

## MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

<b>WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES</b>		<b>PRESENT:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>08 October 2012</b>	<b>John Mackenzie (JM)</b>	<b>David Barclay (DB)</b>
<b>OPENED AT:</b>	<b>10.30</b>	<b>Bob Kindness (BK)</b>	<b>Melanie Smith (MS)</b>
<b>CLOSED AT:</b>	<b>14.45</b>	<b>Angus Davidson (AD)</b>	<b>Richard Greene (RG)</b>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>		<b>Henry Dalgety (HD)</b>	<b>Ben Hadfield (BH) [via telephone till 1215 hrs]</b>
<b>Peter Cunningham (PC)</b>	<b>Mary Gibson (MG)</b>	<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	
<b>Veronica Mullaney (VM)</b>	<b>Peter Jarosz (PJ)</b>	<b>Richard Wilson (RW)</b>	<b>Nigel Pearson (NP)</b>
		<b>Mark Williams (MW)</b>	<b>Jonah Tosney (JT)</b>

### 1. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 minutes which were accepted as a true record – proposed by DB seconded by MS.

### 2. TRUSTEES

The trust is still one trustee short of its maximum but it was decided to leave the status quo for the time being with a view to trying again to get an angling club representative onto the trust in the near future.

### 3. FINANCE REPORTS

#### 3.i Cash Projections:

- The (end of September) cash projections continue to show a reduction in our cash reserves of some £10K by the year-end.
- The application for part funding of Salmon & Trout in the Classroom to the Robertson Trust has not been successful.
- We are still awaiting a letter of endorsement from the HC head of education which, when it arrives, should prove to be an important lever for additional funding to take the “Living Lochs” project onto a yearly event in all three high schools.
- This year’s Annual Review has been produced (and sent out) as both a hard copy and in CD format (approximately 50-50). This has reduced last year’s cost by 50%. It is evident from replies received back, from those who have got either version, that more than 60% believe the cost saving is more than justified. At the same time, important points have been made for the continuing production of some hard copies that can be left in lodges where visiting anglers can read it. This year hard copies were sent to all proprietors and ghillies and this should continue on the evidence of the reports received back so far.
- An offer to sponsor the production of the annual review as hard copies has been made by WRF. However, trustees considered this not to be appropriate. An effort to channel this offer into the Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project will be made to WRF.

#### 3.ii Management Reports:

There were no immediate issues from the Management Reports.

#### 3.iii Accounts:

WRFT initial draft accounts for y/e 2012 are still awaited for scrutiny.

#### 3.iv Southern River Proprietors' Contributions:

- PJ reported that he had obtained the catch records of the southern rivers from MSS under FoI and was busy analysing the data into two five-year periods – 2000-5 and 2006-10.
- Once this is finished, a comparison of the two periods can be applied and a trend evaluated thus giving a basis for a re-valuation of the southern river contributions.
- This method mirrors that used by District Valuation Officers when they re-value rateable values every five years.

#### 3.v

Concern having been previously expressed by Hugh Whittle about Marine Harvest’s involvement with the Trust and the comparative level of funding from Southern Proprietors; BH reported on a meeting that he had had with Hugh Whittle in Fort William, the main points of which were:

- MH had provided sea lice data to the previous owner of Inveran as a monthly summary and offered the same data provision to HW.
- HW wanted weekly information reports and that is subsequently being provided.
- Discussion soon moved to management and MH involvement in WRFT.

accountability for MH on general management as well as on sea lice control.

- HW felt this was inappropriate and also felt that MH should re-locate from Loch Ewe.
- There was discussion on sea trout re-stocking project for Loch Maree. BH made it clear that this was still in deliberation stage and will be science focussed.
- BH suggested to HW that by participating in WRFT meetings, HW may better understand the fuller picture.
- Some emails from HW followed on from the meetings but they were quite negative and BH saw no further need to respond.

