exacerbated the problem. PiP project officers spent much of January 2016 assessing the damage to enclosures and repairs began in late January. Storm damage also affected in-stream restoration works. In Glen Doll a stretch of the White Water has switched channel, providing excellent new spawning habitat for salmon but causing the loss of some grazing land. Fortunately, we have been working with a very understanding landowner, but hundreds of metres of fencing will have to be moved or replaced.

Less fortunately, thousands of mussels were washed out on the Dee and South Esk, and it will take some time to assess the long-term effect on these populations. PiP would like to thank everyone who reported mussel strandings, and who tried to help save them by throwing them back in the rivers.

Once again, the PiP Project Officers would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has engaged with us this year – including Fisheries Boards and Trusts, farmers and landowners – and we look forward to working with you in 2016.

PiP are on Twitter @MoTheMussel or our webpage is *http://www. pearlsinperil.org.uk/*

The future is bright not bleak – a market overview

ANDREW J RETTIE FRICS - *Partner, Strutt & Parker LLP*

I write this article in late February, during what is always a speculative period for a firm of agents and individual who specialises in the sale of properties in market sectors which are distinctly seasonal.

I lead a team selling salmon fishing properties alongside our bread and butter of estate and farm sales. As a lifelong and passionate salmon fisherman, it is an element of my job that I particularly enjoy – not least the occasional opportunities to flick a fly that it affords.

In the late winter and early spring of any year, we spend a lot of time both looking back and forward. In the case of the former, we are reflecting on market activity during the preceding year (in all three sectors) in order to analyse market values, consider any emerging trends or themes, and identify the individuals who are actively looking to buy. This enables us to gauge the strength or weakness of these market sectors, understand their influencing factors, and then predict how they might perform going forward. These predictions are particularly important for informing clients who may be considering selling their property during the year ahead.

The salmon fishing market has always been a niche sector, with relatively few properties being traded annually. That was no different in 2015, with the following seven fishings being sold during the year, or being under offer at the year-end (excluding timeshare rods or pro indiviso shares):

- The Canterland Fishings, River North Esk
- The River Mallart, the Naver system
- The Ardmiddle Fishings, River Deveron
- The Upper Netherdale Fishings, River Deveron
- The Horncliffe Fishings, River Tweed
- The Kinnaird Fishings, River Tay
- The Morsgail Fishings, Isle of Lewis

This list includes those fishings that form part of larger estate sales.

As most readers of this article may be aware, the capital value of salmon fishings is traditionally assessed on a £ per fish basis against the 5- or 10-year average catch for the river or beat. In gauging market strength, we analyse each and every salmon fishings sale at a pound-per-fish rate, which we can then consider with reference to other sales in the same year, and also historic sales on the same river, or of the same beat. This allows us to chart the ebb and flow of salmon fishings values over a period of time.

To elaborate, last year's sales show a variation in capital value of between £4,500 and £5,750 per salmon/grilse (sea trout are analysed separately at between 10% and 20% of the rate applied to salmon/grilse). Whilst it would be inappropriate to reveal the pound-per-fish rate for each property sold, what is of particular interest to me is that the 2015 transactions show the smallest percentage difference between the highest and lowest rate for many years, equating to a difference of just 28%.

To put that in context, the difference between the highest and lowest rate per fish back in 2011 (a year which also featured seven transactions) was 109%, with a range from £5,250 per fish to £11,000 per fish.

The reduction in price elasticity of salmon fishings reflects the caution which has been injected into the minds of prospective salmon fishery owners in the period since 2011. This is due to a range of factors, including two very disappointing fishing seasons in general terms in 2014 and 2015; the uncertainty of Scotland's future within the UK; the Scottish Government's Land Reform and Wild Fisheries Reform agendas; and the unquantifiable effects of climate change.

All of these factors and more have the potential to impact on both the number of wild salmon returning to their native rivers and the manner in which they be fished for by anglers. This inevitably impacts buyer confidence, which is reflected in the softening of values during the last five years.

I am an optimist, however; and I am encouraged by the positive steps in wild fisheries management over the last year, which includes the three-year ban on netting, the generally sensible proposals within the Scottish Government's draft Wild Fisheries strategy, and the grading of salmon rivers to reflect their conservation status/harvestable surplus.

The evidence of the several fishings sales handled by Strutt & Parker during 2015 suggests there is demand for the ownership of Scottish salmon fishings, and an increasing understanding amongst buyers that the future of the sport they love – and with it the capital value of their investment – is bright, not bleak.

Upper Netherdale Fishings, River Deveron.

Hornecliffe was sold in 2015.

Crumbs of comfort?

ANDREW WALLACE - *Chairman, RAFTS*

After the 2014 season, when Scottish salmon catches hit their lowest point in living memory (45,175), there was a lot riding on 2015. The spring was promising, with excellent – and in some cases exceptional – catches in places and Scottish river managers dared to hope that 2014 was an unfortunate anomaly.

However, although conditions favoured occasional reasonable grilse and salmon catches in the summer, the grilse runs did not generally appear to be strong and this was followed by a worrying absence of back end fish. While the autumn experienced some punishing high water conditions which could have negatively affected catches – in much the same way as the lack of water was blamed for a poor end of season in 2014 – the year undoubtedly ended, once again, with some serious questions about grilse and summer/autumn salmon abundance. And it is small consolation that salmon stocks around the North Atlantic appear to mirror the Scottish malaise.

It is almost impossible to generalise when trying to make an assessment of overall Scottish salmon stocks and catches, as there are so many different stories and perceptions. However, the graphs in the following pages speak for themselves – 2015's projected catch of around 50,000 salmon adds up to another weak year, and in some catchments there was an alarming lack of fish.

Why a particular river should suddenly suffer from such a serious absence of fish, while its neighbours hold their own, must inevitably focus our attentions on the issue of marine impacts and mortality in the early part of the marine migration. Efforts are now being made to explore this problem.

The biblical flooding events of the winter of 2015/16 are another cause for concern, although there is some evidence that big floods do not always create serious abundance legacy issues. Scottish sea trout stocks and catches appeared to continue their modest upward trend in many systems – a crumb of comfort in an otherwise unsettling year.

The removal of mixed stock net fisheries and the new, albeit controversial, conservation limits will put Scotland's commitment to the control of exploitation – an area where its reputation has suffered – beyond doubt. However, anybody expecting an instant windfall should read their salmon history more carefully. Scotland has now fired its last practical shot in the locker for controlling salmon exploitation and, like the Bank of England with interest rates, has run out of options to deal with that impact. This places a sharp focus on the need for better information about the factors taking their toll on our salmon stocks, such as those in marine and transitional waters, and the need to control these issues.

With net and rod exploitation, in any practical sense, now dealt with, logic dictates that we put the spotlight firmly on the other impacts that are evidently taking such large and repeated bites out of the salmon abundance pie.

River Tweed at Leaderfoot viaduct.

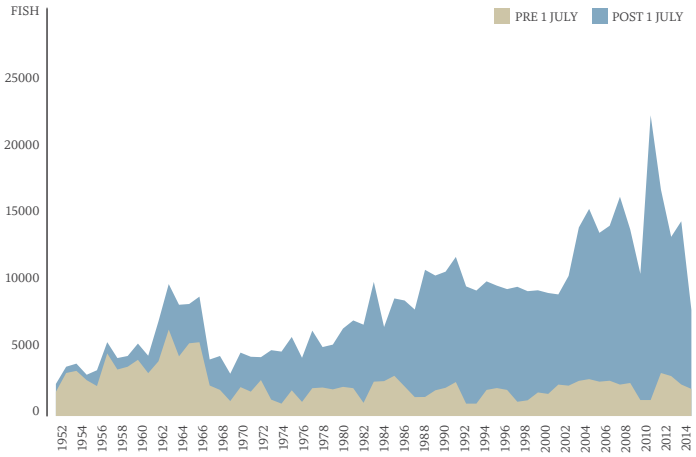
Tweed

Nick Yonge - *Director, Tweed Commission and Foundation*

Spring and summer catches were higher, but those in the autumn were significantly down, meaning that the overall salmon catch for the year was similar to 2014, although more fish were caught by rod. Sea trout and brown trout catches were particularly good in the summer. Following the closure of major coastal net fisheries, the only salmon killed by netsmen were those caught by two net and coble fisheries. A third, in-river, net and coble fishery was operated for demonstration and research purposes but no salmon were killed. The spring run was better than in 2014 and the Tweed Spring Salmon Conservation program continued, with only 2% of spring fish being killed. The RTC also continued its conservation payments to tributaries and the upper river fisheries which contracted to measures that would not otherwise be mandatory.

	2015 total	pre Jul 1	post Jul 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate*	Largest fish
Salmon	8,091	2,030	6,061	553	13,816	98/73/80%	28lb
Sea Trout	2,232	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,007	N/A	n/a

*Season dates: 1 Feb – 30 Nov. * Spring / summer / overall.*



TWEED ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - RIVER TWEED COMMISSION

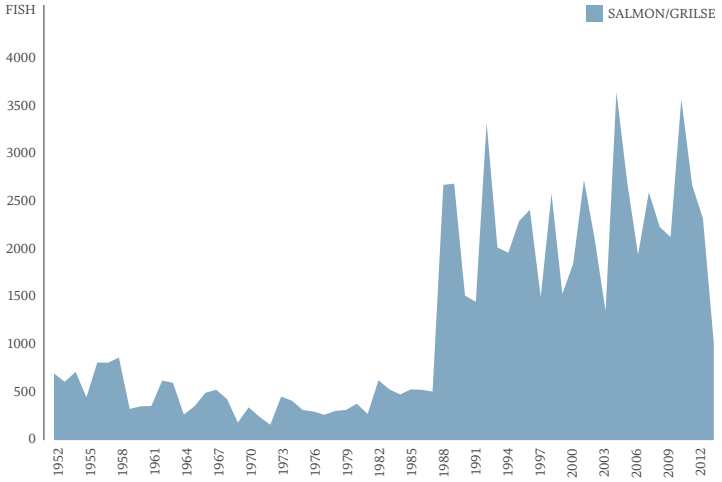
Forth

Alison Baker – *Forth Fisheries Trust*
Fen Howieson – *Chairman, Forth DSFB*

At the time of writing the full catch returns are not available, but generally salmon catches across the District appear to be above last year and there seems to have been a larger spring run on some rivers. Low water during the last months of the season prevented fish from entering a number of rivers until the last week of the season and this will have impacted on catch numbers, some rivers reporting no catches for the first time for a number of years. Running fish, however, were seen throughout November. Catches for sea trout are still falling, again impacted by low water. Works to improve existing fish passes and ease other barriers are ongoing, but these structures, together with a high level of organised poaching, continue to be a concern. Prior to the introduction the Scottish Government's new management of killing regulations, the majority of the rivers in the District were already practicing full catch and release for salmon, the others restricting the numbers of fish killed. Netting still continues in the estuarine areas of the Forth and the conflicts of the regulations need to be resolved.

	2014 total	pre Apr 1	post Apr 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	997	258	739	66	2,270	94/76/74%*	16lb
Sea Trout	391	n/a	n/a	90	791	73%	3.5lb

*Season dates: 1 Feb - 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



FORTH DISTRICT ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2014
SOURCE - FORTH DSFB

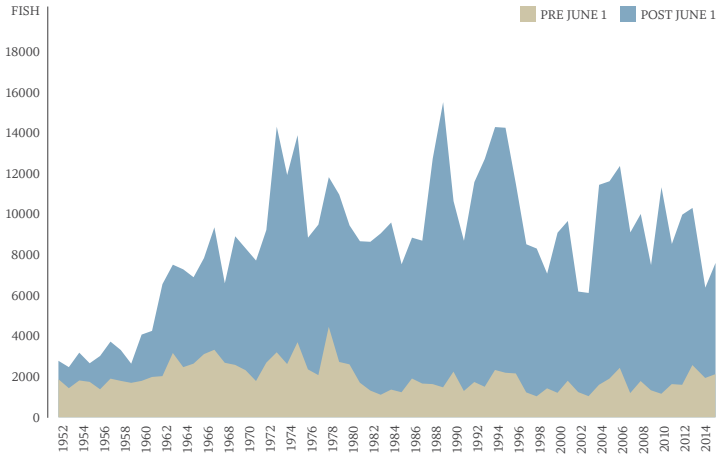
Tay

Dr David Summers - *Director, Tay DSFB and Tay Foundation*

The first two months of the season were nothing remarkable, not helped by very high water. However, April was better than the recent average, May was the 4th best since 1952 and June was our best ever: a reasonable run of spring fish and colder weather in late spring may have helped. Once again, 3SW fish were a significant spring feature and at least five over 30lb were reported, including a Malloch Trophy winner which was caught on the River Lyon by Tom Buchanan. However, though not as bad as in 2014, the late summer and autumn catches were down, as they seem to have been elsewhere. While there were more grilse than in 2014, the main summer run was not as strong as it was a few years ago and was again late, not peaking until well into August. The trial season extension which ran from 2011 to 2014 in the lower and middle Tay was not continued in 2015. It was a matter of disappointment that the long awaited restoration of flow to the River Garry, a flagship project in the first WFD Scotland River Basin Management Plan, was not even agreed, let alone implemented, by the plan completion deadline in December 2015.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	7,779	2,171	5,608	n/a	9,797	94/79/83%*	35lb
Sea Trout	1,581	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,227	82%	n/a

*Season dates: 15 Jan – 15 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*

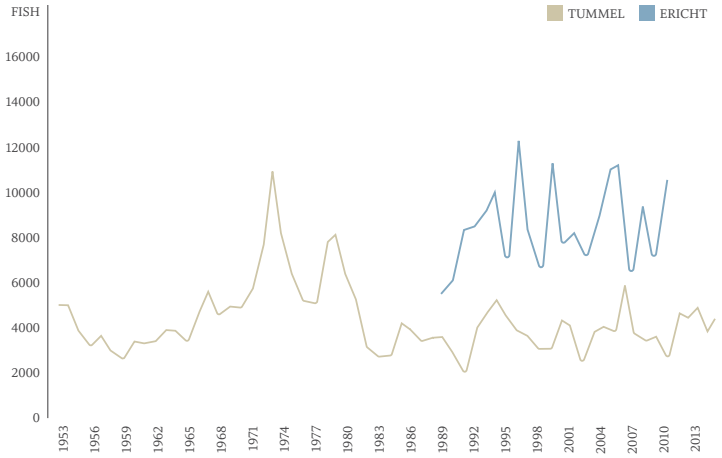


TAY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - TAY DSFB

Tay catchment counters

Dr David Summers - *Director Tay DSFB and Tay Foundation*

The total count at the fish pass on the Tummel in Pitlochry – 4,689 – showed a marked increase over 2014 (4,151). Although not as good the three years before that, it was still one of the better years in the last decade or so. There was a notably low count in May, probably a result of low temperatures delaying migration, followed by an improved count in June. There was a higher count in August than for a few years, perhaps reflecting a better grilse run, the majority of which seemed to appear at Pitlochry around mid-August.



