

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	30 May 2013	John Mackenzie (JM)	David Barclay (DB)
OPENED AT:	15.00	Bob Kindness (BK)	Mark Williams (MW)
CLOSED AT:	18.00	Melanie Smith (MS)	Richard Greene (RG)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Henry Dalgety (HD)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Peter Kinloch (PK)	Richard Wilson (RW)	Angus Davidson (AD)
Ian Kinloch (IK)	Andy Walker (AW)		

Prior to the start of the meeting JM welcomed Peter Kinloch, Chairman of the Skye Board and Trust, his son Ian and Dr Andy Walker, who has great expertise on sea trout, who was in the area and kindly giving a talk at the evening Open Meeting which followed the Trustees Meeting.

1. MATTERS ARISING

There was one matter arising from the 4th March 2013 minutes raised by MW. Subject to the substitution of the word "essential" to replace the word "planned" in line 12 of item 2 the minutes were then approved – proposed by MW seconded by BK.

2. WRASFB

2.i The trust had been aware for some time that funding from the board would be both less than in previous years and project specific.

PJ was able to inform the meeting that he had a letter (from the board) detailing the funding for the trust as:

- £4076.00 for fish farm visits (five in total) (this is wholly dependent on condition that the WRFT biologist conducts the inspection and is permitted to disclose the raw sea lice data to the board. The board requires this data in order to fulfil its duties as a statutory consultee during the planning application process).
- £4348.00 for work in preparing responses to planning applications (eight in total).
- £3000.00 annual payment for the WRFT biologist's time attending meetings, reading fish scales from rod caught salmonids and et al (this payment is over and above any, or all, of the WRFT biologist's time on projects a) and b)).

PJ explained that the board has decided to hold a reserve of funds (raised from its levies) for any unexpected eventualities. There is an expectation that planning applications and review assessments may become more numerous than usual and that, therefore, the board should hold cash reserves for the purpose of responding to these.

2.ii The board requires seeing uncensored inspection reports on sea lice from fish farm visits, The board has written to Stuart Black (SB) (head of Highland Council planning) on this matter. A meeting with SB will be arranged to discuss an official way of rescinding a confidentially agreement that exists between WRF Ltd and the trust biologist (that applies to one of their fish farms).

2.iii There is no funding for 2013-14 from the board for electro-fishing within the board area. Any river proprietors within the board area that may consider a juvenile survey necessary or desirable will need to find funding for that work.

3. SECOND BIOLOGIST

3.i On Tuesday 21st May there was a sub meeting of members of the trust (JM, DB, PC, VM and PJ) to discuss a draft budget and to consider the obvious deficit in funding and ways of addressing this issue. Following this meeting a telephone discussion between MS and PJ occurred with regard to the situation of a second biologist in light of Pete Minting's resignation and move to another employment. MS/PJ drafted a paper detailing a proposed way forward with regard to the second biologist position re-focusing of the post's remit and this paper was circulated in the meeting.

3.ii A discussion followed the reading of this paper and there was general agreement that it was a positive way forward:

- The focus of the post will be different.
- The post will be based in Inverness (saving office and related costs).
- A central part of the new person's remit will be to identify new projects and the funding required to carry them out so that, as far as the trust is concerned, the new post will be very largely self-funding.

- The situation will be reviewed on a set date once the new person is in place (say four months after appointment) through reporting on targets for income generation.
- This arrangement allows for the mutually beneficial link with UHI to be maintained.
- In the light of the major reduction in board funding, P.C will have some “spare” time which will be used to do survey etc work done in recent years by the second biologist.

4. FINANCE REPORTS

4.i Cash Projections

PJ reported:

- Confirmation has been received that the application to the HC discretionary fund had been approved for this year’s Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project – allowing continuity.
- A further application for a total of three funding for the Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project has been made to the Prince’s Countryside Trust – awaiting a decision from the trust.
- The Nineveh Charitable Trust has agreed to fund the secondary school project “Living Lochs” for the next three years.
- The board already do some educational work with local schools (Poolewe primary mainly) and may be interested to do more – should the trust therefore approach the board for funding towards the trust’s established educational projects? Although the board has not previously been asked, it is not a controversial subject and would afford valuable PR. Maybe an approach for next year?
- An estimate for an electro-fishing contract for survey work prior to a hydro scheme has been submitted to Green Hydro – awaiting a decision.
- The only sweep netting site (within the MIAP project) that is 40Km from a fish farm is on Skye and PK reported that the area has now got two aquaculture companies fighting over the Crown Estate lease for that sea loch – both wish to apply for planning permission there. The rivers leading into that sea loch have never been electro-fished and no invertebrate surveys have been done. These studies/surveys need to be done on these rivers and money has been earmarked for this work. PC needs to evaluate the time required to do this work on Skye along with the surveys he should do on the southern rivers.
- Insurance and accounting costs – to date the costs for public liability, employer’s liability, contents and boat insurances (through Lycetts) is circa £1.3K. By purchasing public liability, contents and boat insurance through the Highland Council’s community scheme for £467 and by continuing our Lycetts’ insurance for employer’s liability (with a small amount of public liability) at a reduced premium of £265 we have managed a substantial saving (£600) with no reduction in cover.
- The intention is now to look for reductions to our accountancy charges – especially as our turnover may not exceed £100K at which amount OSCR require accounts to be done by “qualified” accountants.

4.ii Management Reports

At this time the management reports are history – so there was no need to spend a lot of time on these – however, the outstanding points are worth noting:

- VM reported that she has set up two new sheets – one is Board core work, the other is contract work. It was suggested that there should also be another that is for Board planning applications.
- Any work to do with the Board, phone calls, dealing with other communications, meetings etc. - all time needs to be recorded as a cost and allocated to the correct Board “project”.
- Although Board funding is project specific it can still be termed a grant donation and avoid the need to be involved with VAT.

4.iii 2013-14 Budget

The budget cannot be set at this moment due to the uncertainty of the financial situation going forward.

4.iv Southern River Proprietors’ Contributions

On the northern rivers within the WRASFB area the rateable values have increased (on average) by 83.6% since 2005 and from the same date average salmon catch show a 74% increase. So there is a relationship between rateable increases and catch. After analysing the average catch returns on the southern rivers (not including the Carron) and then applying the same logic to the

southern rivers – their contribution would then yield just over £7.1K (if all proprietors were to pay). PJ will talk with NP.

5 **BIOLOGIST'S REPORT**

See report from Peter C (attached below).

Précising his report PC stated that:

- To date it was an unusual year for weather with a drop of 2 C in sea temperatures. Large sea mammals and basking sharks had not appeared yet.
- Visits to Loch Torridon and Loch Carron will become PC's job. The new proposed fish farm in Loch Carron will need to be monitored if it goes ahead. Any objection would need to be on the basis of the sea lice management. Marine Science Scotland do not recognise population impact in relation to sea trout as a consequence of salmon farming. They maintain there is not a proven link as there are examples of where sea trout numbers are good close to fish farms.
- WRFT should possibly ask MSS what they are doing about investigating a possible link between sea trout numbers and sea lice numbers and fish farms.
- Shona Marshall has completed annual report and is "publishing" it as on-line to save money. It is probably worth sending out some paper copies of the review - but a suggestion that CDs be used for most people was agreed.
- Bob K was asked if he could state where the best sites are for sea trout netting on the Carron. Bob K recommended that the best way is to use a boat depending on how high the river is.
- Ruby (student from SAMS) is doing project on historical herring fisheries (for her master's degree) including changes in fisheries, policy and herring numbers – together with fishermen stories.
- It was noted that there were some issues with the MIAP GIS based locational guidance tool. A review of the 1st draft threw up some minor problems that are being taken into account for the next version.

6. **PLANNING AHEAD**

6.i Work Programme

Peter K. gave an overview of the work on Skye that needs doing (see 4.i bullet point 6) for which there is some monies available but additional funding needs to be found. PK was given an assurance that, despite the turnover of biologists, a WRFT biologist would be able to do the required work.