JM further clarified the position over restocking, particularly that considerable scientific work (e.g. genetics) with Eric Verspoor involved, needs to be done before it can go ahead. BH agreed with this appraisal saying that MH have £30K (over 4-5 years) set aside for this project but only when the science is under way. There needs to be a clear differentiation between sea trout and salmon stocking and there is a need to understand the ecosystem where sea trout are the key species much better than we currently do. Both the Shieldaig and the River Carron projects need to be taken into account when we set out the framework for the science that needs to be done. BH felt that a restocking programme could be of significant benefit to the sea trout of Loch Maree if management of fish farms remains positive re sea lice numbers.

MS will discuss with EV (and others) a framework for the science for both the salmon stocking on the Bruachaig and sea trout based on an ecosystem approach. MS will bring a drawn up outline framework to inform discussion at the next meeting.

In conclusion, agreement on the following key points was emphasised:

- Aquaculture presence at trustee level is essential if WRFT is to be better informed of issues of fish farm management, especially their controls for sea lice.
- This presence provides a more complete forum for informed debate and discussion.
- All project proposals are subject to an open vote after informed debate.
- The Trustees' decisions are informed by and based on sound science.

## 5 PLANNING AHEAD

### 5.i Peter Cunningham's Biologist's Report (copy attached below):

- Electro-fishing programme is on course for completion by the end of October.
- A draft northern river report has been produced and comments are being sought.
- A second visit to the Ardessie fish farm took place on 26 September and a report has yet to be produced. Little Loch Broom has experienced a bad year for sea lice while Loch Ewe has had a mixed year, both exacerbated by the very dry weather leading to a lack of fresh water in the rivers.
- The Tournai Trap has had its best year on record for grilse but not for sea trout – this reflects the picture in the Ewe system generally.
- PC believes that there is a poorer survival rate of larger sea trout now than there used to be. He can determine this factor, to some extent, from historical records and by calculating ratios of younger/smaller fish versus large fish.
- The Bruachaig project needs better co-ordination ensuring that genetic samples are taken from all brood stock prior to husbandry by BK - **PC**. Without genetic samples being taken, no fish caught below should be moved above the waterfalls on this system.
- PC would like to see a workshop held in the Ullapool area with various aquaculture companies and wild fish interests to see what could be learned from each other.

### 5.ii Jonah Tosney's biologist's report (copy attached below):

- The ENTRUST funding has been secured and the Angling Advisory Service project is now underway.
- There is a need to ensure that the views of owners, in respect of information being made available by this project, are fully reflected.

### 5.iii BK gave a report on the River Carron year to date:

- It was very dry and, as a result, the river was very low up to 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July.
- Larger grilse were the early running fish up to Loch Dughail and then dropped back down to the river.
- It has been a good year with generally more fish in the river than seen in previous years.
- Red vent fish syndrome was evident in most fish.
- Around 320 salmon and sea trout caught – including re-captures.
- The average was 4 anglers per day on the river.

**6. Aquaculture Planning Applications and Responses:**

A written procedure for WRFT responses to aquaculture planning applications needs to be documented ensuring inter alia that in future all WRFT responses are “signed off” by either the chairman or the administrator but not by the biologist who drafted the response. This will reduce potential pressure on individual biologists and also make certain to the recipient that responses from WRFT come from that body rather than from an individual.

**7. AOB:**

- PC stated that WREN have applied for funding for a herring project that will have both a scientific and cultural aspect – the trust may be asked to provide the administration for this project.
- PC also asked about a possible sea trout/charr survey week focusing on Achlaise/Badachro/Coulin with an option to involve schools. As there are no funds available for this project it would need to comprise biologists’ time and volunteer work only.