RIVER TUMMEL (PITLOCHRY) UPSTREAM COUNT 1953-2015
SOURCE - SSE
RIVER ERICHT UPSTREAM COUNT 1990-2010
SOURCE - TAY DSFB

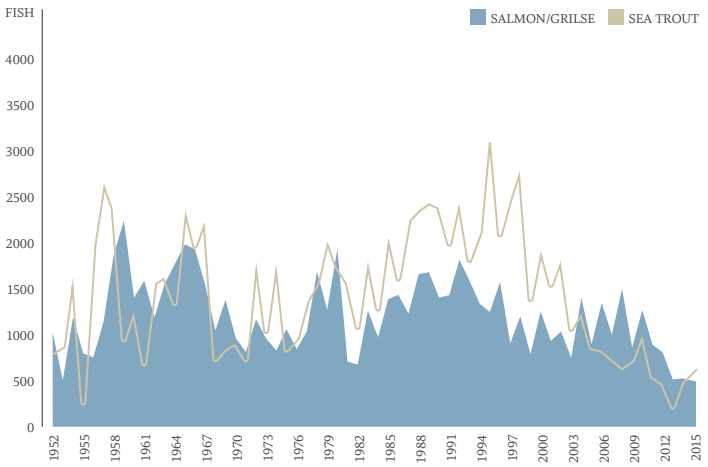
South Esk

Dr Marshall Halliday - *Esk Fishery Board and Trust*

Overall the rod catch of salmon and grilse declined slightly in 2015 but sea trout catches were reasonable, with some really good catches on some beats. The spring salmon rod catch, however, held up reasonably well, with the decline being mainly in grilse. However, the new Scottish Government initiative to close coastal netting for a period of three years, should provide some respite for salmon and grilse. Voluntary catch and release measures extending into June will support the statutory ban on killing salmon up to 30th April. The catchment is undergoing a number of river restoration projects managed by the Fisheries Trust, with support made available through SEPA's Water Environment Fund as well as the Perils in Peril LIFE Project. The focus is on the Melgund and Pow burns and Glen Doll/Moulzie. Exceptional high flows are a major threat to the river and work continues with tree planting in the upper catchment to mitigate against their effect. This will be a long term project but one which is essential to safeguard the river habitat.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	494	94	400	n/a	1,034	99/67%*	n/a
Sea Trout	643	n/a	n/a	n/a	726	67%	n/a

*Season dates: 16 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer.*



SOUTH ESK ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - ESK DSFB

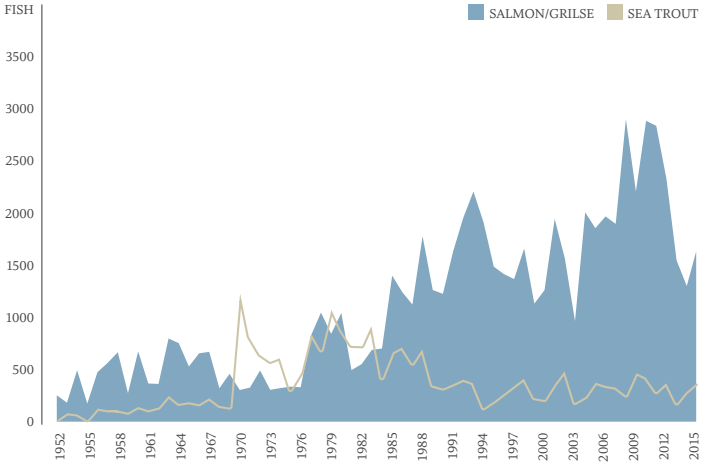
North Esk

Dr Marshall Halliday - *Esk Fishery Board and Trust*

Conservation measures continued in 2015, with statutory measures preventing the killing of salmon prior to 30th April enhanced by the Esk Board's voluntary measures recommending extending catch and release until June for both salmon and sea trout. Again the Board compensated coastal net fisheries to return all healthy sea trout during the entire season and also leased the coastal net fishery off Johnshaven as a further precautionary measure. All conservation measures were well received and supported by anglers. The spring rod catch was down but overall the rod catch has been relatively constant during the last 3 years. The reduction in the spring rod catch might be due to the major breach of Morphie Dyke, enhancing the ascent of early-running salmon into the upper catchment. Sea trout runs, although not reflected in the rod catch, were promising. This winter has been characterised by exceptionally high river flows which will no doubt have washed out some redds and buried others. These high flows are becoming the norm and are a cause for concern. The Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust continues to trap mink and control invasive weeds and the cooperation of proprietors is gratefully acknowledged.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,685	427	1,258	n/a	3,089	98/72%*	n/a
Sea Trout	376	n/a	n/a	n/a	488	87%	n/a

*Season dates: 16 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer.*

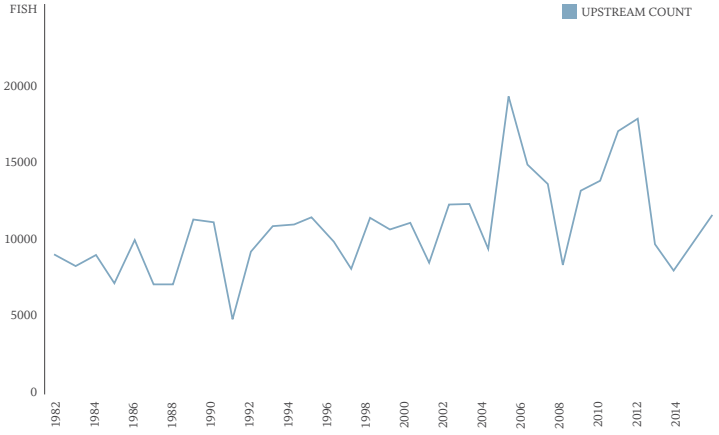


NORTH ESK ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - ESK DSFB

Logie counter (North Esk)

Dr Marshall Halliday - *Esk Fishery Board and Trust*

The 2015 count reached 12,100 which continued the improvement over the last few years and is close to the 10-year average of 12,465. The count was enhanced by a late run of grilse and it now seems to be a feature that grilse are returning later in the year. The counts for January to May inclusive were 2,684, compared with 2,579 in 2014, while August to October amounted to 6,267 fish, up from 4,536 the previous year. The condition of grilse was reasonable, with less evidence of very small fish. It will be interesting to see if there is a discernible difference in the fish count this year with the cessation of coastal netting south of Montrose.



NORTH ESK UPSTREAM COUNT 1981-2015
SOURCE - MARINE SCOTLAND SCIENCE

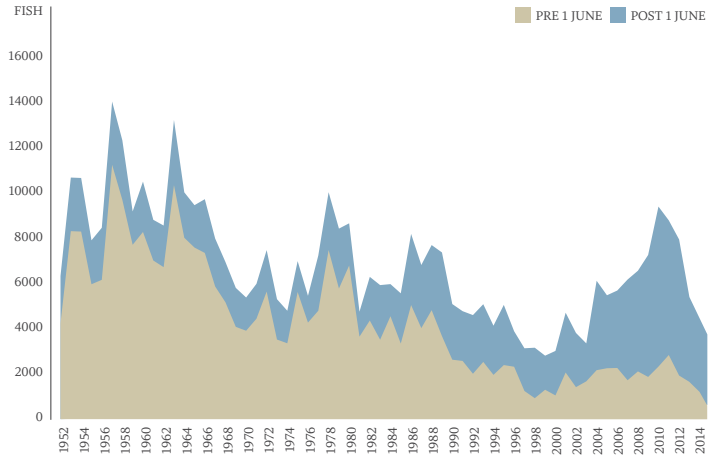
Dee

Mark Bilsby - *River Dee Director*

2015 was a very poor year, with low numbers of salmon and grilse venturing back from the sea in each month of the season. The big question for 2015 is why is this occurring – as the Dee has, up until recently, been a river in recovery. Stocks of juvenile fish are in good health and the number of smolts going down the river is good, which suggests that the problem is out to sea. However, whilst historically we have always looked at marine survival as being an issue on the high seas in the far Atlantic, recent research indicates that the problem may be occurring within sight of the land. To this end the Board and Trust have started a major smolt trapping and tagging programme to understand what happens to these fish as they venture down the river, through the estuary and out to sea. This work is happening now and its results will be provided every autumn so that we can keep people informed about how these fish are faring.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	2,558	647	1,991	n/a	6,281	99%	n/a
Sea Trout	1,044	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,693	98%	n/a

Season dates: 1 Feb – 30 Sep.

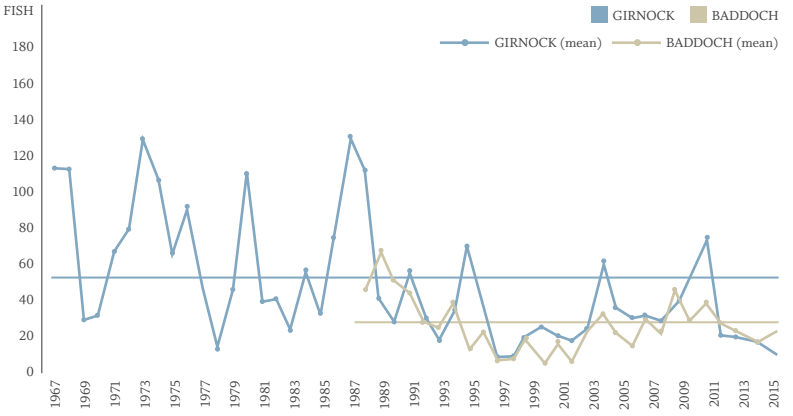


DEE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - DEE DSFB

Girnock and Baddoch fish traps (River Dee)

Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory – Marine Scotland Science

Marine Scotland Science Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory operates two traps on upper tributaries of the Aberdeenshire River Dee (Girnock and Baddoch burns). These tributaries are dominated by early-running spring salmon (multi sea winter fish), the stock component that has been of most concern in recent decades. Although numbers of male and female salmon caught at the traps show similar temporal trends, female numbers are plotted as they are considered the fundamental spawning component. The 10 females caught in the Girnock trap and 22 females caught in the Baddoch trap in 2015 represent 19% and 79% of the long-term means respectively. However, it should be noted that the mean count at the Baddoch is over a shorter time period and does not include the period of high adult returns observed in early years at the Girnock. For further information on the Girnock and Baddoch fish traps, see: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Monitoring/Traps



GIRNOCK & BADDOCH FEMALE UPSTREAM BURN TRAP COUNTS 1966-2015
SOURCE - MARINE SCOTLAND SCIENCE © Crown copyrightt

Number of adult females returning to the Girnock and Baddoch traps on Deeside. Long-term mean values are shown for each site.

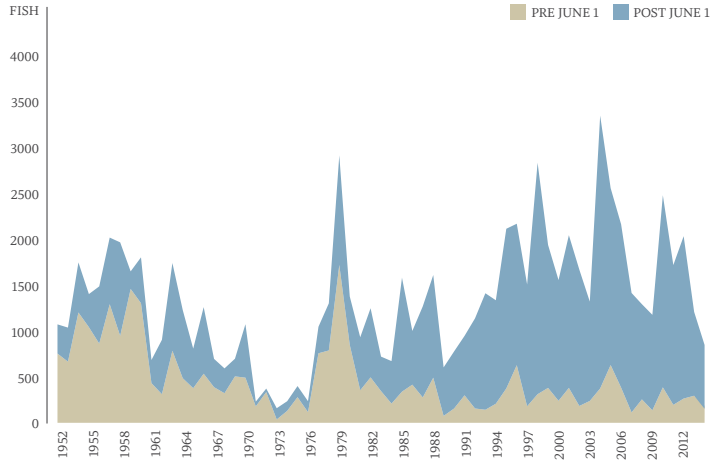
Don

Jon Davison - *Chairman, Don DSFB*

Actual catch returns for 2015 are not available at time of writing, although it seems that this season was as bad as last. Only 3 salmon were recorded in February, early spring saw fishing activity increase and a 24lb salmon caught. June saw the arrival of what appeared to be increased numbers of sea trout but the grilse remained absent in any numbers until the first few weeks of September when catches of grilse in the 4-6lb range did briefly increase, although red vent was noticeable on most. From late September to the end of the season catches were disappointing and largely consisted of coloured salmon. Although there were a few over 20lb in the last month, the heaviest at 25lb, annual catch figures for salmon will be well down for the season on most beats. The River Don Trust is progressing the opening up of the Esset Burn, which currently has two weirs that need modifications, but over 30km of excellent spawning ground should be accessible in 2016.

	2014 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	747	134	653	n/a	1,679	96/84/86%*	25lb
Sea Trout	246	n/a	n/a	n/a	342	89%	10lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



DON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2014
SOURCE - DON DSFB

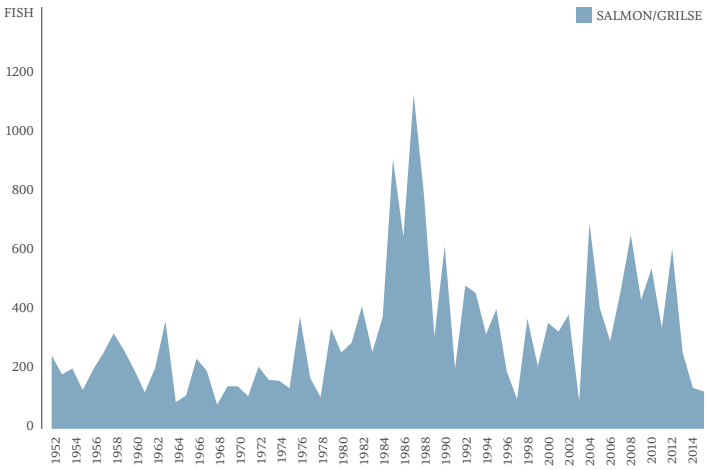
Ythan

Mark Andrew - *Ythan DSFB*

2015 was a very poor year for salmon, with few fish seen and fewer caught, and October was particularly disappointing compared to previous years, although this can partially be explained by less angling effort on the river. Sea trout numbers were also quite poor, but holding up better than salmon. Invasive weeds were controlled for the second year and there was a programme of debris removal and easing of restrictive passes, although there's a concern about the loss of redds from recent floods and the erosion of river banks. A payment was made to Usan not to net within the District. The river has been classified as category 2 by the Wild Fisheries Review and further measures beyond the present conservation code may apply in 2016.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	130	1	129	0	350	0/68/68%*	n/a
Sea Trout	1,268	n/a	n/a	20	1,452	70%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 14 Nov. * Spring / summer / overall.*



YTHAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - YTHAN DSFB

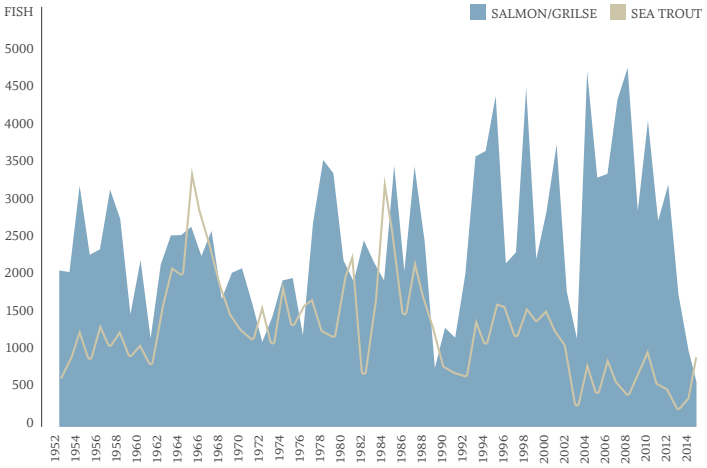
Deveron

Richie Miller - *Director, Deveron DSFB & Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust*

This was the second lowest salmon rod catch since records began and well below the long-term average. Spring salmon catches decreased from the previous year to 44 salmon by end of May, with 72% returned to the river, aided by the Chivas Regal spring salmon conservation scheme. The Deveron rod catch has been shown in a study by Marine Scotland (2005) to be particularly influenced by river flow and this has certainly been a major factor in the low spring and summer catches experienced locally over the last three years. A notable salmon of 30.5 lb was successfully caught and released during October, which secured the Morison Trophy. The sea trout catch increased by 41%, from 412 to a total of 584. For the 2016 season the Scottish Government has classified the Deveron as a Category 1 river, whereby current levels of salmon exploitation are thought to be sustainable. The Board aims to preserve this classification and ask that the River Deveron Conservation Code 2016 (found at www.deveron.org) be adhered to by all anglers. From 2016 onwards net fishing out-with estuary limits will be prohibited by the Scottish Government for a period of three years, due to the mixed stock nature of the fishery.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	980	44	936	1,036	2,880	72/75/75%*	30lb
Sea Trout	584	n/a	n/a	204	653	95%	14lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



