

Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board
Board Meeting at The Harbour Centre, Gairloch
30th April 2013

Minutes

Present: Bill Whyte (Chairman) Hugh Whittle Iain Russell Jenny Scobie Ray Dingwall Brian Fraser Apologies: Jamie Crawford	Gordon Crawford Stephen Bate Donald Rice Pat Wilson Frank Buckley	In attendance: Peter Jarosz (Clerk) Peter Cunningham (WRFT) Mary Gibson (SNH) For Presentation Only: Callum Sinclair (RAFTS) Andrew Wallace (RAFTS)
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1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jamie Crawford.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 3rd and 24th January Meetings

- The minutes of the 3rd January meeting were approved by DR, seconded by IR and passed by the board.
- The minutes of the 24th January were amended to include IR as “present” and were then approved by SB, seconded by GC and passed by the board.

3. Matter Arising

(a) Board Confidentiality and Jenny Scobie.

The chairman again raised the issue of confidentiality over topics discussed at board level. This was directly linked to the release and publication of board business in both the national press and the GAAIA website. The board policy is that board approval is required prior to any publication of board business (taken from The Code of Good Practice for District Salmon Fishery Boards) and that the initial publication should always be via this board’s imminent web site. The chairman asked JS to confirm officially her acceptance of this policy and undertake to keep board topics confidential to board members until publication by the board. JS said she could not accept this, gave her reasons and resigned from the board with immediate effect. JS left the meeting at this point and after a short discussion, the board unanimously accepted her resignation.

(b) Meeting between Bill Whyte, John Mackenzie, Peter Cunningham and Peter Jarosz and Board/Trust Working Relationship

A meeting in February with WRFT occurred to discuss possible future board/trust working arrangements – WRFT to supply contracted work for a specific cost that could include:

- Electro-fishing currently costing some £17K over two years
- Sea trout monitoring/sweep netting currently amounting to £17K last year with a large proportion of this amount funded by RAFTS as part of the post smolt monitoring programme – leaving circa £6K for WRASFB. There is a need to discuss detail, perhaps relocate some of the sampling sites, then decide what WRASFB can afford and finalize a work plan.

Proposed activities include:

- Fish farm visits – information from these visits is most important and seems to be dependant on the agreement the WRFT biologist has with

each fish farm. Therefore, issues of confidentiality with some companies can constrain what is passed onto WRASFB. As the information from fish farm visits is considered critical to WRASFB, WRASFB should be involved in negotiating the terms of these visits with aquaculture companies making the case that visits are an important part of the board's statutory duty.

- The chairman highlighted the fact that WRF Ltd were not adhering to the conditions that formed part of their planning consent – WRASFB will write to Highland Council requesting a response to the concern of the board about the timings of movement of fish and lice treatments by WRF Ltd that are contrary to both guidelines and planning conditions. A letter to HC has been drafted and, subject to members comments, will be sent to Stuart Black (Director of Planning at HC). Planning application conditions (involving site monitoring) could be the way forward for establishing rules for fish farm visits by the WRFT biologist on behalf on the board.
- Meanwhile, concerns about the lice numbers at Ardmair and Ardessie sites have been reported to FHI. Their response to date is to acknowledge receipt of the board's concern and promise a visit to the sites though dates for these visits have yet to be finalized.
- In deciding what work to ask WRFT to do (mindful that the work always needs to be within budget), it is important for the board to clarify what it both needs to do and know in order to discharge its statutory duties.
- When work is contracted to WRFT, payment should be as a "grant" specifically for that work.
- No decision was made to spend money on specific projects and any future decisions will be considered in light of the budgetary constraints with priority being given to the retention of adequate funds for responding to any future planning applications.
- There followed discussion of various work options:
 - (a) rod catches provide important data – as does information on:
 - (b) marine environment – including fish farm activity
 - (c) electro-fishing – this already focuses on a large part of the board area.
 - (d) monitoring of outgoing smolts – using a screw trap? The screw trap (owned by Angus Morrison) is for sale @ £6K but as well as its purchase cost there is a need to consider the operating costs of this method of data collection.

(c) WRASFB Web Site

JC had provided an overview of the options for the web site development that was put to the board by PJ:

if the web site were developed individually its cost would be £1.5K and would be of the same format as the free option offered by ASFB. Although the ASFB format is dictated, WRASFB can decide what text and pictures to put on and the resultant web site can be accessed (via the internet) as a "stand alone" entity. Ideally the information for each river within the board area should come from the owner and there needs to be a couple of paragraphs of text and some pictures. On the "home page" the text should include a comment on the number of catchments and the mileage of the coastline within the board's area. Minutes and items for publication would also be added after board approval. This would then meet the criteria of openness and transparency.

This was agreed by the board and approved for final development

(d) Further Discussion on Planning Applications

The chairman used the example of the aquaculture site at Seal Sound (Isle of Mull) that highlights the roles of SEPA and the Planning Authorities with regard to fish farm operations.

The fish farm at Diabaig was granted planning permission on a ten year probationary period and is subject to both sea lice and benthic monitoring but

what enforcement or monitoring is HC undertaking? WRASFB could offer to undertake the monitoring of this and similar fish farm sites on behalf of HC. The monitoring of fish farm management is crucial in all areas but particularly those where there is a concentration of aquaculture activity.