**8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

<b>NEXT MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Trustees’ meeting	07/12/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees’ meeting	21/03/2013	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees’ meeting	30/05/2013	WRFT Office	10.30

## WRFT Trustee Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012

### Report for Trustees by Peter Cunningham, WRFT biologist (5<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012)

**1. Juvenile fish-surveys & river reports** (core-funded & contract). [See report for 15<sup>th</sup> Aug meeting for e-fish report for earlier in summer]. Following drought, September has been a rather wet month, with much higher water levels than for most of August. The rain was much needed for adult fish (see below). Electro-fishing surveys of the following rivers were carried out: Torridon, Ewe headwaters, Allt Beith, Kanaird, Inverianvie and Lael (4 out of 5 contract sites). Salmon and trout were found throughout the **Torridon River** at variable densities: the highest CPUE of fry were in the middle of the main river (where they were very small); parr were found throughout the main river at low CPUE; trout were found in the burns. In the nearby **Ewe headwaters** (Beinn Eighe NNR) salmon fry were found in both small burns above Loch Bharranch and at good CPUE in the A' Ghairbie river. In the Glen Docherty burn, salmon fry were found at moderate densities below the road and half way up the glen, but were scarce in the middle of the glen and at the highest site. Large parr were found through most of the burn. In the **Kanaird & Runie**: salmon fry and parr were found at nearly all sites; the largest fry and parr at sites near the top of accessible area; smaller fry at higher densities at sites further downstream. **Allt Beith**: Salmon fry and small parr were absent from sites above the old fish ladder on the; several very large precious male parr were found at top of river below 'Goose Loch' (repairs to fish ladder required). **Inverianvie**: Two sites fished: only one salmon parr was found; moderate densities of juvenile trout (& a finnock). E-fishing of sites on **Lael** (for contract) completed: trout at 4 of 5 sites; large salmon parr below powerhouse only, no salmon fry found. Thank you to David Mullaney, Gary Bulmer, Roger McLachlan, Ben Rushbrooke and Andrew Ramsay for assisting with e-fish surveys.

A draft northern rivers (Kanaird, Ullapool, Broom, Dundonnell) fish survey report was completed and emailed to river proprietors and ghillies for initial comments.

I've also been working on overdue Torridon River fish survey report, including results of habitat surveys and previous e-fishing surveys. I'll update this with results of juvenile fish survey on 25/9.

### **2. Sea trout sampling** (core funded in August and September)

Two further sweep in Loch Gairloch since last report: only two sea trout on 21/8; and 8 sea trout on 17/9, including a male sea trout which was caught for the 5<sup>th</sup> time (see story on WRFT website). Lice numbers were low on all these Gairloch fish (max. 11 lice per fish). Details of additional sampling at Dundonnell to follow. Thank you to Bill Anderson, Gary Bulmer, Roger McLachlan, Alec Way, Jim Buchanan, David Mullaney, Ben Rushbrooke, Terry Doe for helping with sweep netting.

### **3. Fish farm visits** (?core funded)

PC visited WRF Ardessie farm on 26/9. Following the visit a draft report was sent to Gilpin Bradley as per agreement; response awaited.

### **4. Rod catches of salmon and sea trout**

Some good fishing for salmon in September as the grilse came in. Several large salmon (>20lb) caught or hooked and lost! [PC caught and returned a grilse in Dundonnell River in early September - his first salmon on a rod for 20+ years; thank you to Alasdair MacDonald!]. Sea trout, particularly larger fish, have been generally scarce. Just 4 finnock (& 3 brown trout) were caught on WRFT fishing day (20/9) [2 boats (2 ghillies & 4 rods) fishing]. However, one boat had 12 finnock (some with slightly tatty dorsal fins) av. ~300g and one larger sea trout of 1.5kg (3.5lb) from Kinlochewe end of loch the following week. Further details of catches to follow . . .

### **5. Tournai trap** (supported by Marine Harvest)

A remarkable run of grilse in September, with current total of 43 grilse and one 2SW salmon in upstream trap so far this year. That's the record annual catch of salmon for the upstream trap (since project started in 1999).

Most of the grilse have been female fish (please see WRFT website for summary report). DNA samples have been collected: project (for discussion with Eric Verspoor) where have adult salmon in Tournaig system come from? What % of salmon are strays, and what % returning home? No farmed salmon so far this year. Of sea trout, only three finnock to date. Traps operated by Ben Rushbrooke who has provided much data including data base of photos of nearly all salmon since 2004.

