

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	15 August 2012	John Mackenzie (JM)	David Barclay (DB)
OPENED AT:	10.30	Bob Kindness (BK)	Mark Williams (MW)
CLOSED AT:	15.45	Melanie Smith (MS)	Angus Davidson (AD)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Mary Gibson (MG)	Ben Hadfield (BH)	Richard Greene (RG)
Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Richard Wilson (RW)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
		Henry Dalgety (HD)	Jonah Tosney (JT)

1. MATTERS ARISING

1.i There were no matters arising from the 31st May 2012 minutes which were accepted as a true record – proposed by MW seconded by MS.

2. TRUSTEES

2.i Angus Davidson was unanimously appointed as a WRFT trustee representing the northern area. It is still hoped to encourage an angling club representative onto the trust.

3. FINANCE REPORTS

3.i Cash Projections:

- The (end of July) cash projections predict a reduction in our cash reserves of some £10K by the year-end. This highlights the difficulty being experienced in finding funding for the educational projects, in particular, Salmon & Trout in the Classroom.
- 2013 is designated as the year of Natural Scotland and that might provide a “hook” for sourcing funding.
- The secondary school project (Life in Lochans) costs about £3K per school and there has been a request from the high schools to run this project every year in each of the three high schools in our area – adding to the problem of finding funding.
- The Life+ FWPM project has been approved and WRFT is committed to undertake a “Pearls in the Classroom” project starting in 2013.
- A further Life+ project on INNS has been “assembled” by RAFTS and, if successful, should generate some additional income for WRFT starting 2013 for work on mink and Japanese knotweed.
- Apart from funding for sweep netting there are no further funds from RAFTS for field work projects this year.

3.ii Management Reports:

There were no immediate issues from the Management Reports.

3.iii Accounts:

WRFT accounts for y/e 2012 have been submitted to our accountants and we await their initial draft version for scrutiny.

3.iv Southern River Proprietors' Contributions:

- New proprietors in the north have expressed strong views on how the levy money (raised by the board) is subsequently used by WRFT for its work.
- They believe that monies raised by levies in the board's area should only be spent on work, performed by WRFT, in the same area – viz. WRASFB should contract WRFT to do specific work within the board area and WRFT should report back on that work accounting for the money spent doing it.
- Every five years rivers within the board area are revalued – so there is a need to review southern rivers' contributions in light of the recent new rateable values coming into force on rivers in the board's area.
- One possible method for revision of the southern rivers' contributions would be to use the latest catch returns, compare them to the catch returns of both five and ten years ago and adjust each river's contribution accordingly but there are considerable difficulties in obtaining this information.

4. PLANNING AHEAD

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

- PC said that he had recently been e-fishing on the Rhidorrich river and that it would be good to tackle the problems in the upper reaches of that river that are affecting its wild fish populations.

- PC stated that most of the sweep netting was now complete and that there was a need for better links between the RAFTS sweep netting results and his lice counts on fish farms though he accepted that it was still difficult to draw correlations between fish farm lice counts and the levels on wild fish.
- PC believed that the sweep netting programme could be used as an opportunity to raise awareness of sea lice issues amongst the general public.
- The Loch Ewe fish farm is in its 1st year of production and after his recent visit to the farm, PC raised concerns about the 2nd year of their production – a draft report was produced and forwarded to MH for comment before its more general circulation. The next scheduled visit there is in November 2012.
- The SSF fish farms in the Summer Isles were visited in June - they are using wrasse as a sea lice control method – a report has been produced and forwarded to SSF for their comment.
- The WRF fish farm sites at Ardesie were visited in July – a report was produced and has been agreed with WRF.
- There is a need to clarify with the individual fish farm companies how reports (on fish farm visits) can be used - **PJ**
- **PC** asked about the possibility of organizing a workshop to discuss sea lice in general with wild fish interests as well as control methods amongst different aquaculture companies operating in Wester Ross. It was agreed that this needed to be discussed with the fish farmers to gauge their support (or not) for setting up such a workshop - **PC**.
- WRFT needs to set out its position with respect to sea lice, what it wishes to see in monitoring and reporting sea lice and generally working with the aquaculture industry.
- At the same time, WRFT should maintain contact with proprietors to ensure that they are “up to speed” with the work of the trust in general and the work on sea lice in particular.
- **BK** reported that he has some 8000 salmon fry from Kinlochewe stock (of about 3 grams in weight) that could be re-introduced back into the wild – it was decided that they should go into the Kinlochewe river.
- A herring project is being submitted by WREN and the project includes awareness raising and activities for schools.
- There has been a report of mink at Glen Carron with two being trapped recently. There is a need to put out more traps and **MG** will check if **SNH** have any spare traps.
- SEPA have some funding available for restoration work and WRFT should identify a project that is likely to be successful for submission to SEPA.

