

WESTER ROSS AREA SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014

This annual report summarises the activities of the WRASFB during 2013/2014 with regard to the delivery of its statutory powers and responsibilities. The WRASFB area was formed on the 24th December 2003 by a designation order which amalgamated the 3 existing District Salmon Fishery Boards of the : Ewe, Gruinard & Little Gruinard, Broom along with the fishery districts of : Kennart, Ullapool, Little Broom, Badachro & Kerry, Torridon, Balgay and Applecross.

BOARD MEMBERS

Board Members are elected, from the list of all qualified proprietors, by the proprietors within the board area. Qualified proprietors may nominate a mandatory to act on their behalf. Additional members can be co-opted to the board by the elected members. The term of office for a board is not more than three years from the date of the triennial elections.

Clerk of the Board

Peter Jarosz
Tel 01445 712899
e-mail admin@wrasfb.co.uk

Elected Members

Upper Proprietors

Bill Whyte (chair)	(Mandatory for Jane Maclay)
Gordon Crawford	(Mandatory for Nicholas Crawford)
Donald Rice	(Mandatory for Regina Anna Properties)
Hugh Whittle	(Mandatory for Inveran Fishings Ltd)
Rosie Nicoll	(Mandatory for Pat Wilson)
Iain Russell	(Mandatory for Philip Smith)
Stephen Bate (vice chair)	Balgay.

Lower proprietors

Jamie Crawford	
Jenny Scobie	(resigned 30 th April 2013)

Co-opted Members

Frank Buckley	(anglers' representative)
Ian McFadyen	(ghillies' representative)
Brian Fraser	(ghillies' representative)
Raymond Dingwall	(ghillie/bailiffs' representative)

Invited Attendees

Mary Gibson	(SNH, non voting)
Peter Cunningham	(WRFT biologist, non voting)

ANNUAL REPORT

Following the triennial elections in November 2012, The Board considered itself to be in a position of financial difficulty. The previous method of the board funding the work carried out by WRFT had resulted in all levy monies (apart from a fixed amount for working capital) being paid to the WRFT for its core functions and activities. As the bulk of the working capital had already been spent, there was little money available for the new Board to operate until the 2013/2014 levies were collected. This issue was addressed by all Board members agreeing to pay their own levies within ten days of the start of the new financial year and levy invoices being sent to all proprietors by the end of April. The Board agreed that in order to avoid this situation again, three things would need to happen:

- 1) The Board would carry over an agreed working capital figure for the following year`s administration costs.
- 2) The Board would carry over and hold an agreed contingency reserve.
- 3) Meeting the requirements of 1 and 2 above meant that a new way had to be found to fund the Trust (which was appropriate in any event), to carry out the work and research required by the Board.

To this end, the Board issued clear instructions to the Trust on what work was required and how much it could afford to donate for the 2013-14 year in order to: a) carry out its statutory remit and b) achieve the required working capital and reserve figure for the future. Although this resulted in reduced funding to the Trust for the past financial year, it has given the Board a more secure financial footing which will result in more available funding through the coming year and beyond to meet the Board`s requirements.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) has compiled a Code of Good Governance for District Salmon Fishery Boards that WRASFB has adopted and works to.

2. ASFB SPRING CONSERVATION POLICY

ASFB has also issued a Spring Conservation policy to help the protection of vulnerable spring stocks from excessive exploitation. Although aimed mainly at addressing the issues arising from the mixed stock fisheries on the east coast, WRASFB supports this policy as suitable for the fragile west coast fisheries as well. The advice from ASFB is that no fish should be killed before 15th May and further information can be obtained from the ASFB web site.

3. WRASFB AREA CATCH RETURNS

Provisional catch figures were obtained from the returns available from the Marine Scotland web site, last updated on 29th April 2014. The WRFT will, as usual, analyse the final declared catch figures and publish the finished data in the WRFT annual review.

a. Declared Rod Catches (to 29th April 2014)

Salmon, 180
Grilse, 217
Sea trout, 45
Finnock, 427

b. Netting rights within the board area are all owned by various proprietors and have not been exercised for some time. These are a mixture of fixed engine (bag nets) and net and coble fisheries.

