

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	29 March 2012	John Mackenzie – Chairman (JM)	
OPENED AT:	10.30	Bob Kindness (BK)	Mark Williams (MW)
CLOSED AT:	14.30	David Barclay (DB)	Richard Greene (RG)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Mary Gibson (MG)	Nigel Pearson (NP)	Graeme Wilson (GW)
Peter Jarosz (PJ)		Ben Hadfield (BH)	Melanie Smith (MS)
		Richard Wilson (RW)	Jonah Tosney (JT)
		Peter Cunningham (PC)	

1. MATTERS ARISING

- 1.i Angus Morrison's resignation as a Trustee was still awaited.
- 1.ii There was a discussion on the subject of MPA designation for Loch Gairloch. Trustees decided WRFT would support but not lead on this matter. A third party submission will require a strong community involvement with a champion/project leader. The most appropriate body to lead would appear to be WREN or the local community council.
- 1.iii There were no other matters arising from the February 2012 minutes that were not itemised on the agenda.

2. TRUSTEES

- 2.i Jenny Scobie has replied in writing, declining WRFT's invitation to become a trustee.
- 2.ii Graeme Wilson is leaving the area and has tendered his resignation as a trustee.
- 2.iii It was agreed that it would be very desirable to recruit a trustee from the far north of the Trust's area as well as someone from another fish farming business to provide a wider understanding of the industry. Some names for potential trustees were suggested and these will be followed up.
- 2.iii WRFT should also record its thanks to Graeme Wilson for his valuable contributions to the work of the trust over the years of his involvement.

3. FINANCE REPORTS

3.i Cash Projections:

- The (end of February) cash projections show that the Board's final contribution is still to be received as well as monies from RAFTS. A Bob Morgan survey contract is also outstanding.
- The (unexpected) success of a grant application (via RAFTS) for equipment means that WRFT now has four up-to-date e-fishing kits. Only trained personnel can use them and **DB** stated that he was prepared to consider undertaking the necessary training. The e-fishing equipment could then be used in Laide Wood for a project of habitat improvement of the burns for sea-trout, possibly funded from the Wild Trout Trust.
- WRFT's cash reserves could be down by some £8K by the end of the year but assets are up by £10K with two new e-fishing kits and a new sweep net. Overall there is increasing concern that core funding continues to decline whilst running costs increase year by year. Additional income from contract work is most important and there seems to be a number of potential contracts for the coming f/y. It was decided to continue to overhead rates following the guideline template supplied by RAFTS.

3.ii Management Reports:

There were no issues from the Management Reports.

3.iii 2012 – 2013 Budget:

- i. The costed work programme for PC adds up to 113 days with some 45% of these being for research, report writing, fish farm visits and meetings.
- ii. The costed work programme for JT adds up to 92 days with some 39% of these being for research, report writing, fish farm visits and meetings.
- iii. There are possible monies from EFF and/or Coastal Community Fund (part of the Big Lottery Fund) for a project on Loch Duich.
- iv. Gift Aid in the current f/y is down (and will continue to be down) because of less personal donations to WRFT.
- v. The core income in the draft budget for 2012/3 is set at £46K, which is down by £7K on 2011/2. Restricted income in 2011/2 topped £40K and, hopefully, this figure will be reached in 2012/3.

- vi. However, with the overall expenses in the draft budget for 2012/3 at £97K, there is still a shortfall of some £11K.
- vii. WRFT must look to reducing costs wherever possible but in areas that do not impact on its basic work. It was agreed that one useful cost reduction would be in printing river reports and the annual review. The number of printed reports should be drastically cut and CD-ROMs be produced for the bulk of reports sent out. Sponsorship of the cost of producing the annual reports could also be explored but this was not considered an attractive option.

4 BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS

4.i 2012/3 Work Programmes and Costings were dealt with above.

4.ii Peter Cunningham's biologist's report (copy attached below):

4.iii Jonah Tosney's biologist's report (copy attached below):

4.iv AGM Meeting:

It was agreed that the format of the "AGM" over the past few years required reviewing. Because of the steadily diminishing numbers attending, very largely people already well informed about the Trust, that this event has been attracting over the past few years, it was decided instead to hold an Open Meeting in the office (in the Harbour Centre) and start at 1900 hrs. Invites to WREN, local schools and Laide Wood wildlife group plus any other suitable organisations and with the programme tailored (for who will attend) would form the format of the meeting with the Trustees' agenda specific to what needed to be discussed.

4.v Bruachaig project:

- BK has 1200 salmon parr ready now of which 50% will be kept as brood stock and the other 50% can be stocked – check with Peter C that they can go into the Kinlochewe river – PJ.
- BK has recently got 8000 eggs from NM at Coulin and these will now form the basis of a second year brood stock.
- Check with NM that Frankie Kalinowski is aware that any future caught fish should go into the stocking brood – PJ.
- There followed discussion on the sea-trout stocking project for Loch Maree and BK confirmed that he had the capacity for rearing adequate numbers.
- It was agreed that Eric Verspoor's expertise was crucial to the genetics for this project and that subject to his input the project should go forward.