6.ii Angling Advisory Service

Ian K. gave an update on the project stating:

- The web platform is complete but needs to be populated with information by the users, owners, angling clubs etc.
- He suggested that there might be two waves – generic information, permits etc. and then the next wave would be information from anglers etc. about 'good spots' – hints and tips.
- The site is modelled on the Assynt Anglers' website – can look at this for information. The Skye/Wester Ross one is an interactive site – so information can be inputted by the users – a step beyond any existing site on the market.
- Question asked about possibly uploading photographs – need a moderator for this – DB volunteered to look at doing this in the first instance. In the longer term we need a keen volunteer for this role.
- AW said that Pitlochry angling club has a site – he noted that there are technical problems and a lot of work in updating. Angling tickets are sold through the system, with money going back to the proprietors on an agreed proportion basis.
- This site possibly does not to be on such a commercial basis as Tweed and Pitlochry area.
- Note that funding for future maintenance funding is needed – PJ suggested we could go back to ENTRUST to get another year of funding. DB is going to look at this and report back.

6.iii Bruachaig

Funding from Marine Harvest is a possibility. As one proprietor has a problem about accepting funding from aquaculture, he is being asked if he would agree to fund the project (along with other Ewe proprietors) and he is now thinking about whether he wants to fund it.

If WRFT is going ahead with this project, there needs to be complete understanding why the work needs to progress and the degree of involvement/complexity of the project.

6.iv Trustees

WRFT is short of one Trustee – there are a couple of possible candidates who will be asked.

Richard Wilson and Richard Greene are up for re-election in late October 2013.

7. AOB:

7.i Change of Audit Requirement

The legal document recording the amendment (regarding the change of accountancy requirement) to WRFT's Deed of Trust was duly signed by four trustees at the meeting.

7.ii FWPM Seminar

A date for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Seminar has been set for Wednesday 24th July following the Life+ FWPM day on Tuesday 23rd July. Permission for access to river on both days has been given. PK noted that 3 rivers on Skye have Pearl Mussels one of which is being raided on a regular basis.

7.iii Some discussion about the MIAP Locational Guidance Tool took place – there are concerns over the inaccuracies in specific sites that is largely due to lack of scientific information where work has not been carried out. The principle reservations are lack of primary sea lice data and migration routes.

7.iv JM went to the Crown Estate meeting in Fort Augustus, called to investigate possibilities of better overall dialogue between wild and farmed interests. Marine Harvest, SSC, SSF, Loch Duart along with a number of West Coast wild fisheries representatives were present. The meeting involved a general discussion with a view to holding meetings hosted by the Crown Estate, probably twice yearly and preferably “on site” (either farm or wild) with and open informal and formal discussion on relevant issues under ‘Chatham House Rules’. SFT had not been invited due to an oversight. JM said he would talk to PK. to ensure that he will be invited next time.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting	01/08/2013	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	03/10/2013	WRFT Office	15.00
Trustees' meeting	TBA	WRFT Office	10.30

WRFT Trustee Meeting 30th May 2013

WRFT Biologists Report (28th May 2013)

1. Weather and river conditions

Over the weekend of 13th-14th April, weather patterns changed from a sustained drought with cold easterly winds, with a resumption of milder, showery westerly winds and higher water levels at last. Since then the weather has been mixed and river levels have remained relatively high for the time of year. Spring salmon have been caught in the Gruinard, Ewe and Carron . . . Sea temperatures have remained colder for the time of year. In the news today there is a report that sea temperatures are about 2C cooler than usual for the time of year, delaying arrival of basking sharks. Last night snorkelling (with new wetsuit) in Loch Ewe it felt rather cooler than usual . . .

2. Sea trout monitoring and report for 2012

So far this year 3 sweep netting sessions have been carried out by WRFT team:

- 13th March, at the mouth of the Dundonnell River in Little Loch Broom at low tide. Our objective was to find out whether over-wintering sea trout were present. 21 sea trout of up to 57 cm were caught. Condition factors ranged from (not too thin for time of year) with lice loadings ranging from 1 to 82. Most fish had scarring or dorsal fin deformities associated with past sea lice infection. Given high lice numbers present on sea trout taken nearby in the fyke net in summer 2012, the number and quality of the sea trout was a little unexpected and encouraging. One explanation is that the abundance of food fish (notably sprats) in Little Loch Broom in 2012 provided feeding opportunities for sea trout close to freshwater. These fish were larger than any taken at any site by the sweep net team in 2012. Are these fish all of Dundonnell River origin? Thank you to Dundonnell and Eilean Darach estates for providing helpers on 21/3. I'll show a short video from this session at the evening meeting on 30/5.
- 10th April, Flowerdale estuary, receding tide. Our usual spring sweep. 10 sea trout were caught, of up to 35cm. Lice levels quite high for time of year, reflecting dry weather.
- 27th May Boor Bay, Loch Ewe. No sea trout caught or seen. May be due to offshore wind – freshwater on other side of loch.