DEVERON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE -DEVERON DSFB

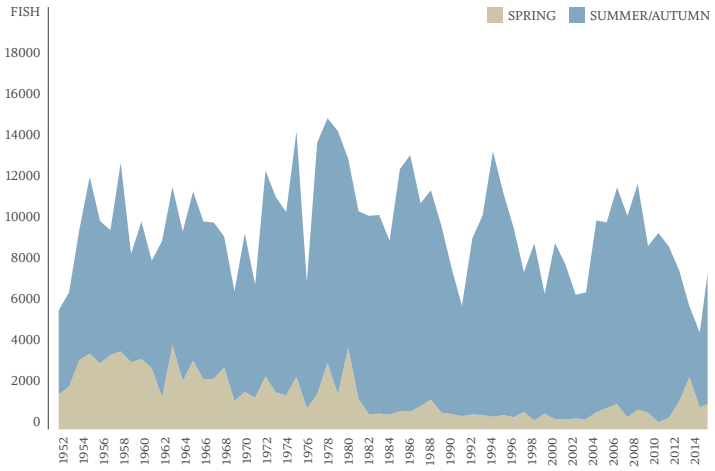
Spey

Roger Knight - *Director, Spey Board and Foundation*

Whilst 2015 was not a record year, catches were up by almost 70% on the previous season and – particularly during the spring fishing – were also more evenly-spread throughout the river than in recent years, which had tended to favour beats in the lower river. Anglers have returned even more fish than before, with 94% being released to spawn, while juvenile fish numbers are healthy. Sea trout catches, meanwhile, were in line with the 10-year average. The Board remains concerned by the significant levels of water abstraction, particularly in the upper catchment by Rio Tinto Alcan, which is licensed to divert water from Spey Dam, some twelve miles from the source of the river, to Fort William. The impact of the abstraction and its associated infrastructure on the upper Spey salmon population is severe, with minimal numbers of salmon fry recorded above the dam in 2015 and none the previous year. The Board is engaging positively with SEPA and Rio Tinto Alcan to deliver improvements in this uppermost part of the river, particularly through the implementation of the Water Framework Directive's second River Basin Management Plan.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	7,728	1,360	6,386	n/a	8,500	97/94/94%*	32lb
Sea Trout	2,175	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,200	81%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Feb - 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



SPEY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - SPEY DSFB

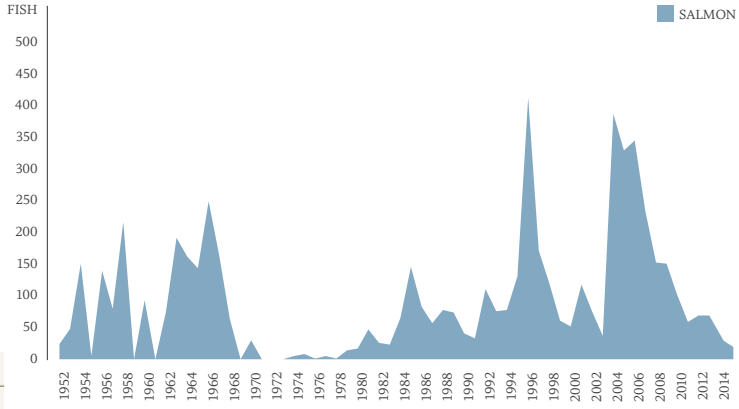
Lossie

Valerie Wardlaw - *Administrator, Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Fisheries Trust*

This was another poor season, with low catches reported and the wet summer being blamed for fish running up the river without stopping in pools, while the autumn angling was disrupted by low water levels. Fish were seen entering the river with high tides in October and November, when anglers reported seeing coloured fish and grilse in the upper river. Access for anglers continued to be restricted by the Elgin Flood Alleviation Scheme works until just before the end of the season. A hydromorphology survey of the lower river was undertaken on behalf of SEPA. Mink monitoring and control continued, with three mink captured. Monitoring of wind farm construction continued, as did INNS plant control, although infestations of giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed remain severe.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	19	n/a	n/a	0	144	79%	n/a
Sea Trout	19	n/a	n/a	0	141	53%	n/a

Season dates: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



LOSSIE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - FINDHORN, NAIRN AND LOSSIE FISHERIES TRUST

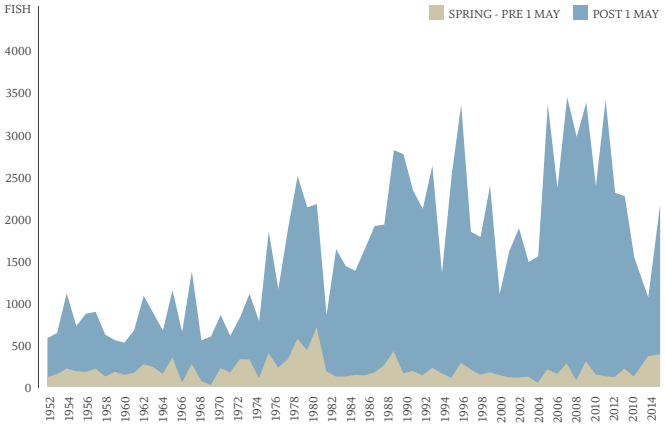
Findhorn

Alasdair Laing - *Chairman, Findhorn DSFB*

The first fresh run fish of the season, weighing 18lb, was caught in February, this early success proved to be the precursor of a decent spring where the lower and middle beats had good numbers of fresh fish. Summer salmon and grilse came in good numbers and, by August, fish were in all beats of the river. Catches were back to average after two poor seasons. Water levels were good throughout the 2015 season, with no severe spates, enabling fish to enter and run up to the head of the river. An 80% return rate was achieved. There was no noticeable damage to fish stocks from the August 2014 spates. The Forres Flood scheme works are now completed and access has been restored to all beats. Monitoring of developments such as wind farms, power line upgrades and road improvements continued. INNS plant infestations, especially giant hogweed, are severe in the lower Findhorn and treatment continues. Predator numbers continue to increase as there is a very limited ability to control numbers.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	2,259	360	1,899	n/a	2,529	91/80/82%*	25lb
Sea Trout	165	n/a	n/a	n/a	105	82%	6lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb - 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



FINDHORN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - FINDHORN DSFB

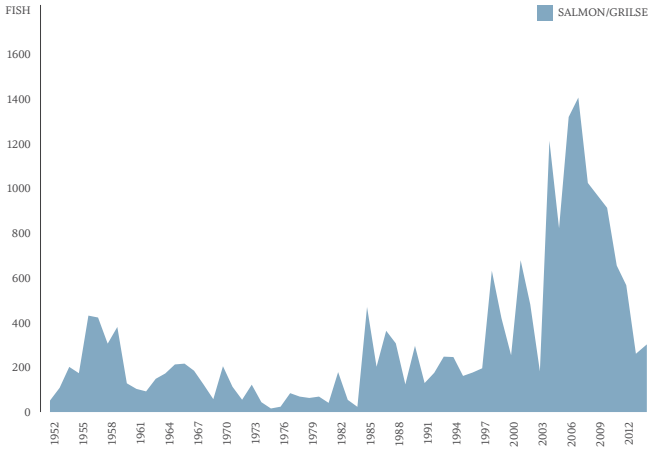
Nairn

Valerie Wardlaw – *Administrator, Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Fisheries Trust*

The season started with an excellent run of spring fish, matched by good catches. Fresh fish continued to enter the river throughout the season, with a good grilse run in the summer and a run of autumn salmon right up to the closing day. The recent trends have been for an improved spring run, a moderate run of summer salmon, a later than normal grilse run and a late run of autumn salmon. Salmon have been a good average size, with many exceeding 8lb. A habitat improvement project in the upper catchment is in development, and a scoping exercise to identify further habitat improvements in the upper Nairn commenced. A hydromorphology survey of the lower Nairn was undertaken on behalf of SEPA. Crayfish control continues, with thousands trapped this year and a PhD project testing alternative methods of control. INNS and mink control continued, while the bank and path damage caused by spates in 2015 is being addressed. Fishing effort on the river has been in decline for a number of years, due the economic downturn, declining catches and lack of public awareness of angling opportunities within the District.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	317	68	249	n/a	766	76/49/55%*	17lb
Sea Trout	124	n/a	n/a	n/a	87	77%	8lb

*Season dates: 1 Mar – 7 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



NAIRN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - NAIRN DSFB

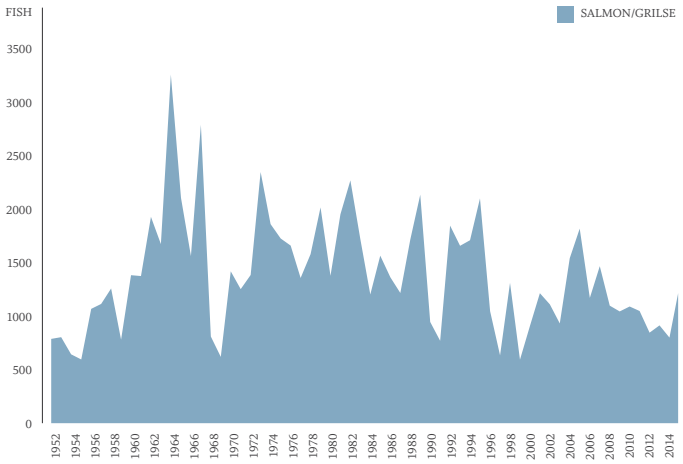
Ness

Chris Conroy - *Director, Ness DSFB*

This was an extremely encouraging season on the Ness system, with the best overall total for 8 years, while spring fish were caught in numbers not seen for 20 years. Catches of grilse also improved significantly after a recent decline, producing the seventh highest catch since records began in 1952. Exceptional seasons were experienced on the River Oich and River Garry, despite a major breach of the Caledonian Canal and disturbance associated with repairs. Autumn MSW salmon catches were down on the previous year and the third lowest since 1952. This may in part be due to the prevailing river conditions, although there has undoubtedly been a long-term decline in autumn salmon catches, with no sign of recovery at present. Voluntary conservation measures have been in place for some time in the Ness District. The overall release rate fell to 84 per cent in 2015, the first fall in five years. This is believed to be in reaction to the Scottish Government's kill licence proposals, with anglers wanting to take a fish while they still could. Volunteer conservation agreements in place with two key netsmen resulted in no fish being recorded by the net fishery for the third year running.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,223	322	901	0	1,057	99/78/84%*	26lb
Sea Trout	93	n/a	n/a	0	66	n/a	n/a

*Season dates: 15 Jan – 15 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



NESS ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - NESS DSFB

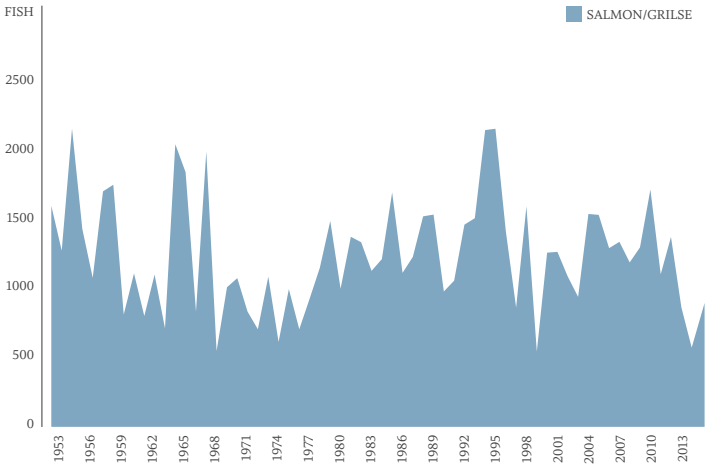
Beauly

Alastair Campbell - *Clerk, Beauly DSFB*

March saw some of the worst flooding on the Beauly in 25 years, the river was recorded at 10 feet above summer lows. The first runs began early April and were fairly hard, providing challenging angling. May saw some exciting fishing, with catches nearly three times greater than the same period in 2014. The quality of fish also improved, with all fish in good condition most into double figures. The grilse were relatively late to arrive, not appearing on the lower river until later July. The fishing throughout August was very good on the lower river, the catches were steady and of good quality. However, upper beats – particularly on the Glass – struggled and all beats fell away in September and October, largely due to exceptionally low water. Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust instigated a programme of scale collection at the start of the year. The uptake on scale collection has been outstanding, with around 97 sets of scales coming from the Lower Beauly and Farrar ghillies (a mixture of historic and 2015 samples). Over time, NBFT will be able to build a detailed picture in terms of smolt age, composition of grilse/multi sea winter and prevalence of repeat spawners etc. The Beauly Board once again joined with the Ness Board to negotiate with the proprietors of coastal netting rights a moratorium on commercial netting in the Inner Moray Firth in 2015.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	5yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	877	65	812	n/a	1,169	100/83/84%*	n/a
Sea Trout	351	n/a	n/a	n/a	309	100%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 15 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*

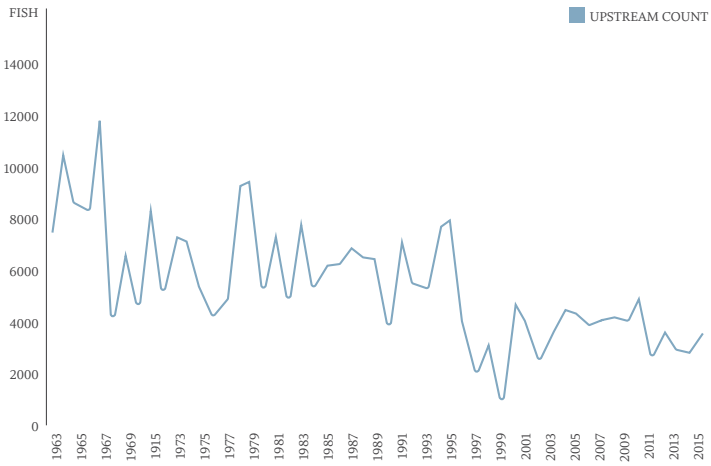


BEAULY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - BEAULY DSFB

Beauly counter

Alastair Campbell - *Clerk, Beauly DSFB*

The fish pass figures provided by SSE registered 4,374 though the Kilmorack dam (up from 3,388 in 2014) and 3,905 coming through the Aigas Dam (up from 2,871 in 2014). The Board is extremely concerned about the proposed 'category 3' grading by Marine Scotland and has questioned the basis upon which the conservation measures have been assessed, particularly the use of catch statistics, where a long-term data set of hydro dam fish-pass counts is available as an alternative, but has been ignored. A review of this and of the area calculations used is urgently being sought.