4.ii Jonah Tosney’s biologist’s report (copy attached below):

4.iii Life+ INNS:

As reported above under **3.i** this project is about to be submitted by RAFTS and, if successful, will start in 2013.

4.iv The Angling Advisory Service project is seeking funding from ENTRUST and needs to define its possible outcomes. This has progressed from its original web site construction into an “apps” driven interactive platform. There is need to clarify that all trustees are happy with its principles and its need to incorporate information of owners – see Assynt web site for comparison.

5. Aquaculture Planning Applications and Responses:

According to the SG web site, the Diabaig Sgur Durghall appeal will be determined by 14th September 2012.

6. Contracts:

Two new contracts have recently been received with short time scales for completion.

7. AOB:

- Signal Crayfish have been reported at Ballachulish and have been treated with chemicals – we need to raise awareness of their proximity.
- FWPM reported in Sguod burn – **MG** will check out their status

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees’ meeting	08/10/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees’ meeting	06/12/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees’ meeting	21/03/2013	WRFT Office	10.30

Report for Trustees by Peter Cunningham, WRFT biologist (13 Aug 2012)

1. Juvenile fish-surveys (core-funded)

Electro-fishing sites have been fished in the Ullapool, Dundonnell, Badachro, Broom and Tournaig rivers to date (13th August 2012). A mixed picture so far. Depleted juvenile salmon populations were recorded in areas vulnerable to drought and washout. Healthier populations were found at 'core' sites where the streambed is stable. **Salmon fry** were found at moderate or high Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) reflecting high densities in the Dundonnell River (especially sites in upper part of river), in the Badachro River at core sites, and the River Broom (in collaboration with SEPA e-fish team) demonstrating successful spawning of salmon in 2011 and survival off eggs through spates and periods of drought earlier in the year. However at a 'core' site in the Rhidorroch River (Ullapool headwaters) no salmon fry were found. In a nearby tributary, salmon fry and parr (and juvenile trout) were found at densities indicative of healthy populations. The lack of fry in the Rhidorroch River was most obviously related to redd washout associated with streambed sediment movement and instability; although drought may have been a contributory factor. This is a problem that was highlighted in the Ullapool River FMP in 2006 and relates to grazing pressure in headwater areas and heavier rainfall (when it comes). At Tournaig (survey led by Roger McLachlan, 11/8), salmon fry were found in the spawning stream below the first falls above the loch, but, for second successive year, not at any of the 4 sites above the falls.

Salmon parr were found at medium to high CPUE in the Badachro River (indicative of healthy juvenile salmon population), though low CPUE at sites fished in the Dundonnell River; and Rhidorroch River. This may be a consequence of a relatively poor 2011 fry year-class and for the Rhidorroch River subsequent washout in 2012. In the Broom parr were present at all 4 quantitative sites (density estimates to follow).

Trout fry were recorded at high CPUE at 3 tributary sites in the middle of the Dundonnell River (including one ditch which was almost stagnant). At one site in a back channel, the flow had almost stopped, so a few stones were moved to increase flow [c. Kerry . . .!]. In the Badachro River, dead trout fry were found in stagnant pools of the outflow stream below Loch Clair.

2. Sea trout sampling (part-funded by the Scottish Government as part of the RAFTS Aquaculture Programme)

Too many lice in some areas, with high lice counts on early-returned sea trout taken in the Two Brooms area in June. In July lice counts were generally lower in the Two Brooms area, and some fish had grown well, with abundant sandeels and shoals of sprats in coastal waters. Some heavily infected finnock (to over 100 lice / fish) were taken in the River Ewe in June and early July; and also 'clean' finnock in good condition. Sweep netting data has been forwarded to RAFTS for analyses.

Kanaid: On 5th June 218 sea trout were caught in the sweep net. Most fish were heavily infected with early stage *Lepeophtheirus salmonis* lice (salmon lice) indicative of infection by larval lice in nearby waters. A subsample of 39 fish of below 250mm in length (average length 174mm, average weight 56g) had average infection of 62 lice per fish. Larger fish of up to 520mm were caught; this biggest fish had no lice on it, and was the fattest of the larger sea trout in the samples. On 17th July: 49 sea trout were taken in the sweep 32 sea trout of below 250mm in length (of average length 209mm) had an average lice count of 6.9 live per fish. Nearly all the fish had black spotting indicative of earlier infection by small lice. The average weight of fish in this subsample at 100.5g) was almost twice that of the 5th June sample. This suggests that many of the fish taken in early June had survived, and lost their lice and had grown successfully (confirmed by scale reading).