4.vi Sea-bed Leasing from the Crown Estate:

The WRASFB letter to the Crown Estate inquiring about possible sea-bed leasing in the Two Brooms area has received a negative reply from the Crown Estate.

5. AOB

5.i Aquaculture Planning Applications and Responses:

In the context of the recent grant of planning consent for a new 2000 tonne fish farm in outer Loch Torridon, despite objection from both the Board and the relevant Community Councils, there arose the question of whether or not the Board had a right of appeal against that decision. The answer, confirmed by Highland Council's planning department, is that it is only the applicant of any planning application who has the right of appeal against a refusal. There is no right of appeal by objectors against the grant of planning consent. However, if not all of the lice data held by MSS had been available to the planning authority (so that they had not been as fully informed as possible) when determining this particular application, the decision could be open to challenge. It was agreed that the Board should, therefore, seek to establish the true position, if necessary using FOI legislation and probably doing so in conjunction with the Community Councils.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Open Meeting	31/05/2012	WRFT Office	19.00
Trustees' meeting	15/08/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	08/10/2012	WRFT Office	10.30

WRFT Trustee Meeting, 29th March 2012

report for Trustees, by WRFT Biologist, Peter Cunningham, 22nd March 2012.

1. Fish-survey reports

I'm currently working on a report for the northern rivers, specifically the Kanaird, Ullapool, Broom and Dundonnell which I had hoped to have completed by now. It's behind schedule but getting there . . .

2. Sea trout (and brown trout) sampling and report for 2011

This has been my main work since the last meeting. A draft has now been completed, in which all data on sea trout sampling in 2011 and related information on wild trout in freshwater, including scale readings, are presented. The main findings are: that the largest sea trout in 2011 were again sampled in Loch Gairloch, some of these fish were caught several times; and that there were problems for sea trout and sea lice in the Two Brooms area and Loch Gairloch in 2011. The lack of sea trout in samples taken from spawning streams in the Loch Kernsary catchment in autumn 2011 supports the hypothesis that trout population(s) in this area are separate from those in the Ewe system headwaters near Coulin. The report also includes the results of the readings of scale samples from sea trout (mostly finnock) caught in Loch Dhughail (River Carron system) in November, demonstrating good marine growth in the summer of 2011 for fish in the Loch Carron area.

Our first sweep netting session of the season took place on the 12th of March 2011. Two flounders were caught (one quite large one) but no sea trout. Pending the outcome of budget considerations, I plan a second sweep netting session in Loch Gairloch in April.

3. Catches of salmon and sea trout

Detailed catch figures were obtained from Ray Dingwall and Graeme Wilson for salmon caught in 2010 and 2011 and from Bob Kindness for fish caught in 2011. I've contrasted catches from these rivers in a report which can be found on the wrft webpage by following links at: <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=141>

Subsequently data has been obtained at short notice from Marine Science Scotland for salmon and sea trout catches for the rivers flowing into the Loch Broom area for the years up to 2010 (to include in the northern rivers report). MSS will release catch data for 2011 from submitted catch returns in April 2012.

4. 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).

Neil Morrison has reported the transfer of 6,000 salmon fry to holding facilities managed by Bob Kindness; BK can provide more information about this.

5. Herring Project (SG funded via RAFTS in 2009 and 2011)

I've had no further involvement in this since the last Trustee meeting. However, I understand that Sue Pomeroy has continued to make good progress; PJ may be able to provide an update. I'm looking forward to hearing the recordings of the interviews.

6. Marine Protected Areas around Wester Ross

I have made plans to hold a meeting in Gairloch on the 7th of May at 7 pm. This will be of a similar format to the meeting that took place in December 2010. The aim of the meeting will be to give as many people as possible an opportunity to understand the current issues and opportunities relating to the Scottish MPA process and to express their point of view.

Katie Gillham of SNH, MPA project officer, kindly phoned yesterday to explain recent developments with the Scottish MPA programme (an email message will follow). A Loch Gairloch MPA within the current Scottish MPA project is now less likely, though may still be possible via a Third Party MPA proposal if there is sufficient local support. More likely (though still far from certain) is the designation of a MPA for Little Loch Broom based on priority MPA search features already recorded therein. Loch Duich also remains a MPA search area. Depending upon the outcome of on-going assessments by SNH, stakeholder workshops and the strength of local community support or opposition, other parts of Loch Broom and Gruinard Bay may also be included within a MPA in this area.

Katie has kindly offered to come to a pre-meeting in April of any interested parties to explain how a Third Party MPA proposal for Wester Ross can be put together. Even with Trustee support I'm happy to do as much of the work in preparation for this meeting as possible in my own time as there much other scheduled Trust work for April and early May.

7. Consultations and responses (core funded)

Current fish farm applications have been in the south of the WRFT and responses have been prepared by JT.