BEAULY (AIGAS) UPSTREAM COUNT 1963-2015
SOURCE - SSE

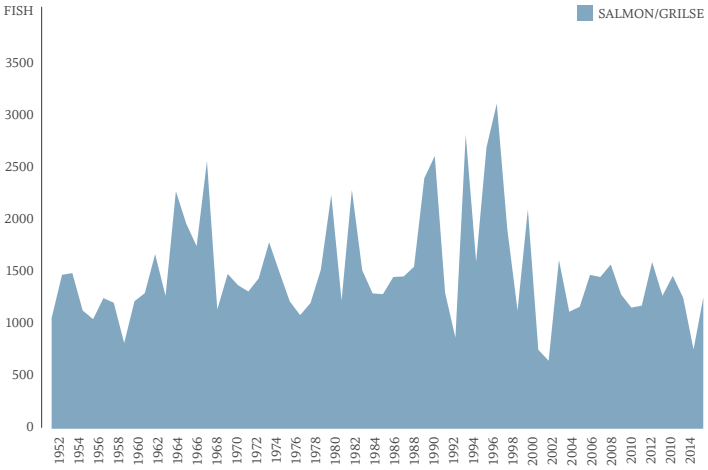
Conon

Simon McKelvey - *Cromarty DSFB*

2015 was characterised by extremes of flow at either end of the season. High flows during spring and early summer brought difficult fishing conditions to the lower beats but, combined with a stronger multi-sea winter run than last year gave good catches on beats near Tor Achilty dam. The grilse run was also much stronger than last year, and gave improved catches during July and August, although these then tailed off with very high temperatures and low flows throughout September. The count through Tor Achilty dam, at over 1,400, was the highest in the last 20 years, which is likely due to the increase in natural spawning in the upper reaches of the Meig following the restoration of the fish pass at Corriefeol. Work is ongoing with Scottish and Southern Energy to evaluate and improve downstream passage of salmon smolts through the hydro scheme. The low water conditions and high temperatures during September and October led to disease issues, with some fish showing symptoms of furunculosis.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1 ,285	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,287	n/a	26lb
Sea Trout	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.5lb

Season dates: 11 Feb – 30 Sept.



CONON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - CONON DSFB

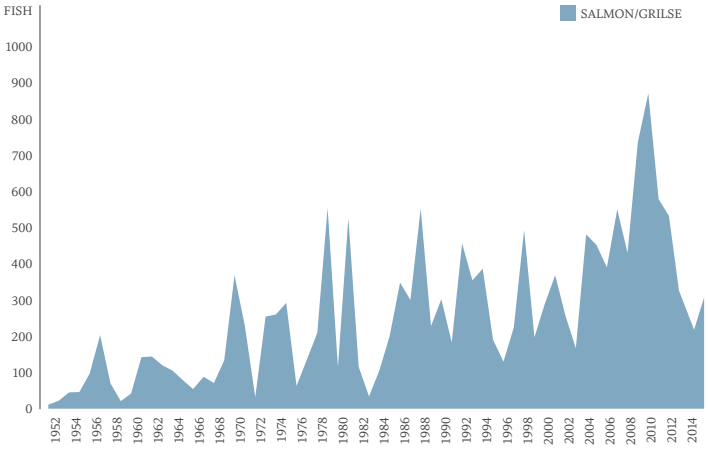
Alness

Roger Dowsett - *Novar Fishings Manager*

The total rod catch was an improvement on 2014, but only about half of the 5-year average pre-2014. There seemed to be a significant improvement in grilse and MSW salmon stocks compared to 2014; the main reason for the poor catches was attributed to another dry summer, the third in succession. There was no significant spate from mid-July until after the end of the season, and this affected both running and taking behaviour of salmon – as evidenced by Alness AC's catches, which were higher than those on the Novar beats, a very unusual event. No progress has been made by the Fishery Board in resolving the barrier to salmonid migration on the Allt na Seasgaic, caused by a poorly designed road culvert. This was once one of the most important spawning burns on the entire system. In mitigation a small broodstock programme remains in place to stock the Allt na Seasgaich each spring with fry. Catch and release rates continue to improve year on year. Carcass tagging has been in place as a trial since 2012.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	5yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	310	26	284	n/a	292	92/70/72%*	21lb
Sea Trout	67	n/a	n/a	n/a	71	96%	4.75lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



ALNESS ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - CROMARTY DSFB

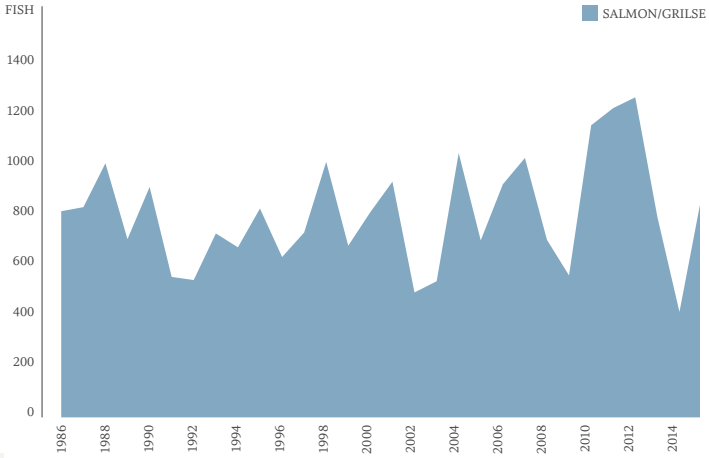
Carron (east coast)

Keith Williams - *Director, Kyle DSFB*

Spring catches were marginally better than in 2014, with April and May providing the best of the fishing. Water levels provided good fishing conditions for much of the summer and grilse runs appeared to be much better than in 2014, both in abundance and condition. Overall the 2015 total was almost double its 2014 counterpart and by the end of July some beats had exceeded their total for the whole of the previous year. During the year a successful application for a feasibility and optioneering assessment of the dam at Diebidale was made to SEPA's Water Environment Fund by Kyle Fisheries. Presently access to the high quality spawning areas upstream of this obstacle is severely limited. A report has now been received from the contractor and the results are being considered. Kyle Fisheries staff also assisted with the removal of a piece of timber from Glencalvie Falls in order to prevent a continued accumulation of material. The upper reaches of the Carron are monitored annually to ensure that salmon are able to pass this natural obstacle. Electro-fishing results from 2015 indicate that adult salmon are successfully negotiating the falls.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	813	195	618	n/a	n/a	97/94/94%*	n/a
Sea Trout	50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	96%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



CARRON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2015
SOURCE - KYLE DSFB

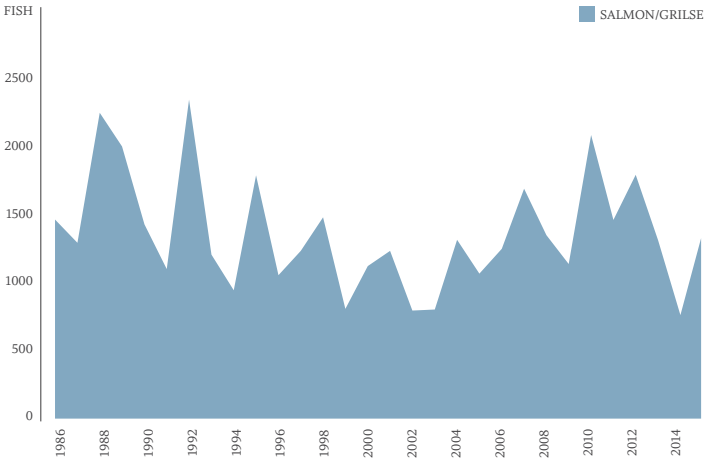
Oykel

Keith Williams - *Director, Kyle DSFB*

The Lower Oykel was the Kyle's star performer of the 2015 season, with over 1000 salmon returned to the water for the first time ever. Water levels were conducive to good fishing for the bulk of the season, although the dry September hampered the beats upstream of Oykel Falls in particular. In a pattern repeated elsewhere in the Kyle of Sutherland catchment, beats upstream of major falls appeared to struggle compared to their downstream counterparts. Late spring fishing was particularly good, with the overall spring catches an improvement on 2014. Grilse numbers showed a marked improvement compared to the dismal showing in 2014, a pattern that was repeated on all the Kyle's rivers. Overall salmon and grilse totals were a considerable improvement on 2014. Anglers are thanked for collecting salmon scales during the season. The results of the scale reading exercise are now being collated.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,323	231	1,092	n/a	n/a	99/95/96%*	n/a
Sea Trout	131	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	96%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



OYKEL ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2015

SOURCE - KYLE DSFB

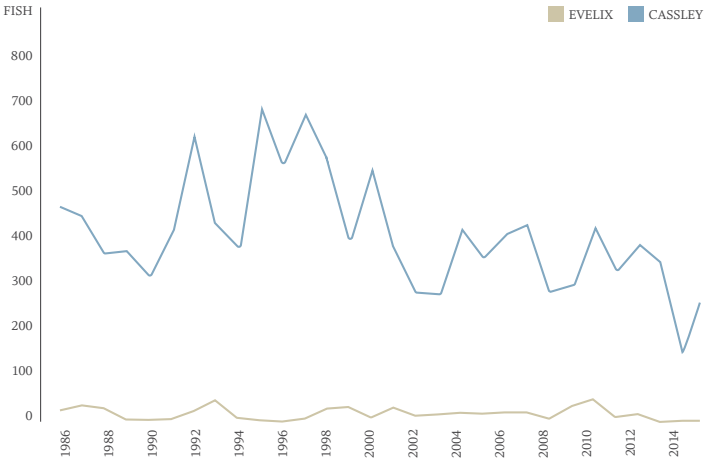
Evelix & Cassley

Keith Williams - *Director, Kyle DSFB*

Spring fishing on the Lower Cassley was much improved compared to 2014 although, in common with the other Kyle rivers, it was April before the catches were properly in full swing. By the end of May the total catch was close to that of the entire 2014 season. Grilse catches were much improved compared to 2014, although these were helped by good water levels for much of the season. As with the Oykel and Shin, beats upstream of a major waterfall did not appear to fish as well as those below it. Examination of the numbers of fish passing through the SSE counter at Duchally shows a sharp contrast in the timing of passage compared to 2014. In 2015 salmon appeared to be using the fish pass much later in the season than normal, but unverified end of year count totals appear considerably ahead of the 5-year average. Meanwhile, the Evelix was helped by the abundant rainfall until September, although final totals were hampered by low water in the last month of the season.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	257	72	185	n/a	n/a	100/89/92%*	n/a
Sea Trout	17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	94%	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



EVELIX & CASSLEY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2015

SOURCE - KYLE DSFB

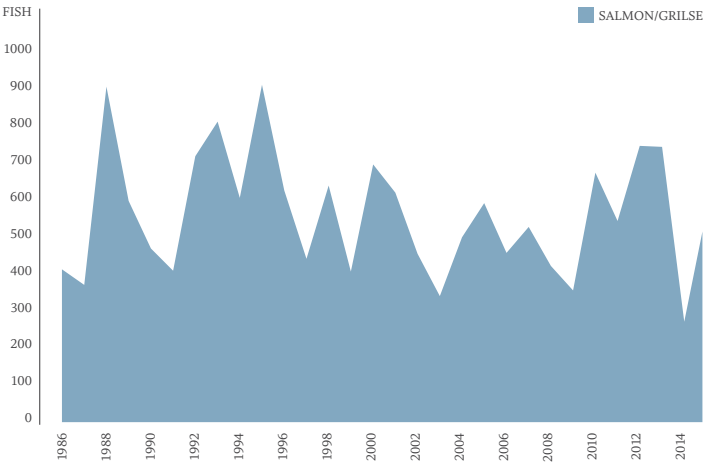
Shin

Keith Williams - *Director, Kyle DSFB*

Catches up until June were fractionally up on 2014 but grilse catches later in the year boosted the overall totals considerably. A phenomenon shared with other Kyle rivers was the stark contrast between catches in pools upstream and downstream of a major waterfall, in this case Shin Falls. It would appear that temperature alone cannot explain this, as a number of fish were seen successfully jumping over the falls but this was not reflected in catches upstream. The guaranteed compensation flow helped maintain catches in September compared to other Kyle rivers and this allowed for some improvement in catches in the upper river. Fish counts at Shin Diversion Dam in Lairg were slightly below the 5-year average. After the end of the season a small number of broodstock were collected for hatchery use and their progeny will be planted out into the River Tirry in early 2016, in support of continued efforts to resolve long standing issues regarding smolt passage through Loch Shin. Data produced by Kyle Fisheries staff in 2015 again shows a worrying paucity of smolts successfully exiting the Upper Shin catchment.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	526	44	482	n/a	n/a	93/100/98%*	38lb
Sea Trout	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



SHIN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1986-2015

SOURCE - KYLE DSFB

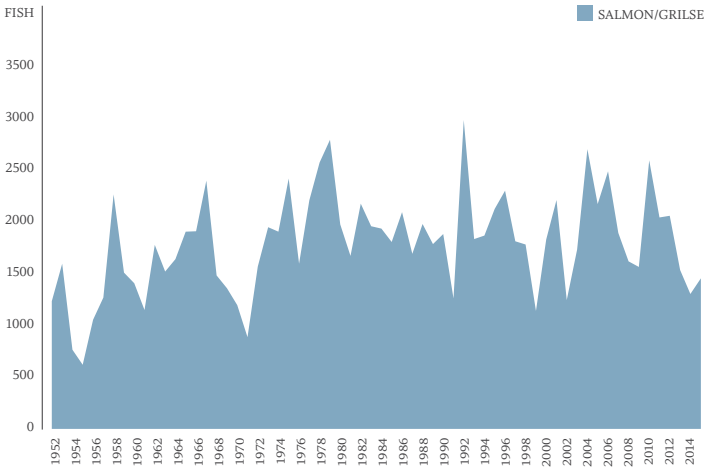
Helmsdale

Michael Wigan - *Manager, Helmsdale DSFB*

The grilse run was late and small. There was also a concern about the number of large and well-mended fish farm escapees – usually around 15lb, but up to 23lb – that were caught. These fish had clearly been in the sea for some time, but we don't know their origins. Are they broodstock that was too old and surplus-to-requirements? There may be a Code of Good Practice, but there is no enforcement.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,454	341	1,113	n/a	1,783	96/89/90%*	26lb
Sea Trout	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 30 Sept. * Spring / summer / overall.*



HELMSDALE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - HELMSDALE DSFB

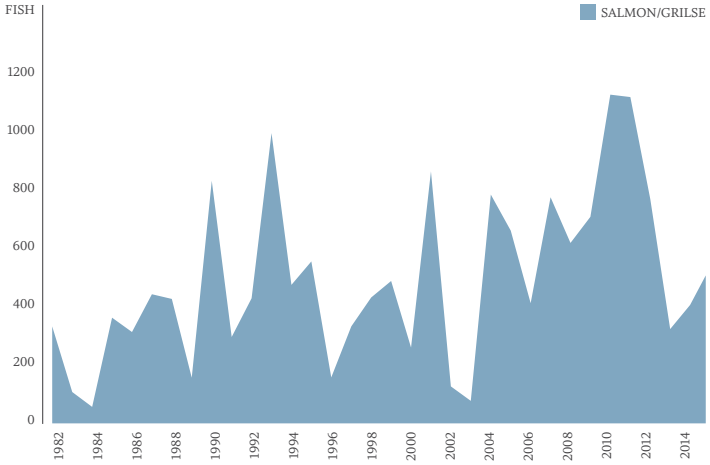
Wick

John Mackay - *Secretary, Wick Angling Club*

2015 was a reasonable season, with a 33% catch increase over each of the previous two years. Our small spring run was slow in arriving but there was a number of well-conditioned fish into double figures. The river fished well right through from June to the beginning of September, but then we were hit by a drought until the last few days of the season.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	530	27	503	n/a	685	15/27/27%*	15.5lb
Sea Trout	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 12 Oct. *Spring / summer / overall.*