Two sea trout to 1.5lb+ (670g+) in good (plump) condition were taken at mouth of River Broom on 27th July 2012. There are anecdotal reports of other larger sea trout taken in the Ullapool area.

Dundonnell Fyke net (operated by Alasdair MacDonald (Dundonnell Estate) & Sally Clements (with support from WRFT). The fyke net trap was operated between 6th June and 27th June and caught 54 sea trout. Of these 32 sea trout were less than 250mm in length (and of average length 180mm) and these fish carried an average of 45 *L. salmonis* lice. 22 larger sea trout of up to 490mm were taken with up to 130 *L.s* lice / fish. Some of the fish taken towards the end of the sampling period (after 20th June) were fat with condition factors of over 1.2 demonstrating good feeding in nearby waters.

Gruinard Bay: Two sweep net sessions at Mungasdale Bay (23rd May [Low tide] & 6th July [high tide]), and one at Inverianvie (12th June [high tide]). The only sea trout caught was a fish of 50cm on 23rd May. On shore waves made use of boat tricky on 12th June and 6th July; however, the net was set in a satisfactory manner on both occasions. Conclusion: low tide is best. PC plans to explore the Inverianvie shore at low tide using kayak and snorkel (in own time!) prior to further sweep net expeditions. I'm still optimistic of better catches here.

PC was invited by WRFT Life Members, Richard Cunningham (no relation) and Mary-Anne Smythe to sample finnock in the Gruinard River. Finnock and larger sea trout could be seen in pool (beneath footbridge), were photographed, but could not be caught despite best efforts of three anglers. Sea lice scarring could be seen on some but not all of these fish; overall they appeared to be in good condition.

Loch Ewe: In total 9 sea trout were taken at Boor Bay in three sweep net session sessions (the two successful sessions were in the first week of July). Lice levels were generally low, though one fish had 70 lice. Using rod and line in the Sea Pool of the River Ewe nearby, on 11 July 15 finnock (length 218mm to 273mm) were taken, with 0 to 127 *L.s* lice (mostly less than 20) and up to 8 *Caligus* lice per fish. On 20 July, another 15 finnock (224mm to 271mm) were taken with 0 to 20 lice; and in good condition having fed well at sea.

Loch Gairloch: two further sweeps on 22nd June (2 sea trout) and 20th July (10 Sea trout). Fish 'B' (see WRFT Wild Trout Report for 2011) was recaptured for the 5th and 6th time. On 22nd June it was 487mm & 1154g with a total of 24 *L.s* lice (undamaged dorsal fin); on 20th July it was 495mm & 1205g with a total of 104 lice and dorsal fin damage of 2 (over a third of fin eroded). Smaller trout also carried lice (up to 90 lice) and had damaged dorsal fins.

3. Fish farm visits (?core funded)

PC visited the Marine Harvest Isle Ewe salmon farm on 15th June with Ray Dingwall; Scottish Sea Farms sites around the Summer Isles on 18th June and Wester Ross Fisheries, Ardesie sites on 11th July. A formal agreement exists between WRF and WRFT regarding reporting protocol; however a similar agreement is required between SSF and WRFT if reports from visits are to be circulated. BH commented on a report from Isle Ewe salmon farm visit and has said that the WRFT biologist is welcome to visit the farm at any time (subject to practical arrangement). Thank you to Ben & Steve (MH), Colin Findlay (SSF) and Hugh Richards (WRF) for organising and supporting the site visits.

- The three salmon farm companies use different production systems and sea lice are controlled in different ways. It could be of value to wild fisheries interests to invite respective salmon farm companies to a sea lice management workshop to explain, contrast and compare sea lice management practices.

4. Rod catches of salmon and sea trout

The River Ewe fished steadily in June and July despite low water. Following rainfall over the last weekend of July, salmon were taken in the Broom, Dundonnell and Gruinard rivers. However, with very low ground water tables, flows have again dropped to very low levels (rain currently forecast). [further details to follow]

5. Tournai trap (supported by Marine Harvest)

8 grilse were taken in the Tournai upstream trap between 27th July and 3rd August. All fish were measured, samples of scales and DNA were taken and all fish were photographed by Ben Rushbrooke. Two of the fish had recent predator damage thought to be that of seals.

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). No salmon fry were found between the Heights of Kinlochewe and the main falls; suggesting that the adult rod caught salmon transferred above the falls in 2011 failed to spawn in this area in 2011.