All were classed as “Mixed Stock Fisheries” as they targeted and intercepted salmon and sea trout in coastal waters making their way back, to the rivers of their birth. Unlike netting in a single estuary where only salmon from one catchment is exploited, mixed stock fisheries have the obvious potential to cause an impact on rivers far from the netting site. The last operational netting station at Red Point was closed in 2004. The returns from legal net fisheries in the Board’s area are therefore zero.

4. FISHERIES PROTECTION

Unlike some other boards that are responsible for only one catchment, The WRASFB (as the name implies) is an Area Salmon Fishery Board. The WRASFB carries the responsibility for many individual catchments and around 500km of coastline. This area extends seaward for 5km from the mean, low water spring tide level and to the furthest point east of each catchment where the waters run to the west. While the income raised from the salmon levies does not allow the direct employment of any bailiffs by the Board, it will authorise fishery employees as Fishery Board Bailiffs. There are currently three qualified and authorised bailiffs in the board area but, before being authorised by the Board, candidates are required to be qualified by passing the IFM/ASFB bailiff course. The Board has agreed that in order to have a more geographical coverage of bailiffs, funding can be provided for a further 4 candidates to take the exams. These areas suitable for extended coverage are, 1 from the Kanaird to Broom area, 1 from the Loch Maree area, 1 from the Gairloch to Red Point area and 1 from the Torridon area. Further information on the bailiff qualifications and applications for funding can be submitted to the Clerk of the Board.

A 100m monofilament gill net deployed in Gruinard Bay was seized and further reports were received on previous illegal netting activities throughout the board area. Random boat patrols will be deployed during the coming season.

5. NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS

The WRASFB has been involved in, or will be involved with the following national consultations:

Land Reform Review Consultation 2013
ASFB Code of Good Governance for District Salmon Fisheries Boards.
Aquaculture and Fisheries Act (2013)
Wild Fisheries Review 2014

6. LOCAL CONSULTATIONS

The WRASFB is a statutory consultee for planning applications regarding aquaculture development or modifications and for the Scottish Government review process for fish farms with equipment placed prior to 2007. The Board is also a consultee regarding run of river hydro schemes and wind farms where the development or access to the development may cause an impact to migratory fish spawning grounds or impede access to those spawning grounds. The Board is not included in consultations on the Scottish Government audit process for fish farms with equipment placed before 2007.

Aquaculture

1. Loch Kanaird, Planning application for site relocation and modification, 13/01494/FUL.

The Board response is on the Board website. Due to concerns from both the Board and the Highland Council, this application was granted a time limited consent, instead of a full permanent planning

consent. This will now allow any effects of the site relocation and modification to be monitored by the Board to see if the applicant's claim of improved environmental performance will be achieved.

2. Summer Isles, Scottish Government review process.

The Board response for all three sites is on the Board's web site. In line with the Board's responses to these reviews, all 3 sites are required to produce a full EIA and consultation prior to any decision being made.

3. Corry, Loch Broom. This site was determined by a Scottish Government Audit and was granted a full permanent planning consent. WRASFB were not consulted on this audit.

Hydro

13/01239/FUL. 100kw hydro scheme, Letterewe. (refurbishment of existing scheme).

13/04025/SCRE. 46kw hydro scheme, Dundonnell

14/00371/FUL. 1.2mw hydro scheme, Langwell

14/00516/FUL. 1.5mw hydro scheme, Badachro

In addition to these applications, the Board has been consulted on pre application issues for further hydro schemes that are not yet in the planning process.