WICK ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1982-2015

SOURCE -RIVER WICK

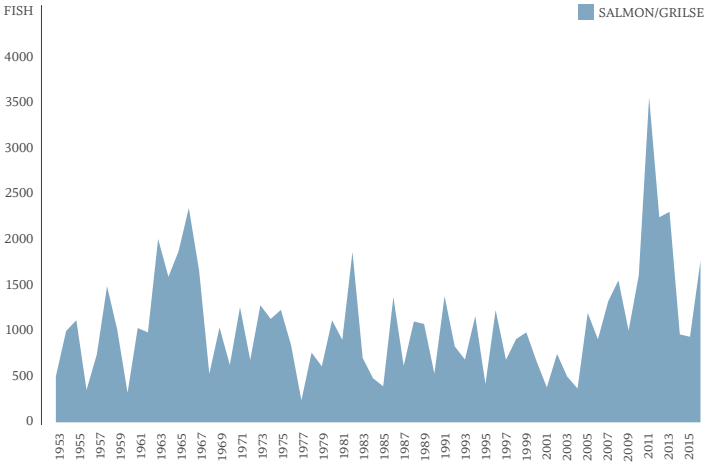
Thurso

Eddie McCarthy - *Thurso River Manager*

The overall numbers of fish around were thought to be as good as we had seen for many years. There were several fish in the 25-30lb range taken in the course of the season and, while the grilse were small in size, they were present in greater numbers than recent years, with many not arriving until early September. Our catch and release policy remains the same – after June 20th, anglers may keep two fish for their week provided that they are under 8lb. Although we remain vigilant in enforcing this policy, it has become obvious that the "releasing" of fish has ceased to be an issue with the great majority of anglers. The government ban on interceptory nets will have a minimal effect on our system but, I am certain, will have a massive effect on a great many other rivers.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,791	250	1,541	n/a	1,657	97/93/94%*	31.5lb
Sea Trout	102	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	78%	4.5lb

*Season dates: 11 Jan – 5 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



THURSO ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - THURSO RIVER MANAGEMENT

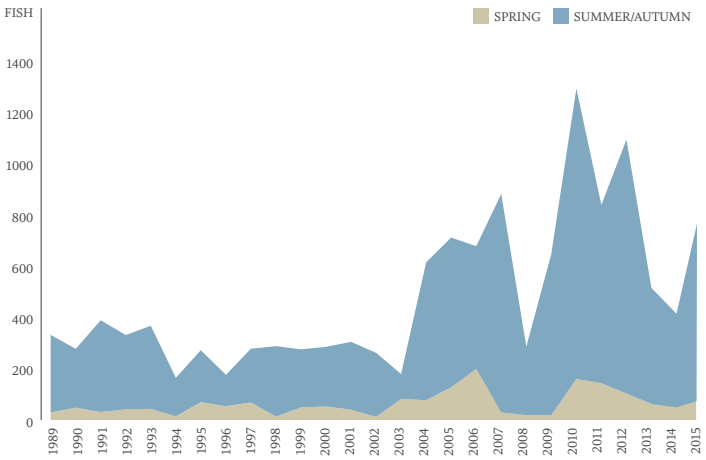
Halladale

John Salkeld - *Halladale Partnership*

Runs of salmon and grilse were much better than the last two years, although they were again 3-4 weeks late in arriving. With low rainfall in September the total annual catch was disappointing compared with the number of fish in the river. Forestry felling is continuing in the Dyke catchment but the agreement to position additional drainage dams and silt traps proved effective last winter. The catch and release code already prohibits taking any salmon pre 1 July and has again been tightened for 2016 to reduce the largest fish that may be taken to 7lb and the maximum number per beat week, when fish may be taken after 1 July, to 5 (for up to 3 rods).

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	775	103	672	n/a	820	99/85/87%*	20lb
Sea Trout	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	n/a	n/a

*Season dates: 12 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



HALLADALE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1989-2015
SOURCE - HALLADALE PARTNERSHIP

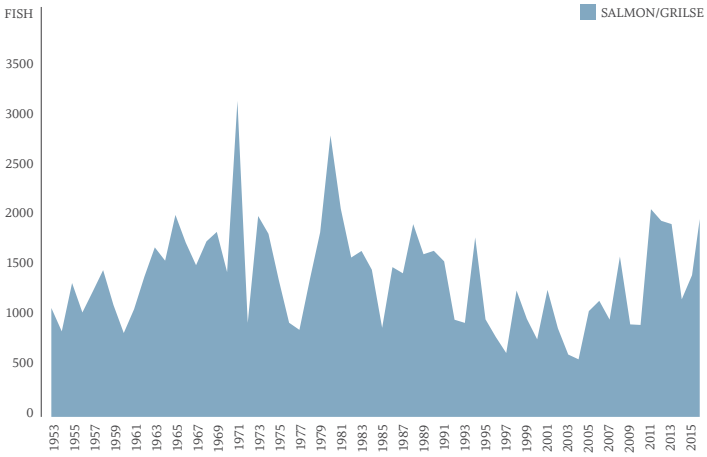
Naver

Matthew Heeps - *Head Bailiff & Fishery Manager*

An enjoyable total of 1,935 salmon and grilse was posted across the Naver catchment – a 52% increase in catches on the previous year, more than 450 fish over the current 10-year average, and the best season for the river in 35 years. The most significant improvement came with the spring catches, which saw a rise of over 90% on the 2014 return. With the average returning springer weighing in excess of 10lb and several fish in excess of 20lb banked, anglers on the Naver were certainly treated to some fine sport. Summer and autumn fishing also showed well, with an increase of a fraction under 40% on 2014 returns seen. The Naver once again recorded some excellent catch & release figures this year, with 100% of spring fish and 92.4% of all the fish banked across the season returned.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	1,935	617	1,318	n/a	1,458	100/88.9/92.4%*	27lb
Sea Trout	237	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.5lb

*Season dates: 12 Jan – 30 Sep. * Spring / summer / overall.*



NAVER ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - NAVER MANAGEMENT

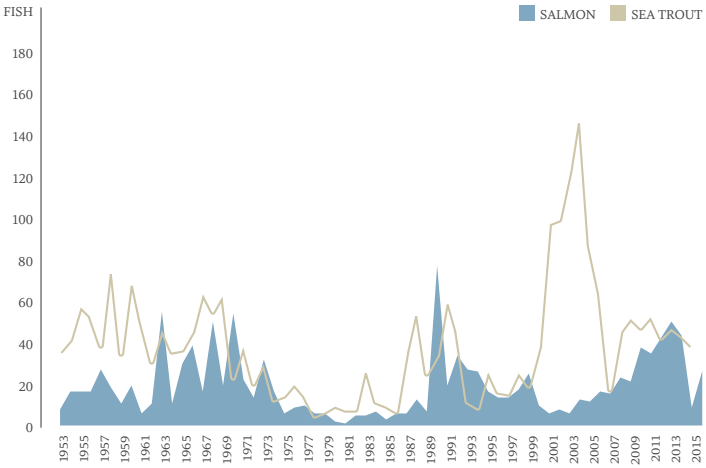
Polla

Charles Marsham - *North and West Sutherland Board and Trust*

Remedial work replacing 3 croys which were destroyed by the devastating flood in August 2014 seems to have worked, as fish were caught in all 3 pools. Our average catch is now as good if not better than the averages since 1950. From this and the number of fish seen we believe we are running the fishings on a sustainable level.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	27	0	27	n/a	29	60%	12lb
Sea Trout	45	n/a	45	n/a	49	70%	7lb

Season dates: 1 Jun – 30 Sep.



POLLA ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - NORTH AND WEST SUTHERLAND DSFB

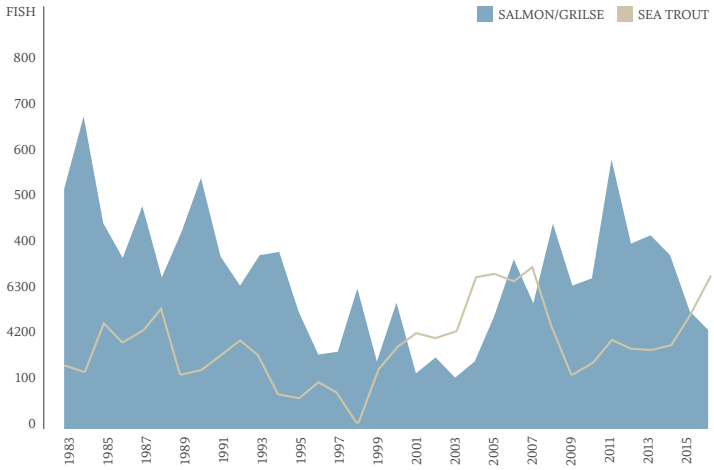
Dionard

Jim Allingham - *North and West DSFB*

2015 was dominated by low water once again and, even when there was water, the runs of salmon and grilse seemed poor and the fish all seemed to be in a great hurry to get up to Loch Dionard. There was virtually no significant rain in Strath Dionard from the first week in September until after the end of the season. The return of salmon and grilse was 38% below the 5-year average and nearly 30% of the total catch was taken in Loch Dionard – a proportion probably never surpassed. Sea trout seemed to be able to get up to Loch Dionard in the lowest water and, whilst the number of sea trout caught in the river was very low, the return from Loch Dionard was a record for recent times. The fact that 89% of all salmon and grilse, and 95% of all sea trout, caught were voluntarily returned to the water reflects very creditably on the responsible attitude to conservation adopted by those who enjoy the privilege of fishing the Dionard.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	218	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	89%	n/a
Sea Trout	341	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	95%	n/a

Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



DIONARD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1982-2015
SOURCE - NORTH AND WEST DSFB

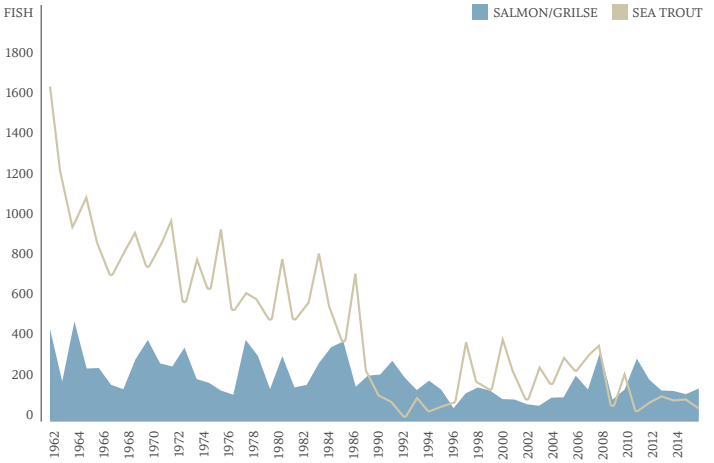
Laxford

Shona Marshall - *Biologist, West Sutherland Fisheries Trust and Reay Forest Estate*

Fish were taken consistently throughout the year, reflecting relatively constant water flows. The grilse run occurred in July, mirroring past run timings. The first salmon taken was early for the system, although not the earliest historically. The restructuring and development of woodland close to riparian waters remains ongoing. A catch and release policy remains in place for all fish until the end of the week containing 16 April, after which one cock salmon may be retained per week per let rod, while all hen salmon and sea trout must be returned.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	174	7	166	n/a	192	86/73/74%*	21lb
Sea Trout	61	n/a	n/a	n/a	167	95%	8lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



LAXFORD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1962-2015
SOURCE - WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST

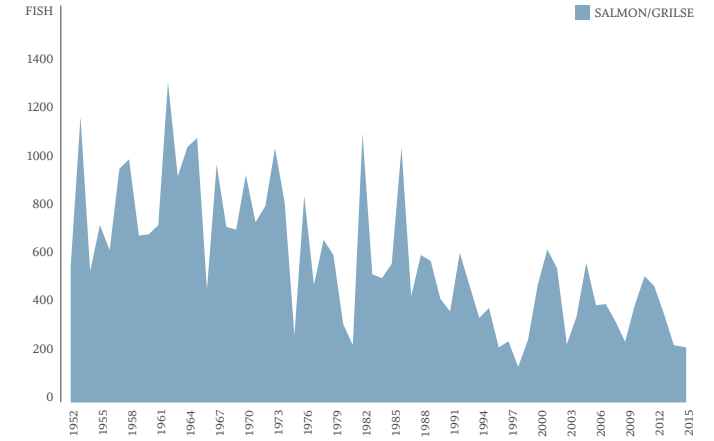
Grimersta

Simon Scott - *Manager, Grimersta Estate*

In 2015 we had good fishing conditions largely throughout the season. Water levels were generally nearer 3' than 2' and only fell below 2' on 4 days in all (August 23rd – 26th). We hoped initially that either the unusual conditions were disguising the distribution of fish, or the main run was late. However, by mid-August we finally accepted that it was a very disappointing run of grilse. There are, nonetheless, areas of encouragement. The condition of the grilse was excellent with very few undersized fish. Secondly, the return of 419 sea trout was the best for 31 years and included a good number of fish in the 2-3 lb range and two of 5lb – the best anyone can recall at Grimersta. We continue to work to achieve consensus on fisheries management and best practice on Loch Langabhat, the headwaters of the system, and throughout the wider catchment. We are extremely concerned about the implications of the proposed application of Conservation Limits on fisheries throughout the Western Isles.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	225	7	218	n/a	360	100/88/88%*	15lb
Sea Trout	419	n/a	n/a	n/a	241	100%	5lb

*Season dates: 11 FEb - 15 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



GRIMERSTA ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - WESTERN ISLES DSFB

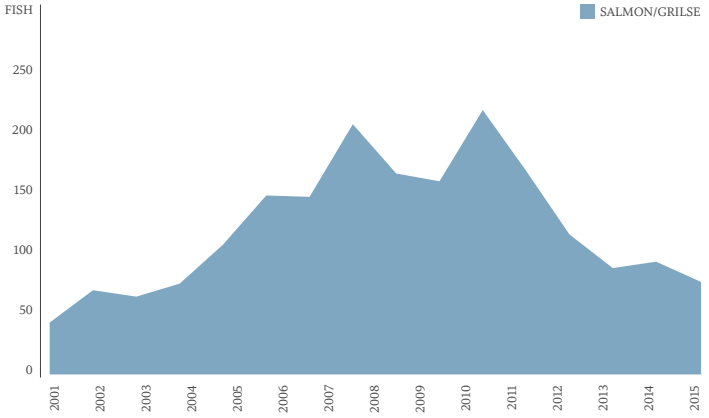
Snizort

Derek Dowsett - *Snizort River Manager*

The season began with promise, with good spates beginning early in the season. Until August the salmon catch was promising to compete with the best year in the last decade (2010). However, rainfall then fell off and much of August, September and October provided poor river levels and few opportunities for anglers to catch salmon. This is the third year in succession where infrequent and low levels of rainfall have become a major problem when the salmon runs are at their highest. The sea trout catch numbers were, however, very encouraging, despite poor water levels. The fish showed very few sea lice and little fin damage or evidence of historic infestation. It is viewed with dismay that, despite its significance in the island's ecology and the SDFB's objections, there have been two successful applications for new fish farm sites in Loch Snizort.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	69	0	69	n/a	131	97%	20lb
Sea Trout	69	n/a	n/a	n/a	60	91%	3lb

Season dates: 15 Feb – 15 Oct.



SNIZORT ROD CATCH STATISTICS 2000-2015

SOURCE - SKYE DSFB

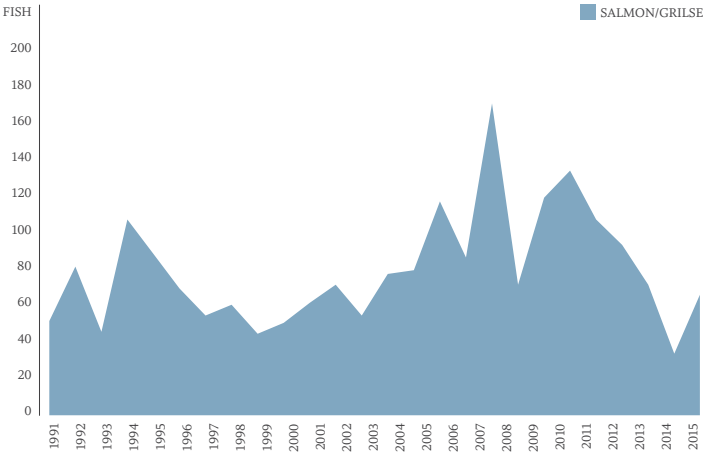
Little Gruinard

Brian Fraser - *Manager, Eilean Darach Estates*

This was again a disappointing season in the Two Brooms area. In the first half of the season the fish were there and the water was good; the second half was marked by poor runs of fish, very little water and unseasonably high temperatures. More research is needed into why our sea trout have disappeared again – there have been very few finnock showing around the coast too – and whether this might be connected to the aquaculture industry.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	65	0	65	n/a	97	100%	15.5lb
Sea Trout	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	3.5lb

Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.



