

Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre Management Committee Meeting – Minutes

01 September 2021

10:30 – 12:00

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

In attendance:

Marcus Walters – Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (acting chair)

Sean Robertson – Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust

Alan Wells – Fisheries Management Scotland

Kjersti Birkland – SEPA

Jamie Ribbens – Galloway Fisheries Trust

Joanna Girvan – Forth Rivers Trust

James Hunt and Jonny Archer – The Tweed Foundation

Sean Dugan – Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre

Apologies:

John Armstrong – Marine Scotland Science

Antje Branding – Marine Scotland

2. Minutes of May 26 meeting, review of action points and matters arising.

ACTION: SR and SD to discuss invertebrate data storage with Craig MacAdam (BugLife).

Craig has made progress and has shared an early draft with SR and SD. Craig is also exploring whether ARMI scores can be predicted for NEPS sites using the RICT method, given that most of the key site data is already collected under NEPS. Committee were in support of this work and discussed further aspects such the timing of training courses and whether these could be online. Committee also stressed the need for biologists to be formally qualified and discussed Freshwater Biological Association and Veritas Ecology as training providers.

ACTION: JH to share invertebrate sampling protocols with SR.

ACTION: SR to discuss invertebrate data analysis options with CM.

ACTION: Nominations for a vice-chair to be circulated to management committee by correspondence. Following the resignation of JG as chair, MW stepped in as acting chair until the next SFCC Member's meeting where an election process will take place and a vice-chair will be selected. MW thanked Jo for her three years of service as SFCC chair. Jo's notable achievements include helping SFCC to join with Fisheries Management Scotland, driving forward the review of SFCC's electrofishing training manuals and chairing our annual biologists' meeting which has seen an increase in attendance year-on-year.

ACTION: SR/SD to catch up to share progress in development of field data collection tools.

CARRIED FORWARD

3. SFCC six-month secondment proposal

A proposal for a six-month SFCC early-career secondment was discussed. With SD planning to request permission to take Shared Parental Leave next May-July, one of the secondees' roles would be to provide cover. Key roles were proposed as follows:

- To revise and update the list of data collection protocols adopted by the SFCC membership and to collate these approaches and make available to the SFCC membership on the SFCC/FMS website.
- To promote and support the roll-out across the whole SFCC membership network of ESRI web-based data collection tools provided by SFCC. Data gathering tool priorities may include European eel surveys, smolt emigrant and tagging data, invertebrate samples, predator observations, pollution and water scarcity reporting, sea lice monitoring, rod catch returns, redd counting and habitat surveys.

Committee debated the proposal and whether members could afford to provide a secondee.

ACTION: Proposal to be amended to run January to June to allow staff member to return to SFCC member organisation in time for the electrofishing season.

ACTION: SD to draft a set of minimum attributes for the secondee post.

4. Financial matters

4.1. Cashflow April-July

SFCC currently have 5 SFCC member subscriptions outstanding.

ACTION: SFCC to continue to aim for cost recovery on training delivery.

Committee took the opportunity to debate arrangements for electrofishing next season and specifically whether training delivery should be led by SFCC or by Inverness College UHI/ SRUC Barony Campus.

ACTION: SD/JR to draft an options appraisal paper for discussion at the annual training review meeting and then at the SFCC December management committee meeting.

4.2. SFCC draft budget April 2022-March 2023

The draft budget for 2022-23 was circulated in advance.

The SFCC chairmanship fee was reviewed as it was initiated when the previous chair had additional line management, budgeting, and project management duties, which are no longer undertaken.

ACTION: SD to make minor adjustments to budget to reflect the discussion.

JH noted the additional annual database costs and reiterated SFCC's long-term goal of improving the database service and cost. With Marine Scotland database resources limited, SFCC's only option currently is to redevelop the database ourselves.

ACTION: SD to prepare a database options appraisal for discussion at the December committee meeting.

5. Manager's report (June-August) by PowerPoint

SD thanked Jamie Ribbens, Rowan McLeary, Chris Daphne and Bob Laughton for delivering a record number of electrofishing courses safely during June and July. 48 candidates successfully qualified across four different venues from Galloway to the River Naver.

The National Adult Salmon Sampling Project was launched in July with 17 SFCC members participating. Approximately 150 samples have been logged through the data collection tool so

far, with several more samples awaiting upload. Low water conditions have made sampling extremely difficult in some rivers.

Web-based data collection tools for pink salmon, escaped farmed fish and red skin disease were launched in June and have been widely used by members. Further development of data collection tools will be a major work focus of SD for the remainder of 2021.

6. Biologists' Meeting format and programme

The COVID-19 landscape remains concerning and it is likely that online events will continue to be the norm for the foreseeable future. Faskally House have recently welcomed back their first small trial group of guests, their first guests since SFCC attended the biologists' meeting in February 2020. The Freshwater Fisheries Lab is not currently accepting visitors.

ACTION: SFCC Biologists' meeting to be held online, to include the option for more informal discussion and interaction, perhaps using break-out rooms. Guest speakers from overseas should also be invited again.

Committee put forward a number of programme suggestions including the following topics; update from the Riverwoods project, hydro speakers from Norway and the U.S.A., downstream smolt passage issues, update on adult sampling project, NEPS, NIPS, trout/salmon genetics, eDNA, West Coast Tracking Project, restoration of small burns, sea lice management.

ACTION: SD to develop themes for discussion at the December committee meeting.

AOB

Remaining 2021 meetings:

Wednesday 1st December

Biologists' Meeting – Feb 2nd and 3rd 2022