**6. Bruachaig Salmon Restoration project** (funded by the Scottish Government via RAFTs and Ewe proprietors, with support from Coulin Estate, and from 2011, from Scottish and Southern Energy). Adult salmon to be collected from Kinlochewe River or lower Bruachaig for broodstock . . . (further update at meeting).

**7. Herring Project** (report from PJ at meeting . . . follow up . . . )

A WREN bid for grant funding for a second stage and larger Herring rediscovery project with several strands has been submitted to SNH and HLF. For discussion at meeting.

**8. Marine Protected Areas** (local community bid update . . . )

The MSS Alba na Mara research vessel was seen in Loch Ewe and Gairloch in September . . .

**9. Mink & other invasive species** (WRFT activity currently core funded)

7 mink were caught at Little Gruinard and 2 on Isle of Ewe over the summer and early autumn. Mink were also seen near Aultbea, on road between Gairloch and Poolewe, near Applecross (see WRFT website), detected near Greenstone Point (by sniffer dog), and a dead one found on the road near Kinlochewe. Thanks to Gunnar Scholtz (Scottish Mink Initiative project officer) for information and support. Thank you to Ben Rushbrooke for video link. Further update to be provided at the meeting, including possibilities for future work.

**10. Trout loch sampling** (core funded & PC own time!)

PC joined WRFT members David and Dugie Foreman to collect genetic samples of brown trout from hill lochs around Gairloch in September. We also investigated the main burn into Loch Bad na h-Achlaise near Badachro r. possible sea trout restoration project. Its rather too weedy and slow flowing for trout spawning (except higher up?).

**11. Other notes**

- Completed intake structure for Kinlochewe water supply inspected (works on bank to complete pumping station on-going . . .).
- [Sea Bass videoed near Gairloch using (own) new GoPro Hero2 camera. This camera has also provided good video of trout, juvenile salmon and underwater habitats at survey sites: software required (to edit video . . .)].

**12. Future work priorities (for discussion):**

- Completion of juvenile fish survey.
- Surveys of sea trout spawning burns.
- Sea trout monitoring report for 2012.
- Juvenile fish survey reports.
- Loch survey (sea trout and charr) week with Jonah Tosney (& invited experts) end of October – early November?
- Small sea trout system restoration project development (as per report for meeting on 15 Aug)?
- Meeting with Dr Eric Verspoor to discuss options for genetic studies (Bruachaig salmon, Tournaig salmon, Loch Maree trout?).

[end]

### **Jonah Tosney's Biologist's report for WRFT meeting, 08/10/12**

- Angling Information Project – joint venture between Skye Fisheries Trust and WRFT now underway. IT degree student Iain Kinloch will spend one year working on an angling information website designed to deliver information to and receive information from anglers on Skye and WRFT rivers. Project funded by Enrust (Thanks PJ).
- Skye fisheries surveys – Surveys now complete on Conon, Rha, Brogaig, Bay, Horneval, Kilmarie and Kilmaluag with “new” salmon populations found in Conon, Brogaig, Kilmarie and Kilmaluag. Funded by Skye FT. Salmon appear to have spawned in three of these smaller rivers in 2010 but not 2011
- Salmon in the classroom – Glenelg, Kyle and Auchtertyre primary schools taken on electro-fishing trips in September, Plockton to follow in October. Three schools have requested a repeat each year, two schools (with joint year groups) would like the project every second year.
- Planktonic Sea Lice sampling – initial samples from Lochs Kishorn, Carron, Duich and Alsh all now processed, with lice identified in Lochs Carron and Kishorn. Project needs refinement (identification of more sampling sites in each loch to avoid sampling only hot-spots or blanks), but worth further development with possible support from Marine Harvest in Lochs Alsh, Hourn and Duich and interest from Scottish Sea Farms in Loch Kishorn. West Sutherland Fisheries Trust and Marine Scotland (Shieldaig) run similar programs so worth streamlining methodology.
- Aquaculture – Scottish Sea Farms application for a new 2000 tonne site in Outer Loch Kishorn refused due to adverse impacts on an unspoilt recreational area.
- Marine Harvest intending to expand production significantly in Loch Alsh – further information requested through screening and scoping process. Full application expected soon.