LITTLE GRUINARD ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1990-2015

SOURCE - LITTLE GRUINARD MANAGEMENT

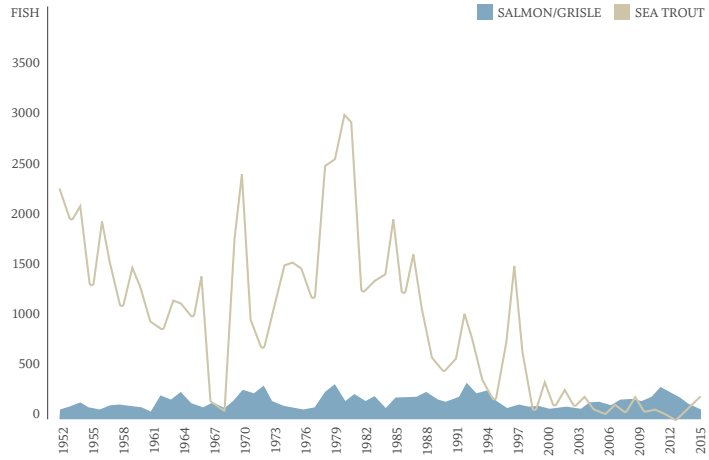
Ewe and Loch Maree

Peter Cunningham - *Biologist, Wester Ross Fisheries Trust*

The season started well, with some of the best fishing for MSW salmon in June for many years, while grilse were caught from July through to the end of the season in reasonable numbers. For sea trout, it was a poor season for the Ewe and most of Loch Maree (which was lightly fished), but a better season on the lochs at the top of the system. A sea trout with over 400 sea lice on it was caught by WRFT sweep netting team in Loch Ewe in June; other heavily infected fish were taken in the Ewe in July. Efforts are ongoing to resolve fish passage issues associated with new hydropower developments in the Bruachaig River, to ensure that salmon are able to access sizable areas of spawning and nursery habitat. On Loch Maree the number of larger brown trout caught exceeded the number of sea trout, possibly reflecting a continued shift towards production of non-anadromous trout. A common seal was seen in Loch Maree in October, others have been seen feeding on salmon in Loch Ewe. Riparian habitat improvements are ongoing along important sea trout spawning burns at Slattadale and in the headwaters above Loch Coulin, led by respective owners. The WRAFB was actively involved in discussions with aquaculture regarding future management of interactions.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	202	n/a	n/a	n/a	218	100/90/90%*	20lb
Sea Trout	99	n/a	n/a	n/a	115	100%	3lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



RIVER EWE AND LOCH MAREE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST

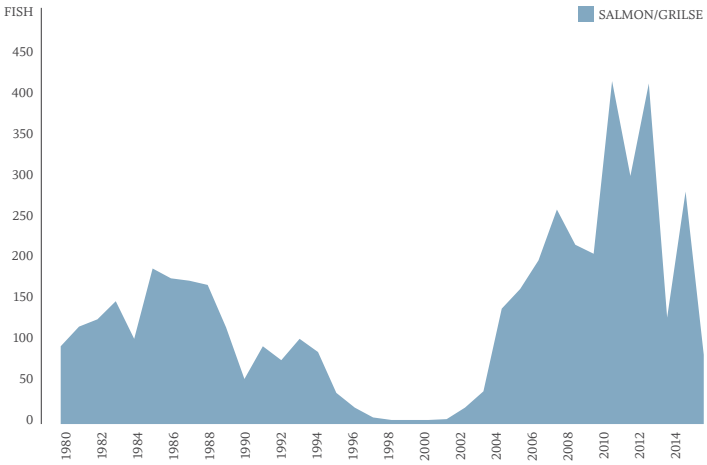
Carron (Wester Ross)

Bob Kindness - *Carron River Manager*

There were several positives for the season, including 24 double-figure spring salmon caught before the end of June on the lower 2 beats with a minimal of fishing effort. Sea trout and finnock were also present in good numbers, were in excellent condition and were almost completely devoid of sea lice. Despite these positive figures, the season was disappointing; largely due to the almost complete absence of grilse in the rod catch. While the number of grilse in the river was clearly well down on the previous season, the weather had a big part to play in the lack of catches. Dry conditions for the second half of August and throughout the whole of September and October resulted in unfishable conditions and low fishing effort during what is normally the most productive part of the season. However, winter spates, resulting in gravel movements, are a particular issue for the river, and winter 15/16 was no exception in this respect. It is also probable that losses to predation occur, as witnessed from the presence of damaged smolts in the screw trap. The actual impact on catch numbers of these issues and other factors, together with the influence of the on-going stocking programme to mitigate against such losses, is the focus of the River Carron Research Programme undertaken by the Rivers and Lochs Institute at Inverness College UHI. A 100% catch and release policy continues to operate. All salmon are put in keep-nets after capture to allow full recovery, so we can be certain that when a fish is released it will survive.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	76	10	66	n/a	252	100/97/97%*	18lb
Sea Trout	137	n/a	n/a	n/a	119	100%	2.5lb

*Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



CARRON (W.COAST) ROD CATCH 1980-2015
SOURCE - RIVER CARRON MANAGEMENT

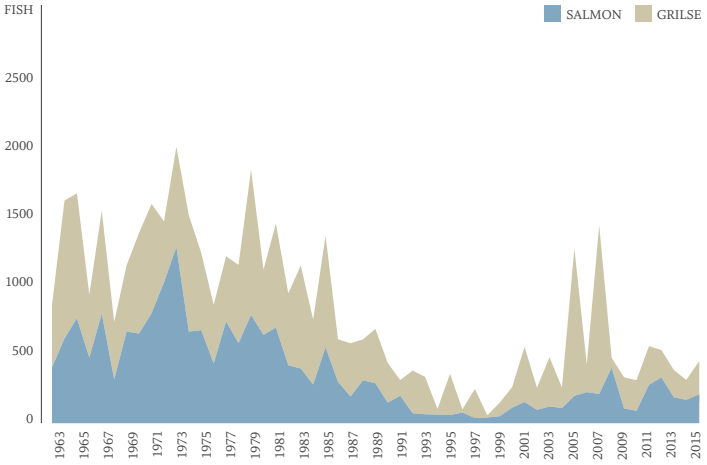
Lochy

John Veitch - *Lochy River Manager*

The 2015 total of 465 salmon and grilse equates to a 47% increase on 2014 and a 2% increase on the 5-year average. May and June delivered some excellent fishing on the Lochy beats – favourable conditions, with good water levels and cool temperatures, helped the spring catch increase by almost 90% on the 5-year average and most of the salmon were between 12-16lb. July and August also produced some excellent fishing and we finished 34% up on the 5-year average in these months, although all grilse had red vent syndrome. September and October, on the other hand, saw a change in conditions, with summer weather prevailing and catches dropping accordingly. A total of 48 fin-clipped salmon and grilse from our smolt programme were caught in the season and during rod and line broodstock fishing. It is estimated that the underutilised main stem redds will have benefitted from the spawning of returned hatchery fish by upwards of 1.8 million additional ova.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	465	113	352	n/a	529	98/91/94%*	25lb
Sea Trout	104	n/a	n/a	n/a	157	100%	4lb

*Season dates: 15 May – 15 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



LOCHY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1963-2015
SOURCE - LOCHY ASSOCIATION

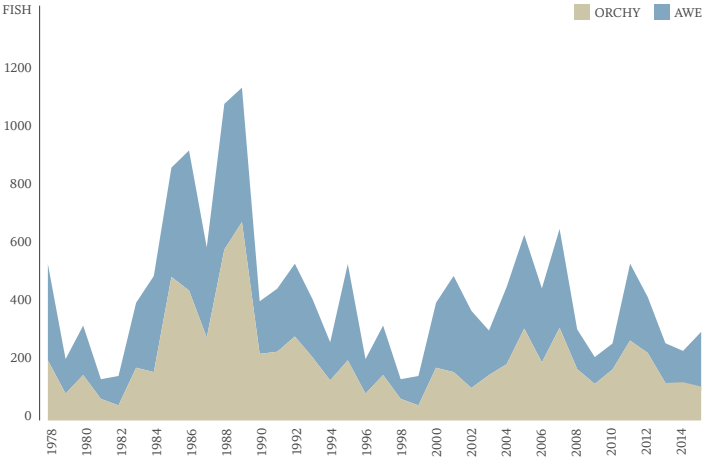
Awe and Orchy

Roger Brook - *Chairman, Argyll DSFB*

The total catch of 324 salmon was 37% up on the previous year, despite the counter only showing a 2% increase in salmon numbers. The reason for this increase is very simple: the normal compensation flow which has maintained the Awe at the same level for 50 years was artificially increased during the main salmon run by the Hydro Board, whose main generator was out of action. This held the fish in the Awe for longer than normal before they were able to reach the Orchy. The Catch in the Awe was up 92%. The Orchy catch was down by 8%. The grilse run occurred during this period. The Awe catch was 55% grilse. The Orchy catch was only 25% grilse. This is what different flow rates can do to a fishery.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	324	49	275	n/a	368	93%	n/a
Sea Trout	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct.

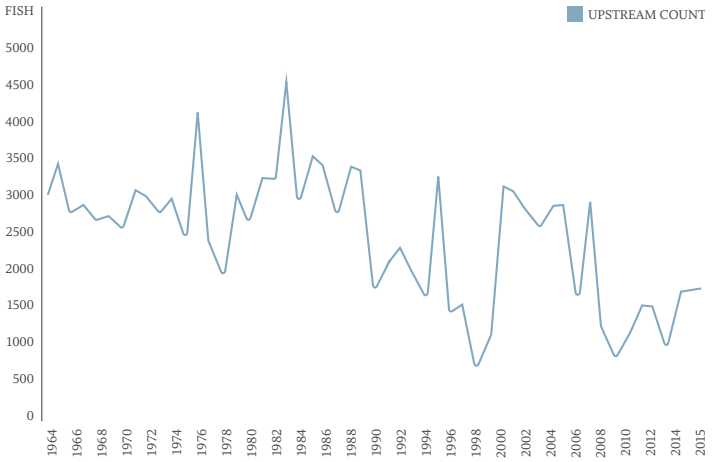


AWE & ORCHY ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1978-2015
SOURCE - ARGYLL DSFB

Awe counter

Roger Brook - *Chairman, Argyll DSFB*

The total run of fish through the Awe counter was 1,772 – 2% above the previous year and 24% above the 5-year average – and there are signs that the count is stabilising at about 60% of the historic normal level. The flows on this river have been stable for 55 years; ever since the hydro-electric scheme was built. The timing of the various components of the fish run have been similarly reliable, with fish arriving during the same week year on year. It was interesting this year that repairs to the generating set coincided with high rainfall during the main summer run. As a consequence much higher flow rates were put down the river and the fish were diverted away from the fish lift and counter. The result was a 5-week delay in fish leaving the Awe through the counter, which benefited angling on the Awe at the expense of the Orchy.



AWE BARRAGE UPSTREAM COUNT 1964-2015
SOURCE - SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ENERGY

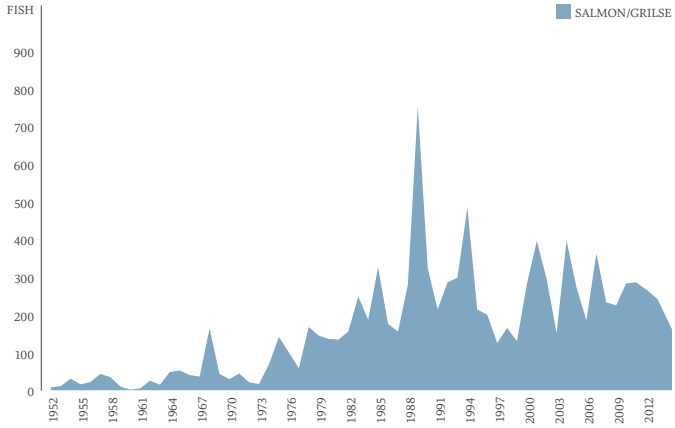
Irvine and Garnock

Stuart Brabbs - *Ayrshire Rivers Trust*

Although the final returns are not available at the time of writing, 2015 appears to have been a season of mixed fortunes, with the Garnock seemingly faring better than the Irvine, although both suffered from the dry autumn. The Dean ford has been replaced with a 4 section box culvert on the Kilmarnock Water, thus enabling virtually unhindered fish passage throughout this catchment for the first time in decades, and the Trust has been working closely with SEPA to develop designs for fish passes at Sevenacres and Garden weirs on the Lugton Water, which should allow access to over 20km of habitat. The River Irvine Improvement Association hatchery at Dean Castle Park in Kilmarnock was unsuccessful in securing broodstock over the winter, due to high water levels, but electrofishing surveys by the Trust found naturally produced salmon parr in the Fewick and Craufurdland Waters which is an encouraging development. In recent years release rates have improved considerably, although still fall far short of the national average and recent government reforms have categorised the catchment as category 3, meaning that all salmon and grilse must be returned from April 1. The volunteer bailiff force continues to provide enforcement within the catchment – all credit to them for their hard work.

	2014 total	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	171	n/a	284	57%	n/a
Sea Trout	134	n/a	96	72%	n/a

Season dates: 15 Mar – 15 Nov.



IRVINE/GARNOCK - ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2014
SOURCE - AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST

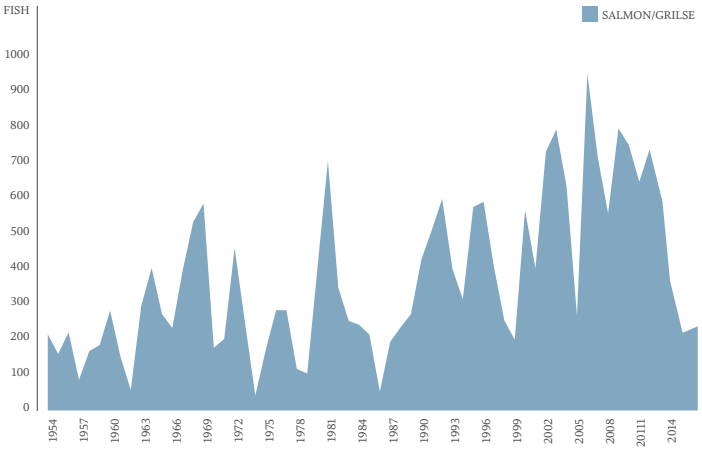
Ayr

Stuart Brabbs - *Ayrshire Rivers Trust*

2015 started well, with reports of good numbers of grilse and salmon entering the river in June and catches coming from most beats. Most of the rest of the season – bar a small spate in August – was dogged by low water, although there appeared to be more salmon in the river than in recent years. The restoration of open cast coal sites at Powharnol, Ponesk, Skares and Netherton is gaining momentum, but key issues will be addressed and hopefully water quality will improve as a result – recently large sections of the river have been upgraded from 'bad' to 'good' water quality. Hopefully this should soon be reflected in improvements in juvenile salmon and trout populations. The Scottish Government has classified the Ayr system as Category 3, which means it will operate as a catch and release fishery for salmon in 2016. Under-reporting of catches has long been an issue on the catchment and this undoubtedly contributes to the recent categorisation. Similarly, anglers have been slow to adopt catch and release and, despite recent improvements, the catchment's performance remains far below the national average of 82%.

