

# WRASFB ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

supported by the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards [ASFB] and Fish Legal



The Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board (WRASFB) has continued to work in close co-operation with Wester Ross Fisheries Trust (WRFT) over the past two years in two distinct areas of work:

- **Monitoring of fisheries.** Data collection by WRFT (e.g. from sweep netting and electro-fishing surveys) has added to the data bank that the WRASFB requires in performing its remit as the statutory consultee for wild fish. A summary of these surveys can be seen elsewhere within this document.
- **Responding to planning applications.** WRFT has provided background information for responses to planning applications for both fish farm sites and for run of the river hydro schemes.

The WRASFB has responded to planning applications for run of the river hydro schemes on seven locations within the Board's area over the past 12 months: at Strathcarron, Kishorn, Bruachaig (Upper Falls), Braemore, Achnasheen, Achnashellach and Ardessie. A number of these applications are quite recent and, whilst the Board (following advice from the WRFT biologist) made recommendations on some of these schemes, it remains to be seen if applicants agree to accept the recommendations made by the Board.

As far as aquaculture planning applications are concerned, the past twelve months has seen numerous efforts by the Scottish Salmon Company [SSC], utilizing all the legal processes available to them and employing expensive lawyers, to have the ten-year term at their farm in Torridon (Sgeir Dughall) replaced with permanent planning consent. These legal actions have included the Court of Session and your Board has had no alternative but to seek legal advice from Court of Session experts so that our responses, to these applications by SSC, are both robust and legally accurate. Currently this case is back with the DPEA for a second ruling by a reporter appointed by Scottish Ministers. All this involvement of legal experts as well as the additional time the Clerk of the Board has had to spend working on our responses has depleted the Board's contingency fund (held for just this purpose). There is little doubt that these efforts by SSC to replace the ten-year term with permanent planning consent will be ongoing. In order for the Board to continue responding to these attempts by SSC (and any other aquaculture company) there is an urgent need to replace the monies in the contingency fund and, to this end, WRASFB's board took the decision to raise the levy rate for the first time in five years.

WRASFB, in conjunction with the Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board (ADSFB), made (on behalf of ASFB) the wild fisheries' response to the Independent Consenting Review. This review, commissioned by Marine Scotland and the Crown Estate to examine the current planning application process and report on ways of "stream-lining" the planning procedure for aquaculture, took the form of a document that detailed the current process and asked for comments from aquaculture companies, the local planning authorities and ASFB (representing the wild fish interest). WRASFB/ASFB, in the joint response, made a number of important points/recommendations and, at the same time, listed several failures within the existing planning system.

WRASFB also presented strong views to the consultation on the draft "Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill 2016". This is the forerunner to what will become an Act of Parliament in October 2016, the purpose of which is the dissolution of the existing Fishery Boards and their replacement by the new Fishery Management Organisations.

On less political issues, WRASFB has helped to support the educational projects run by the WRFT as part of the Board's public awareness remit.

Further information about WRASFB, including copies of responses to planning applications, can be found on the Board's website at <http://wrasfb.dsfb.org.uk/>.

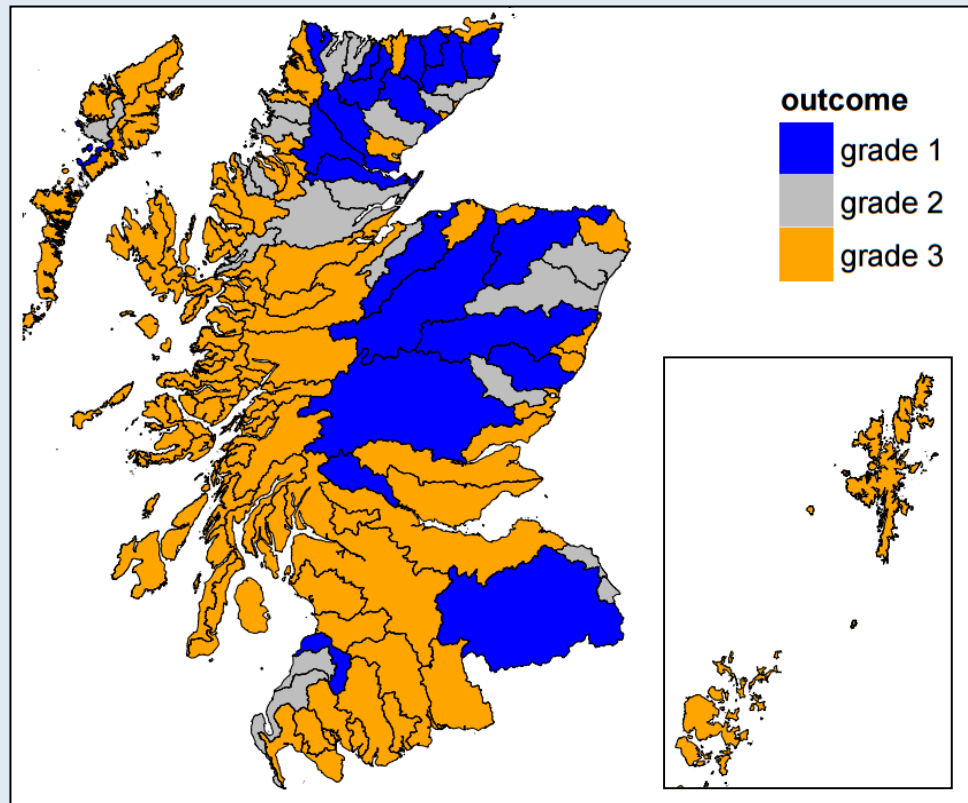
#### **Box 4.1 New Conservation Measures to Protect Wild Salmon in and around Skye & Wester Ross**

Following a review of [Conservation Measures to Control the Killing of Wild Salmon in Scotland](#)<sup>1</sup> and associated analyses of rod catch and river data, the Scottish Government has categorised fishery districts within the areas covered by the Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries Trusts (and boards) as Category 2 or Category 3 status (below).

Category (grade) 3 status means that a mandatory catch and release policy for salmon is required and a conservation plan should be produced. Category 2 means that a conservation plan should be produced but mandatory catch and release is not required in the first instance.

The River Carron and Little Gruinard River (both Category 2 rivers) already operate a mandatory catch and release policy. This will not change. The Gruinard River, the only other Category 2 river within the area, has also decided to follow a

mandatory catch and release policy for the 2016 season to ensure a consistent approach to the conservation of wild salmon across the area in 2016.



***This means that all wild salmon should be carefully released following [catch and release guidelines](#)<sup>2</sup> wherever they are caught within the Skye and Wester Ross Fisheries Trust areas in 2016.***

<sup>1</sup> Conservation measures to control the killing of wild salmon in Scotland:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/licence>

<sup>2</sup> Catch and release guidelines: <http://www.asfb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CR-2013.pdf>