7. REPRESENTATION AT MEETINGS

ASFB/RAFTS. Regarding the Managing Interactions Project (MIAP)

ASFB. Local engagement on interactions between Wild and Farmed Fish

Crown Estates. Investigation into improving wild/farmed fish relations.

Highland Council on various aquaculture planning matters.

Aquaculture Companies on various, local operational matters.

Plus discussions on various local matters with:

Association of Salmon Fishery Boards

Rivers and Fishery Trusts of Scotland

Fish Legal

Highland Council

Marine Scotland

Marine Scotland Science

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Scottish Government

8. STOCKING CONSENTS

It is a legal requirement to have written Fishery Board consent before restocking salmon or sea trout into any waters of the area. Full details of the guidance and requirements can be found on the ASFB web site.

The following consents were granted by the Board during the 2013/2014 year.

Dundonnell

Bruachaig

Shieldaig

9. PRIORITIES FOR 2014/2015

WRASFB will continue to use its statutory powers with regard to the protection and enhancement of migratory fish within the Board area.

In partnership with WRFT, WRASFB will continue to improve its database on wild fish, fisheries and aquaculture operations within the Board area in order to meet its statutory remit.

The Board will establish and maintain discussions with all aquaculture companies operating within the Board's area regarding the interaction between wild and farmed fish.

The Board will continue to liaise with the local planning authority and submit planning application responses that are focused on sound science and evidence. Where a time limited consent has been granted, the Board will seek to carry out a monitoring programme (subject to the necessary funding), evaluate the results and advise the planners accordingly. To assist in monitoring the downstream migration of smolts, The Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) has kindly agreed to a long term loan of their rotary screw trap. There is another rotary screw trap in the area which the Board is looking to secure.

The Board will strive to keep levies as low as possible whilst still meeting its statutory obligations.

The chair will be involved in the Wild Fisheries Review 2014.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH GOOD GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

a. Meetings

The Board meeting for the 13th March 2014 was advertised on the web sites of both WRASFB and ASFB. It was advertised in The Gairloch Times and The Ullapool News and was also intimated on the local radio station (two lochs radio) on the day of the meeting. The advertisements for both the Annual Proprietors' and the Annual Public meetings on 28th May 2014 have been sent to Scottish Ministers, as required by the Aquaculture and Fisheries Act 2013.

b. Members' Interests

The WRASFB maintains a register of interests for all board members. This will be available for public inspection at the annual public meeting. Should a member declare an interest at the start of any board meeting, that interest will be recorded in the minutes.

c. Annual Accounts and Reports

The annual accounts and annual report are required to be circulated to all proprietors for comments in advance of the annual proprietors meeting where they will be presented. Following approval, they will be posted on the Board's web site and a copy sent to Scottish Ministers

d. Annual Public Meeting

The WRASFB annual public meeting will follow immediately after the annual proprietors meeting on 28th May 2014.

e. Complaints Procedure

The WRASFB has adopted a formal complaints' procedure that can be found on the Board web site.

11. COMPLAINTS TO THE BOARD

There have been no formal complaints raised against the Board during the 2013/2014 financial year.

12. **CONCLUSION**

Throughout this past year, your Board has worked particularly hard to meet the requirements of new legislation and the same old challenges faced by all salmon fishery boards. As Chairman, I would like to thank all the Board members, who give their time freely, for their considerable input over the past year. My thanks also go to the Clerk of the Board who has now discovered that his interpretation of the term “part time” is not quite the same as mine.

All fishery boards face the same juvenile production challenges where the statutory remit is to enhance and protect wild salmon and sea-trout. Geographical challenges include the mixed stock netting on the east coast, water abstraction to feed large hydro dams on the central river systems and, poorly sited or poorly managed aquaculture operations on the west coast.

The key to any board effectively addressing these challenges is through having good information that can then be used with an effective strategy. The right information needs to be collected through the right monitoring and then the science and evidence needs to be focused and used, at the right time.



Bill Whyte
WRASFB Chair

Dated 17th June 2014