8. Proposed Fish farm visits.

I've signed an agreement to visit Wester Ross Fisheries salmon farms later this year. I plan to organise initial visits in April. The agreement is that following a visit, a report is drafted which is agreed by both parties (WRFT and WRF) prior to further distribution.

9. Biosecurity issues (core funded)

Mink: Graeme Wilson reported the capture of a mink at Little Gruinard last week. I have asked those who trapped mink last year to help with trapping again during the next few weeks. Some additional phone calls may be needed to help co-ordinate the current trapping programme.

10. Carrying Capacity Project

Following the very generous offer from Ben Hadfield of Marine Harvest for supporting this project at the last Trustee's meeting, I'm currently awaiting the outcome of further discussions between John Armstrong and Simon McKelvey regarding the composition of salmon carcass analogue pellets to be used in trials.

11. Proposed work programme. This has been prepared and costed and will be circulated by PJ or VM separately.

12. Some other activities

- Preparation of a poster outlining the work of WRFT for the RAFTS conference next week.
- Preparation of a bid for electro-fishing survey of the River Lael and related correspondence.
- Visit of Gairloch High School biology class. The pupils and their teacher, Andrew Johnston, all had an opportunity to view plankton down the new microscope as part of a biodiversity quiz.
- Ben R got his barrel of beer for taking photographs of Arctic charr (and other fishes) as promised. Other members of the WRFT field teams assisted . . .

13. Future events / activities:

- RAFTS 2012 AGM & Council Meetings, 28th March, SNH Battleby Centre, near Perth
- RAFTS/ASFB Conference 29th March, SNH Battleby.
- Loch Gairloch MPA? Meeting. Monday May 7th at 7pm, Gairloch Community Hall.
- RAFTS Challenge and Scale Reading Workshop, Friday 18th May, Tweed Foundation.

14. Leave: PC plans to head south to Perth on 28th March following the WRASFB meeting for the RAFTS Annual Conference on 29th March, and then have a few days break before returning to Gairloch on the weekend of 7th – 8th April. Please contact me on my mobile phone (07786 836 003) at any time during this period.

Table 1 [cf. from WRFT Trustees 14/12/11]: Some information for discussion at meeting on proposed visits to fish farms by WRFT biologist(s) in 2012. Note that there may be changes at some sites in consented biomass prior to 2012; and the anticipated year of production cycle is based on information relating to recent patterns of production at respective sites and may also be subject to revision.

Location	Operator	Combined SEPA Biomass (tonnes)	Anticipated year of production cycle	Suggested time of visit(s) by WRFT Biologist	Priority	AMG?
Summer Isles farms	Scottish Salmon Farms	1850	1	latter part of year	Medium	No
Loch Kanaird	Wester Ross Fisheries	1050	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	No
Corry, Loch Broom	Wester Ross Fisheries	1050	1	latter part of year	Medium	No
Ardessie	Wester Ross Fisheries	662	2	any time after May	High	No
Isle Ewe	Marine Harvest	1369	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Aird, Kenmore, Camus	Scottish Salmon Company	2000++	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Upper Loch Torridon	Marine Harvest	2000++	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Loch Kishhorn Farms	Scottish Salmon Farms	4000++	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes
Upper Loch Carron	Scottish Salmon Company	1375	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes
Sron, Alsh, Duich(& ?Hourn)	Marine Harvest	8000++	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes

[end]

Jonah Tosney's Biologist's report for WRFT meeting, 29/03/2012

Aquaculture

- Permission granted for new 2000 tonne site in Loch Torridon despite objections from WRASFB, Torridon, Shieldaig and Kinlochewe councils and local creelers and fishermen, and concern from other consultees. Permission to be reviewed after 10 years and subject to SSC not using the existing Camas site (approx. 500 tonnes) concurrently.
- Objection drafted to new 2000 tonne Scottish Salmon Company site in Loch Carron. SSC have not provided lice data for the existing site with the application, despite it appearing to be well managed. Riparian owners and directly affected trustees (MS, BK, RW) consulted.
- Application received from Scottish Sea Farms for a new 2000 tonne site in Outer Loch Kishorn. Supporting data requested.
- Request received from SEPA for comments on CAR licence applications for Lochs Carron and Kishorn.
- Permission received from Marine Harvest to attend lice counts and a health team visit – currently negotiating dates. Permission received from SSC, dates TBA. Permission requested from Scottish Sea Farms, no response as yet.

Salmon in the classroom

- Salmon eggs and talks provided for Loch Duich, Auchtertyre, Glenelg, Kyle and Plockton primary schools. Fry to be released w/c 26/03/12 with electro-fishing to follow in August. This project has been extremely well received.

Student placement

- Skye FT have suggested the possibility of jointly hosting a one year student placement, primarily to develop the Angling Information Project discussed in 2011, as well as other IT related projects. Currently under discussion.

Funding

- European Fisheries Fund – awaiting further info from Highland Council about how funding will be allocated.
- Big Lottery Fund – tip offs from PJ and MH about a large possible funding source. Not yet investigated.