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

Sue Pomeroy has recorded 10+ conversations with fishermen [PJ has details]; and has helped to develop a project proposal for grant funding to be submitted on behalf of WREN.

8. Marine Protected Areas around Wester Ross

PC attended the national MPA stakeholders workshop on 27th-28th June. MPA search areas include Loch Broom, Little Loch Broom and the Summer Isles area (but not Gruinard Bay); and Loch Gairloch and Loch Ewe (local community bid). At the workshop we discussed options for selection and management – including whether targets would be set simply to protect what remains, or whether targets for habitat and species *restoration* would also be included. NGOs remain concerned as to how ‘ecological coherence’ will be achieved. MPA search feature (habitats and species) management guidance is being prepared by SNH, and will be compiled within a handbook by December 2012. Advice on MPA designation will be forwarded to SG Ministers early in 2013.

9. Biosecurity issues (time core-funded at present)

PC attended meeting to discuss preparation RAFTS EU Life+ bid on 7th August. The RAFTS bid is for a 5 year programme of work to control Invasive Alien Species (IAS) which occur in or near aquatic habitats, based on setting up networks of volunteers in 18 fishery trust areas. The WRFT part of the bid focuses on Japanese knotweed, initially within the River Broom catchment (then elsewhere within WRFT area) and mink.

10. Some other activities

- Preparation of WRFT Review July 2012
- Nineveh Trust Visit 18th & 19th June
- Flowerdale Sweep Netting 22nd June (Gairloch Wildlife Festival Event)
- Gairloch Gathering (including e-fishing demo) 30th June
- Laide Community Woodland Aquatic Bug Hunt 26th July
- Visit by Jean Urquhart MSP 31st July (discussed sea lice and wild fisheries, herring project and MPAs)

11. Project idea:

Small sea trout system restoration project: The following burns could support much higher production of sea trout: Second Coast, Sand burn (Laide), Slaggan, Allt Beith, [Sand (Gairloch)], Strath (Gairloch – redundant water supply), Loch Bad an-H Achlaise (Badachro). These small loch & stream systems are all in need of work to remove blockages / ease culverts / repair fish ladder (Allt Beith) and could be restored and ‘managed’ to increase their amenity, biodiversity and fisheries value via generation of local volunteer network. To develop a project would require the agreement of local land owners, tenants, and angling clubs.

[end]

Jonah Tosney's Biologist's report for WRFT meeting, 15/08/12

- **Plankton sampling for sea lice.** Initial survey sites have been identified and sweeps taken from Lochs Duich, Long, Alsh, Carron and Kishorn. Initial results show that lice are present in moderate numbers at some sites but not at others, as expected. I'd like to continue the sampling program, sampling each of these lochs plus Loch Hourn on a monthly basis (1 day sampling time, 1 or 2 days sample sorting). As discussed at the previous meeting Marine Scotland have shown that planktonic lice numbers correlate very well with both stage of production cycle and numbers of lice on wild fish. I'd also like to re-visit the idea of using sentinel pens to look at impacts on wild fish. Marine Harvest will support this work in the Alsh / Hourn / Duich area. Sentinel pens would be very labour intensive and probably require an assistant. I also have concerns about the welfare of the fish in the pens. It could be an excellent project though, and is worth consideration.
- **Skye work** – invertebrate sampling completed, electro-fishing to follow in September.
- **Sweep netting** – third sweep of the Carron completed in early July. Lice numbers were again high and fish showed signs of serious lice damage. Fewer early-stage lice were found than in earlier sweeps, and the majority of July lice were adults suggesting infection pressure may have eased. 16 sea trout have been netted on the Carron this season, 15 were infected, with an average number of 62 lice per infected fish. A new site at Nostie Bay (Loch Alsh) was also swept in July, no trout were caught despite the encouraging presence of large numbers of sand eels.
- **Salmon in the Classroom** – Loch Duich primary school returned to the River Ling and found plenty of salmon fry and eels, and were lucky to see two large adults in a pool. Glenelg, Kyle, Plockton and Auchtertyre schools booked for the Autumn.
- **Aquaculture** - Highland Council have turned down Scottish Salmon Company's application for a new site in Loch Carron. The reasons given were the visual impact and impact upon property prices, the impact upon wild salmonids, and the impacts upon benthic ecology, particularly flame shells. No decision yet on Scottish Sea Farms application in Loch Kishorn.
- **AMG** - Lochs Alsh / Hourn and Duich AMG – successful and productive AMG meeting with Marine Harvest (the sole operator in the area) and Nigel Pearson, wild fish representative and trustee.
- **News** - Salmon population discovered in the small Allt Gleann Udalam, which feeds into Loch Alsh.