The sea trout monitoring report for 2012 can be found on the WRFT website via links at:

<http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=162>

Following publication of papers demonstrating a relationship between sea lice burdens on sea trout and proximity to salmon farms (Middlemas *et al*, 2012) this report considers the geographical occurrence of larger sea trout. Using data released by the Scottish Government following a FoI request by Don Staniford, it was possible to contrast the occurrence of larger sea trout in samples collected in different areas. Loch Gairloch sea trout grew bigger than those which returned to the MSS Shieldaig sea trout project trap. Elsewhere in Scotland, larger sea trout tended to be absent from samples of fish taken downwind of an area with high concentration of salmon farms in the Loch Linnhe area. The largest sea trout recorded by a sweep netting team was a fish of over 70cm caught at the mouth of the Polla River. However, the relationship is not straightforward, as demonstrated by the Dundonnell sweep on 21 March 2013.

I've asked various people on guidance regarding the need to work up a peer-reviewed paper to focus on relationships between sea trout populations in the West of Scotland and salmon farming using the methodology in the sea trout monitoring report for 2012. The aim would be to provide better information for assessing potential impacts r. salmon farm planning applications, etc.

3. River reports

The other report (nearly finished) is for the River Ewe and neighbouring systems. This report present the results of a range of work in the area during recent years, including rod catch analyses, results of juvenile fish surveys in 2011 and 2012, the Tournai trap project to monitor wild salmon in an unstocked system, local sea trout studies including sweep netting, and investigations of trout in potential sea trout spawning burns in the Kernsary sub-system in 2011 and Sguod system in 2011 and 2012. There is also an update on the Bruachaig salmon restoration project, which based on estimates of salmon smolt production may have contributed approximately 1 in 20 rod caught salmon to the Ewe fishery in years 2010 to 2012 and 1 in 10 fish to the Kinlochewe River fishery.

I've proposed to members of WRASFB that a Ewe fisheries management group and meeting would be the most useful forum in which to present this report and consider actions proposed.

4. Salmon farm visits

Since the last Trustee meeting I've carried out the following fish farm visits:

- 2nd April: WRF Corry salmon farm. Lice levels were above CoGP levels. I expressed concern to WRF management and requested that action be taken to reduce lice levels. Given the size of the Corry fish farm, I anticipate that there will have been a large population of infective larval lice within the Loch Broom area earlier this spring. I anticipate high levels of infection of sea trout by sea lice this year in the Two Brooms area and possibly beyond.
- 24th May: WRF Ardessie salmon farm. Lice levels were above CoGP levels. I expressed concern to WRF management and requested that action be taken to reduce lice levels. I anticipate continued high levels of infection of sea trout by sea lice this year in the Little Loch Broom area.
- 27th May: WRF Ardmail salmon farm. Lice levels were below CoGP levels. Given that this farm is only 9 months into a two year production cycle I expressed concern that lice levels would exceed CoGP levels within subsequent months.

I've also made various attempts to contact Scottish Salmon Farms to arrange a visit to the Summer Isles farms (messages left for John Rae and Colin Findlay). Responses awaited.

I'd welcome an invitation from Scottish Salmon Company to visit sties in Loch Torridon and upper Loch Carron.