	2015 total	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	249	n/a	537	44%	n/a
Sea Trout	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a

Season dates: 15 Feb – 31 Oct.



AYR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST

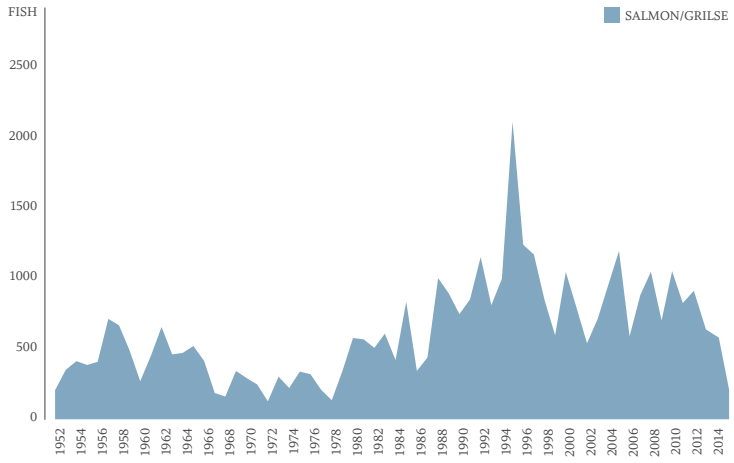
Doon

Stuart Brabbs - *Ayrshire Rivers Trust*

Catch returns were incomplete at the time of writing, but it is clear that 2015 was a very poor year, despite the compensation flow received from Loch Doon Dam. Catches were poor throughout the summer and salmon seemed unwilling to enter the river on compensation flows alone. Finally, in August, the river came into a small spate, which resulted in fish caught throughout the system, while there were reports of large numbers of fish running during the last two weeks of the season, but few beats seemed to benefit, compounding a very disappointing year. The Board is working with the Trust on a number of environmental improvements including bank stabilisation, fencing and restoration. The Doon was the only west coast mainland Scottish river to achieve Category 1 conservation status, which reflects the improvements in catch and release figures, but the Board seeks a target of at least 80%, in line with the majority of Scotland's rivers. Unfortunately, the classification makes no allowances for local weather and the last 3 seasons have all been plagued by poor angling conditions. Similarly, the number of returning adults appears to be declining, and this is a very worrying trend.

	2015 total*	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	222	n/a	827	72%	n/a
Sea Trout	5	n/a	n/a	80%	n/a

Season dates: 11 Feb – 31 Oct. * Provisional figures



DOON ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST

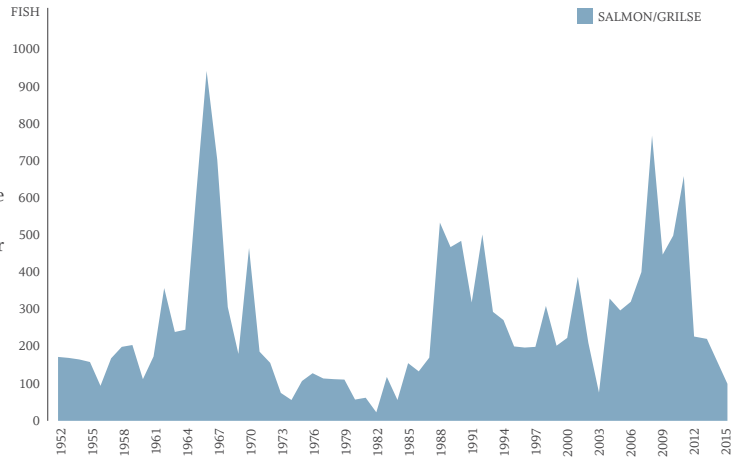
Girvan

Stuart Brabbs - *Ayrshire Rivers Trust*

Although catch returns were incomplete at the time of writing, 2015 will undoubtedly go down as the worst season for many years – largely due to a lack of water. As usual, a few springers entered the river early, and made for the upper reaches, but few were caught. There were a couple of small spates in August but they dropped away quickly and most salmon ran hard through the lower and middle reaches. Bailiffs reported large numbers of salmon in the harbour and watched good numbers running the dykes when the river came into spate but anglers further upstream didn't see these fish. Juvenile salmon stocks remain at good levels, with some of the best electrofishing results found anywhere in Ayrshire, but we can only speculate on the impact the extremely wet winter has had on spawning. DSFB Bailiffs are active along the length of the river and have reported several people for illegal activities in the lower reaches. The Board encourages catch and release for all salmon and sea trout and, in light of Scottish Government's Category 2 classification, this recommendation may be strengthened.

	2015 total*	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	108	n/a	395	78%	n/a
Sea Trout	48	n/a	n/a	94%	n/a

Season dates: 25 Feb – 31 Oct. * Provisional figures



GIRVAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST

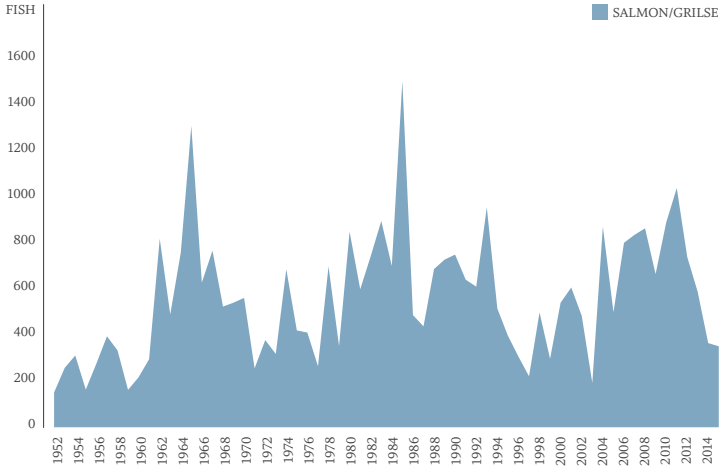
Stinchar

Stuart Brabbs - *Ayrshire Rivers Trust*

The Stinchar suffered from a lack of water for much of the season, although small rises in late June and July both produced a few fish, as did a small spate in August. Reports suggested that the condition of the fish landed was excellent, particularly the grilse, while the numbers of salmon and sea trout in the river during August was also encouraging. September and October were disappointing, as the river once again suffered from low water, but heavy rain in the last week of the season saw good numbers of (largely coloured) salmon caught. The Water of Assel and other lower river tributaries suffered from poor spawning success in winter 2014/2015, while redd washout following the wettest winter (2015/16) for many years is a real concern. The DSFB continues to encourage conservation measures for salmon and sea trout, and the 2015 catch returns indicate significant improvement has been achieved, with 85% of salmon and 90% of sea trout being released. The Stinchar has received Category 2 classification from the Scottish Government, despite efforts from the Board and Trust to have this increased to Category 1, due to perceived flaws in the methods used to determine its conservation status

	2015 total	total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	337	n/a	705	85%	n/a
Sea Trout	40	n/a	n/a	90%	n/a

Season dates: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



STINCHAR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - AYRSHIRE RIVERS TRUST

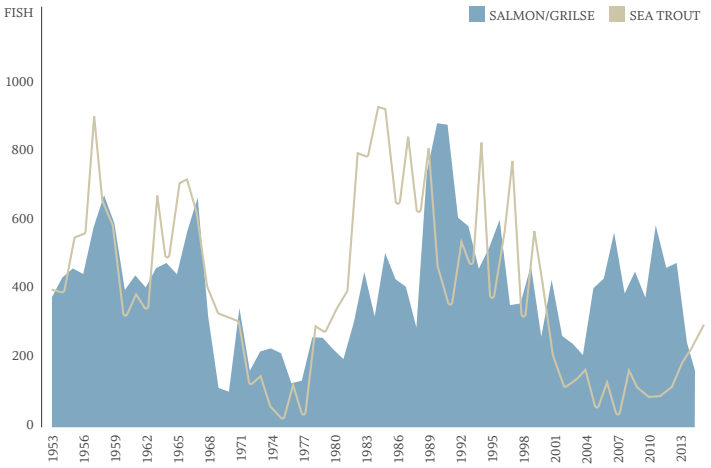
Cree

Terence Flanagan – *Chairman, Cree DSFB*

Although exact figures are not to hand, it appears the 2015 rod catch was approximately 330 salmon, more than double the 2014 total, and a decent season after two poor years. Most gratifying was a good run of spring fish – the best for several years – while sea trout catches also showed an improvement. Following a strong start to the season, catches dropped off markedly from the end of August, as lack of rain made fishing very challenging. Nevertheless, the River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust found the upper parts of the catchment "stuffed with fish" when they came to capture broodstock for the hatchery. A programme of environmental improvements continues. The major problem is acidification caused by conifer forestation and this is tackled by a joint approach of mitigation stocking and limestone addition, carried out by Galloway Fisheries Trust. Following extremely damaging floods on 30th December, it is feared that many redds will have been washed out. We fear that the classification of the Cree as a Category 3 river, and the imposition of compulsory catch and release will cause enormous economic damage to the district and inevitably depress rod catches further.

	2014 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	163	4	159	43	n/a	75/65/65%*	n/a
Sea Trout	306	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	87%	n/a

*Season dates: 1 Mar – 14 Oct. * Spring / summer / overall.*



CREE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2014
SOURCE - GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST

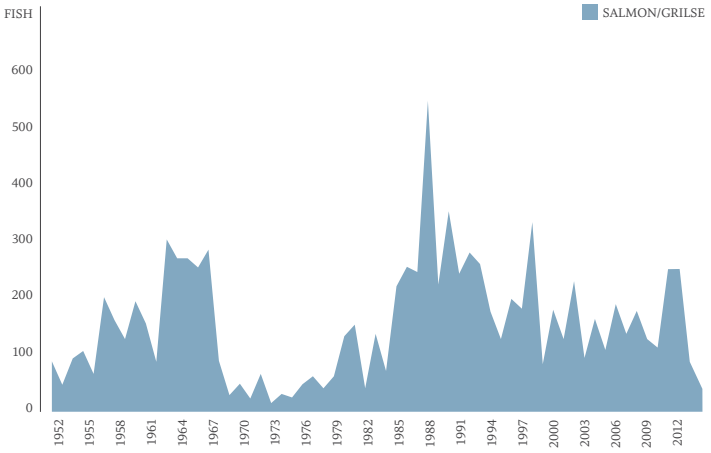
Bladnoch

Galloway Fisheries Trust

Although the final 2015 figures are not available at the time of writing, it was a much more encouraging season than the disastrous 2014. Greater numbers of fish were around whenever suitable water flow conditions were present, spring catches commenced in April and increasing numbers of fish were caught into May. By late May anglers felt there were more springers in the river than there had been for many years. River flows in June were more varied but when suitable river conditions were present fish were caught. A reasonably wet July resulted in some good fishing conditions and the arrival of grilse, although a lack of rainfall in the autumn limited the numbers of fish entering this spate river. A noticeable lack of anglers on the river will have limited overall catches, although most individual anglers reported their best catches in recent years. The main environmental concern is acidification in the headwaters, but a programme of conifer removal and peatland restoration is being undertaken to improve water quality, backed up by a small targeted hatchery, and salmon are now starting to return to some of these areas. The river has been classed as "Category 3", so all salmon caught after April 1st will have to be returned.

	2014 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	29	1	28	29	146	100/96/97%*	n/a
Sea Trout	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a

Season dates: 25 Feb – 31 Oct. Spring / summer / overall.



BLADNOCH ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2014
SOURCE - GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST

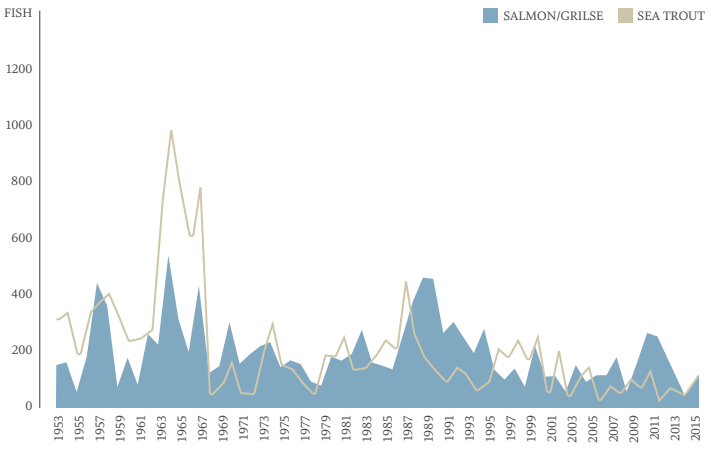
Luce

Galloway Fisheries Trust

The season started well, with three weeks of good fishing and a decent number of good sized sea trout caught. After a dry June, regular rainfall throughout July and August provided enough water for salmon fishing to benefit and there were a modest number of salmon caught, particularly following a large flood at the start of August. Grilse entered the catches from July, but numbers were fairly disappointing throughout the season. September and October, normally the peak months for salmon, were unseasonably dry and this was reflected in the catches – with only 34 salmon and 12 grilse recorded. When water was available, for the last two weeks of the season, salmon were found to be running straight through the lower beats, with little interest in the fly. The season's total was an improvement on 2014 and 2013, but still well below historical average. Due to the Luce receiving Category 3 status, all salmon caught on or after April 1st must be returned.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	112	0	n/a	n/a	144	63%	12lb
Sea Trout	113	n/a	n/a	n/a	91	59%	6.25lb

Season dates: 25 Feb – 31 Oct.



LUCE ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015
SOURCE - GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST

Urr

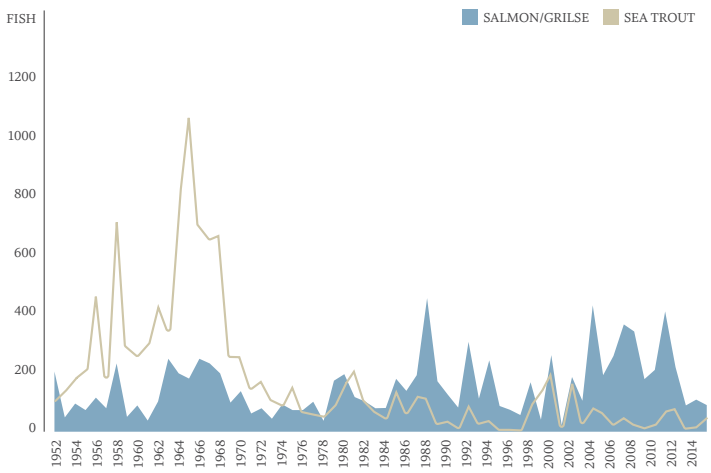
Will Marshall - *Secretary, Dalbeattie Angling Association*

Kenny Irving - *Chairman, Castle Douglas Angling Association*

The catch for 2015 was very similar to 2014, although the size of fish was slightly bigger on the whole and included a couple of springers. Indeed, the season showed early promise, with a few fish caught in June and July, but this was dashed by the late summer/back-end dry weather resulting in no water. Surprisingly, when water came in first week of October the fish did not come in any numbers. Gravel build-up in some pools, leading to loss of depth hence loss of fish holding capacity, has caused some concerns, as has the continued presence of North American signal crayfish at Buittle, although these may be poisoned this year. Of note, the new kill restrictions that are being planned by the government for 2016 may have pushed up the kill-to-release ratio in 2015, as people don't know when they will be able to harvest a salmon again.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	83	2	81	n/a	134	100/63/64%*	21lb
Sea Trout	48	n/a	n/a	n/a	39	73%	6.5lb

Season dates: 25 Feb – 30 Nov. Spring / summer / overall.