Scottish Sea Farms have re-submitted an application for a new site at West Strome which, although it is outwith the board area, could well impact on the Applecross rivers especially as the Outer Kishorn appeal has been successful.

(e) Freedom Foods

DR gave a overview of a report by G Linley-Adams (January 2013) on the RSPCA's "Freedom Food" programme (that was originally intended for land based farming) but extended, without any significant alteration, to apply to the fish farming industry. The report by GL-A concludes that in reality Freedom Food places few demands on fish farmers and is no more strenuous than the existing planning permissions and the SSPO's code of good practice. However, the RSPCA has commissioned a review of the content of their Freedom Food programme with submissions to that review by invitation only. Since virtually no wild interests were approached by RSPCA for submissions, WRASFB's response by letter with its concerns and recommendations to RSPCA was done (by DR) entirely at our own behest.

4. 2012-3 Accounts

An income/expenditure sheet was presented to the board covering the F/Y 2012-13 and before this and the accompanying paperwork was sent to the accountants that were used last year (cost £600+). It was decided to look for cost effective alternative accountancy sources. GC kindly offered the use of his company accountant and an opinion will be sought from Bob Younger as to the feasibility/transparency of this course. From the latest bank account information, it can be reported that some 50% of 2013-14 levies have now been paid.

There are three remaining outstanding levies from year 2012-13 and a "final" demand will now be issued to these proprietors offering to them 14 days to pay before the matter is referred to the board's lawyer. These proprietors should not have the same expectations as paid up proprietors with regards to the passage of board information or data.

5. Board's Work Plan for 2013/4

There followed a general discussion on what to do with the levy monies – what amount to spend and what amount to accumulate – always bearing in mind the board's responsibilities/statutory duties as well as the "fixed" expenditure requirements whilst, at the same time, looking to the future.

WRASFB need to quickly define an annual amount of expenditure for the board.

RD said that, for example, the Bruachaig Project should be funded by the Loch Maree and Ewe proprietors (rather than by the board) as they are the beneficiaries of this project.

6. MIAP

The RAFTS team were invited in and Callum Sinclair gave a "Powerpoint" presentation of the MIAP model V1 that contains three elements:

- Locational Guidance and Zones of Sensitivity
- Sweep netting data – results are on the RAFTS' web site
- Genetics - results are on the RAFTS' web site

The Locational Guidance uses catch statistics from 1952 to the present from 414 catchments and has 7 criteria that are: SAC designation; WFD Classification; Rateable Value; Type of Fishery; Catchment Accessibility; Juvenile Populations and Habitat Quality. Five of these criteria are scored to "run" in the model which produces the locational guidance map.

The second map that is produced by the model is the Map of Sensitivity and Coastal Waters that is based on 4 criteria that are: Type of Loch; Orientation; Flushing Rate and Monitoring Data based on a 5 scale scoring. Plus context data – Marine Science Locational Guidance; SNH Marine Protected Area and WFD Classification. This map showed that 19% of the west coast coastal waters scored the highest sensitivity and that 57% of all west coast aquaculture is, in fact, located in these waters of highest sensitivity. Currently the model offers 88% coverage but with additional data incoming this will update to model V2.

This map (model V1) equates to a “lice risk” mapping.

There is no information on smolt migration routes and sea lice dispersal routes as this information is not available at present.

The technical document/report is aimed to be produced by end of May 2013.

AW and CS agreed to add to MIAP model V1 interpretative criteria: to include that certain areas (particularly near river mouths) should be regarded as being of particular sensitivity even if the scale scoring did not reach levels 4 or 5 in any particular area.

The board’s position on MIAP remains as it was documented after the January 24th MIAP presentation though the board was further encouraged by today’s presentation and wishes to thank Callum Sinclair and Andrew Wallace for their time.

7. WRASFB Insurance

A realistic insurable amount (from £250K to £2m) for board members was worth consideration.

The board is covered for its legal costs through its annual membership of Fish Legal.

8. Biologist’s Report

The WRFT biologist’s report was circulated to members.

9. AOCB

i) Investigations into migratory paths

Documents from SB had previously been circulated to members on this item and was of particular interest to the board.

Following on from the work already done by MSS in Loch Shiel/Loch Torridon, should WRASFB ask MSS to undertake further work on smolts (including migratory paths) in a partnership?

The existing MSS project focuses on sea trout and would need additional infrastructure to include a focus on salmon. It was also noted how expensive the individual receptors and transmitters currently are.

Perhaps this work is better carried out at a strategic level.

SB/BW to talk to JR (MSS Shiel manager) about the MSS project, their results to date, their future proposals and explore with JR possible opportunities.

Some possible work in the Kyle Rhea area in relation to offshore renewables would look at migration routes as well as genetics (samples taken from the smolts would show where they have come from).

ii) Statement Correction

To correct an email dated 27/04/2013 from Jenny Scobie in which she stated, “MIAP is NOT supported by Scottish Natural Heritage, Lochaber Fisheries Trust or Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board”, Mary Gibson pointed out that in the case of SNH this was not true as SNH were, in fact, supportive of MIAP.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of our next meeting will be determined after the results of a date poll that has yet to be circulated.