5. WRFT Biologist's proposed priorities for summer 2013 (to discuss)

Given a reduction in levels of funding from the Scottish Government and WRASFB in 2013, I propose to focus on the following:

- **WRFT Review June 2013.** I aim to complete this in June, primarily as an on-line document. However I think some sort of WRFT summary document or newsletter should be printed and circulated to all fisheries so that local and visiting anglers are reminded of the continued existence of WRFT? Suggestions please.
- **Sweep netting for sea trout.** RAFTS-Scottish Government is funding sweep netting at Kanaird, Boor Bay (Loch Ewe) and in Loch Gairloch. We've lost funding for the River Carron site as the numbers of post-smolt sea trout caught in 2011 and 2012 were not high enough for the purposes of the RAFTS post-smolt monitoring study. We were unsuccessful at Boor Bay last year (though not in 2011), so it is important that we catch 30 post-smolts there this year. Further sessions are planned for around 7th – 13th June at all sites.
- **Electro-fishing surveys of juvenile fish (primarily salmon) populations.** The priority is to focus on rivers in the south of the WRFT area which were not surveyed in 2012. This will require approximately 8 – 10 field days (Rivers Ling to Barrisdale). In addition there may be e-fishing contract work.
- **Salmon farm visits.** The WRASFB has provided a budget for visits to salmon farms. If there is agreement from salmon farming companies, I plan to prioritise visits to farms within the WRASFB area (Loch Broom area to Loch Torridon).
- **Responses to salmon farm applications.** WRASFB has provided funding to support this work, and comments for responses to several applications / fish farm reviews are being drafted.
- **Project development.** Please revisit the 'Fisheries Management in Wester Ross: a Review . . . report of December 2012' to provide a steer at the Trustee Meeting on 30/5. This report can be found on the WRFT website via links at: <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=159> . (I'll tell you what I think would be of particular interest and value at the meeting on 30/5.)
- **Meetings and support with fisheries interests** (e.g. Glenelg Angling Club – various issues; River Ewe fishery management group – to agree projects and support . . .)

6. Other notes

Fish traps: at Tournai numbers of sea trout and salmon smolts are well down on previous years (figures from Ben to follow tomorrow night). At Shieldaig the sea trout smolt run has also been delayed – Jim had his peak run of sea trout smolts yesterday!

Ruby Neervoort, a student from Holland via SAMS, has been working here since 9th April on her MSC thesis project on 'Factors behind the historical changes in the herring fishery in Wester Ross'. Ruby has transcribed the interviews of herring fishermen carried out by Sue Pomeroy as part of last year's project (. . . Sue interviewed Richard Greene last week). A new bid for a grant to learn more and raise awareness of herring has been prepared by WREN.

I had an operation on 18th April and was off work for most of the following week, returning to office on 29th April to prepare for WRASFB meeting on 30th April. During convalescence I spent some time painting a **marine wildlife poster**, a draft of which can be seen on WRFT website at <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=164> . Good therapy! The poster aims to raise awareness of some of the habitats and wildlife to be protected within proposed **Northwest Sea lochs Marine Protected Area**, stakeholder consultations for which are underway (so far commercial fishermen and fish farmers . . .).

As of yesterday, I'm now effectively back to full fitness so far as sweep netting and other field work. Thank you to the NHS and to various people for helping out while I was recuperating. Tonight I shall cycle home for the first time since January . . . !

7. Some recent meetings attended.

- 21st March RAFTS AGM, near Perth. A theme was catchment management. Highlights included presentations by Chris Todd on the performance of salmon at sea, and Mark Coulson on levels of Norwegian genetic signature in wild Scottish salmon populations.
- 27th March. Tweed Sea Trout Seminar, Kelso. A particularly interesting evening of talks by the Tweed Foundation team, including tracking studies in freshwater and at sea, and results from traps in spawning burns and fish counters.
- 11th April. MIAP Inverness. The 1st version of the Locational Guidance tool presented by Donna 5. Claire-Hunter.
- 16th April. River Basin Management Planning meeting, Inverness. Teams from SEPA, SNH and fisheries trusts to review progress following production of the first RBMP and consider priorities for future plans. Useful day with presentations on securing project funding and helpful contacts.
- 30th April. WRASFB Meeting. Various issues including presentation and discussion of the above mentioned MIAP v1 by Callum Sinclair with Andrew Wallace.

8. Opportunities for volunteers / dates for diary

- June (various dates to be confirmed): sweep netting of Kanaird, Boor Bay, Gairloch and possibly other sites for sea trout. All helpers welcome.
- July (dates at short notice): electro-fishing surveys and one or more hill loch survey in 1st week of July
- 25th July: Laide Wood Aquatic Beasties day

[end]