URR ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - GALLOWAY FISHERIES TRUST

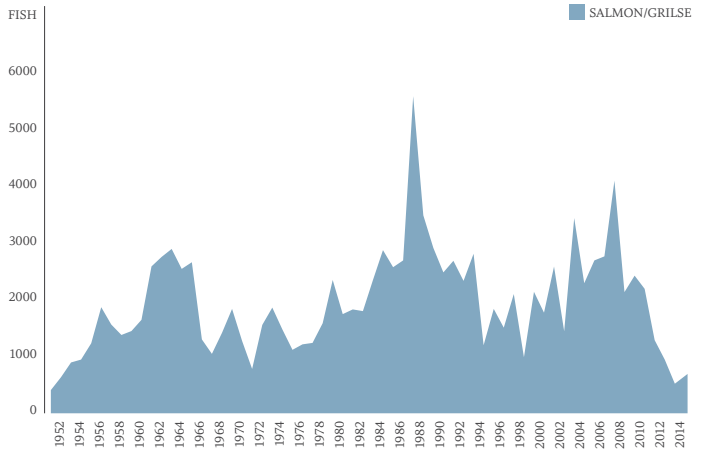
Nith

Jim Henderson - *Fishery Director, NDSFB*

There were increased runs of sea trout, salmon and grilse during 2015, which were reflected in catch returns, although these numbers are still poor in comparison to historic catches. Water conditions enabled fish to run to the top of the river early in the season. There has been a change in run timing, with salmon and grilse running earlier in the season and August now proving to be the prime month. We are concerned at the impact that repeated destructive flood episodes may be having on spawning beds throughout the catchment, particularly at this time when returning adult populations are at a low ebb. Following the recent categorisation of all Scottish rivers, the Nith is categorised as Grade 3 and as such will be operating a 100% catch and release policy for salmon during 2016. All estuarial nets will also fish 100% catch and release for salmon, while nets beyond estuarial limits will not fish for salmon for the next three years.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	702	37	665	417	2,527	57/63/63%*	25lb
Sea Trout	1,063	n/a	n/a	283	1,049	80%	8lb

Season dates: 25 Feb – 30 Nov. Spring / summer / overall.



NITH ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - NITH DSFB

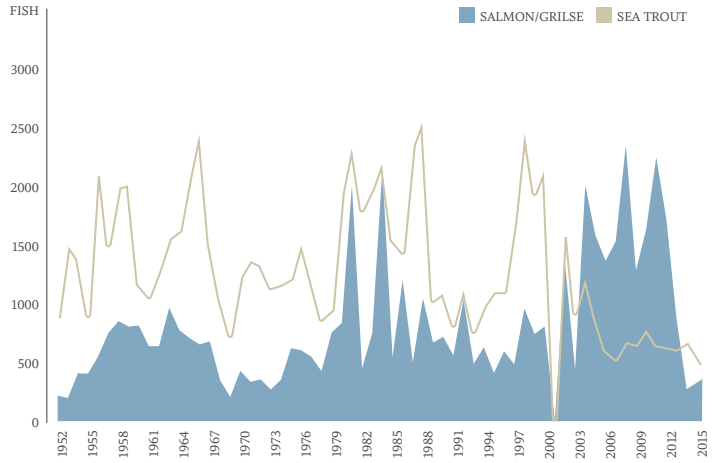
Annan

Antony Donnelly - *Director of Fisheries, River Annan Trust & DSFB*

2015 will be considered yet another poor season, despite a consensus among regular anglers that there were more fish than in the previous two years. Good numbers of salmon arrived to the Solway in June and the excellent water levels in July and August saw numbers of salmon entering the river but very little rod effort during this period. The extremely dry autumn meant that most of the river was practically unfishable and, for the fourth year in a row, there was no meaningful back end run. Similar to other rivers around the country our sea trout numbers improved, but there was minimal effort to target them. One positive was Network Rail's installation of a new fish pass on the Wamphray Burn – which flows underneath the west coast mainline – opening up 12 km of habitat to salmon. Our next barrier challenge will be to address SEPA's ecological status downgrade of the entire River Annan, due to Milnby Weir acting as complete barrier to the migration of the European eel, as well as posing issues for the upstream and downstream migration of salmonids. The combination of our existing C&R codes and the WFR Category 3 Conservation measures means that, from season 2016, we will be enforcing 100% release of all wild fish species.

	2015 total	pre Jun 1	post Jun 1	Total nets	10yr average	Release rate	Largest fish
Salmon	378	30	348	106	1,209	100/80/82%*	26lb
Sea Trout	496	n/a	n/a	n/a	651	92%	8lb

Season dates: 15 Feb – 15 Nov. Spring / summer / overall.



ANNAN ROD CATCH STATISTICS 1952-2015

SOURCE - ANNAN DSFB

Fisheries management in Scotland – facts and figures

	2015	2014
Number of District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs)	41	41
Total revenue generated by DSFBs	£4,835,546	£4,973,378
Income from rod fishery	£3,614,306	£3,771,093
Income from net fishery	£49,729	£61,137
Expenditure incurred by DSFBs	£4,809,580	£4,823,651
Financial support provided to Trusts by DSFBs	£732,827	£606,782
Total rateable value of fisheries	£3,931,719	£3,875,633
DSFB staff (full time equivalents)	Remunerated - 85 Voluntary - 224	Remunerated - 86 Voluntary - 88
Number of accredited water bailiffs	435	400
Number of ghillies associated with salmon fishings	519	502
Number of Scottish charitable Fisheries Trusts	26	26
Revenue generated by Trusts	£3,035,533	£2,916,177
Expenditure incurred by Trusts	£3,129,087	££3,120,234
Trust staff (full time equivalents)	Remunerated - 54 Voluntary - 70	Remunerated - 53 Voluntary -42
DSFBs & Trusts - Operational data		
Nets seized	124	154
Offences reported	98	164
Stocking consents granted	27	33
Offences reported	33	38
Hatchery outputs consented, by life stage:		
• *Ova*	1,700,000 (1.7M)	1,910,000 (1.91M)
• *Unfed fry*	1,798,700 (1.8M)	2,355,751 (2.35M)
• *Fed fry*	703,473 (0.7M)	1,234,563 (1,2M)
• *Smolts*	50,001	50,002
Numbers of surveys conducted:		
• *Habitat*	321	915
• *Invertebrate*	560	169
• *Electro-fishing*	1640	1572
• *Invasive species*	57	35
Number of school projects	222	213
Other educational projects	242	80

	Cumulative to end 2015
Habitat restored/protected (km)	1250km
Riparian trees planted	512,344
Riparian fencing erected	743km
Cost of above schemes	£4,414,612
Man made barriers assessed and cost (£)	276 (£255,901)
Man made barriers eased and cost (£)	127 (£850,505)
Access gained above eased barriers (km)	2382km
Length of watercourses treated for invasive species	3936km

Planning and development casework undertaken by Boards & Trusts (numbers of cases dealt with)		
Aquaculture	22	20
Terrestrial windfarms	35	48
Marine renewables	8	9
River hydro schemes	45	66
Controlled Activities Regulations	91	181
Other (forestry, flood alleviation, land use planning etc)	66	43

The representative bodies ASFB & RAFTS

ASFB turnover 2014 (2013)	£151,290 (£152,601)
RAFTS turnover 2014/15 (2013/14)	£1,220,527 (£781,391)

ASFB & RAFTS Management & staff as at 1 January 2015

ASFB Management Committee

Chairman: Alasdair Laing (Findhorn)
Mark Bilsby (Dee)
Andrew Wallace (RAFTS)
Roger Knight (Spey)
Alister Jack (Annan)
Roger Brook (Argyll)
James Henderson (Nith)
Nick Yonge (Tweed)
Giles Curtis (Western Isles)
Anson MacAuslan (Caithness)

RAFTS management

Chairman: Andrew Wallace
Treasurer: Roger Brook
Board:
Roger Brook (Argyll Fisheries Trust)
Colin Adams (Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust)
Alasdair Laing (Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Fisheries Trust)
Marshall Halliday (Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust)
Melanie Smith (Wester Ross Fisheries Trust)
Ron Woods (Co-opted member, Scottish Federation of Coarse Anglers)
Luke Comins (Co-opted member, Tweed Forum)
Jamie Ribbens (Biologist Representative – Galloway Fisheries Trust
Lorraine Hawkins (Network Representative) (River Dee Trust)

ASFB staff

Director: Brian Davidson
Press Officer (p/t): Andrew Graham-Stewart
Legal Adviser: Fishlegal

RAFTS staff

Director: Chris Horrill
Project Co-ordinator: Rob Mitchell
Administrator: Linda Kelly
Scottish Invasive Species Initiative Project Officer: Meryl Norris
Invasives Technical Officer: Matt Oliver
Legal Adviser: Fishlegal
Pearls in Peril LIFE+ Project Scotland *Project Officer:* Lorna Wilkie
Agriculture Project Officers: Flora Grigor-Taylor/Steff Ferguson (job share)

ASFB / RAFTS office

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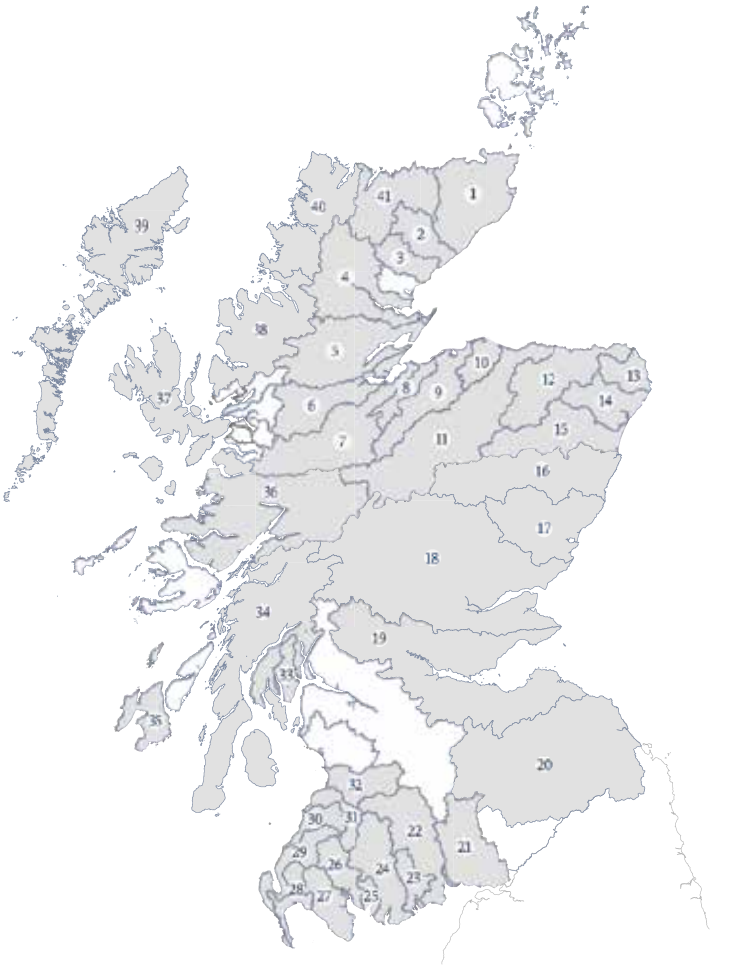
Tel: 0131 555 1158
Web: www.asfb.org.uk / www.rafts.org.uk

	2014				2013			
	Rod catch	Released overall	Released spring	Net catch	Rod catch	Released overall	Released spring	Net catch
Salmon & grilse	45,175	82%	93%	17,778	67,468	80%	92%	24,370
Sea trout	22,058	80%	n/a	6,108	16,078	77 %	n/a	6,116

Salmon Fishery Districts

1 Caithness
2 Helmsdale
3 Brora
4 Kyle of Sutherland
5 Cromarty
6 Beauly
7 Ness
8 Nairn
9 Findhorn
10 Lossie
11 Spey
12 Deveron
13 Ugie
14 Ythan
15 Don
16 Dee (Aberdeen)
17 Esk
18 Tay
19 Forth
20 Tweed
21 Annan
22 Nith
23 Urr
24 Dee (Kircudbright)
25 Fleet (Kircudbright)
26 Cree
27 Bladnoch
28 Luce
29 Stinchar
30 Girvan
31 Doon
32 Ayr
33 Eachaig
34 Argyll
35 Laggan and Sorn
36 Lochaber
37 Skye
38 Wester Ross
39 Western Isles
40 North and West
41 Northern



Sources:

Salmon Fishery Districts - Scottish Government 2006.
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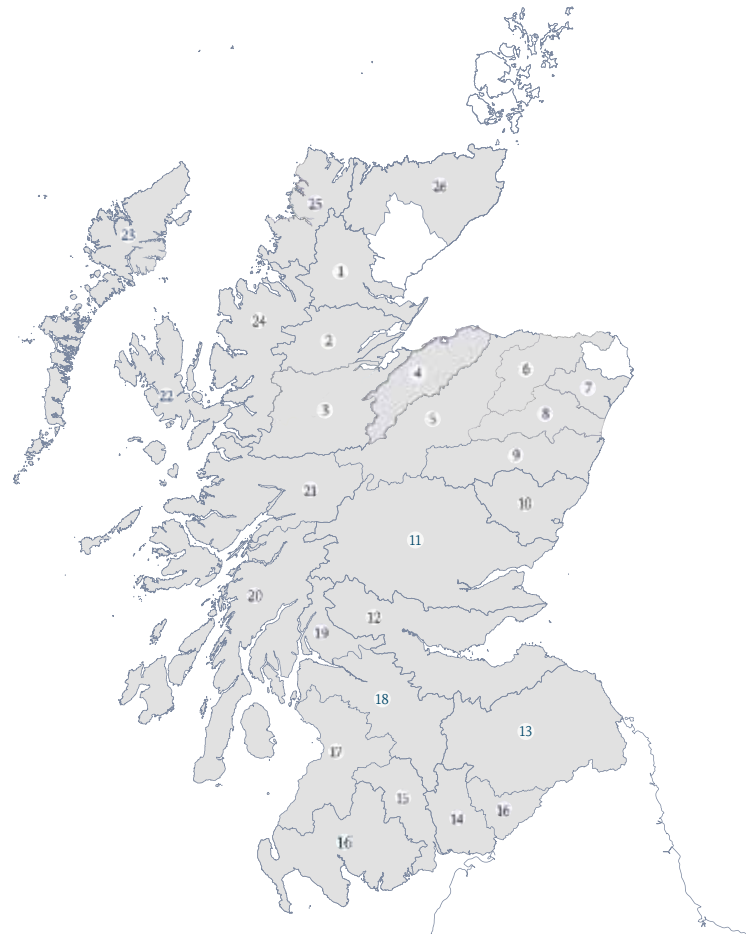
Scottish Government GI Science & Analysis Team - January 2009, Job 4528sn.

Fisheries Trusts

1. Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust
2. Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust
3. Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust
4. Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Trust
5. Spey Foundation
6. Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust
7. River Ythan Trust
8. River Don Trust
9. River Dee Trust
10. The Esks Rivers Fisheries Trust
11. Tay Foundation
12. Forth Fisheries Trust
13. Tweed Foundation
14. River Annan Trust
15. Nith Catchment Fisheries Trust
16. Galloway Fisheries Trust
17. Ayrshire Rivers Trust
18. Clyde River Foundation
19. Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust
20. Argyll Fisheries Trust
21. Lochaber Fisheries Trust
22. Skye Fisheries Trust
23. Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust
24. Wester Ross Fisheries Trust
25. West Sutherland Fisheries Trust
26. Flow Country Trust



Sources:

Fisheries Trust Boundaries, SG MS and SEPA (2011).
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Scottish Government Marine Scotland GIS team, February 2012, gj0627.

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Association of
Salmon Fishery Boards

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www.rafts.org.uk

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