WRASFB ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Supported by the Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) and Fish Legal

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
BS	Bakkafrost Scotland (formerly The Scottish Salmon Company)
CAR	Controlled Activities Regulations
CL	Conservation Limit
DPEA	Scottish Government – Planning and Environmental Appeals Division
DSFB	District Salmon Fishery Board
EISR	Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
FOI	Freedom of Information
FMO	Fisheries Management Organisation
FMS	Fisheries Management Scotland
IFM	Institute of Fisheries Management
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MS	Mowi Scotland
MSS	Marine Scotland Science
MSW	Multi Sea Winter
NASCO	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation
PAWC	Partnership Against Wildlife Crime
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
THC	The Highland Council
WFR	Wild Fisheries Reform
WRFT	Wester Ross Fisheries Trust

The Board's Role

The Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board (WRASFB / the Board) is a DSFB and as such is the statutory body responsible for the protection and enhancement of salmon and sea trout fisheries in its designated area. It was constituted under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Act) Scotland 2003. Salmon fishing rights are private heritable titles that are registered separately from land and as such can be bought or sold like any other property.

DSFBs finance their work by applying a levy on the salmon fishery proprietors as directed under the 2003 Act. The 2003 Act states that "a district Board shall have the power to impose an assessment, to be known as the fishery assessment, on each salmon fishery in their district. The fishery assessment is assessed at such uniform rate as is determined for all fisheries in the district by the Board and, shall be levied according to the valuation of a fishery as entered into the valuation role". A DSFB may do such acts, execute such works and incur such expenses as may appear expedient for the protection or improvement of the fisheries within their district; The increase of salmon (and sea trout); or the stocking of the waters of the district with salmon (and sea trout).

Elected members of those salmon fishery owners (proprietors) form the core membership of the Board with representatives of salmon anglers and tenant netsmen being co-opted onto the Board as appropriate.

Board Members

Board members are elected triennially and the last election took place in November 2024. The elected members and co-opted Board members then elected one of their number as Convener. The current Board members are:

Upper Proprietors

Stephen Bate	Convener (River Balgy East bank)
Donald Rice	Mandatory for Regina Anna Properties (Dundonnell)
Rosie Nicoll	Kinlochewe
Phillipa Cliff	Mandatory for Philip Smith
Gordon Crawford	Mandatory for Nicholas Crawford (Eilean Darrach)

Lower Proprietors

Gordon Crawford	Mandatory for Nicholas Crawford (Eilean Darrach)
Rosie Nicoll	Kinlochewe

Co-optees

Richard Munday	Anglers' representative

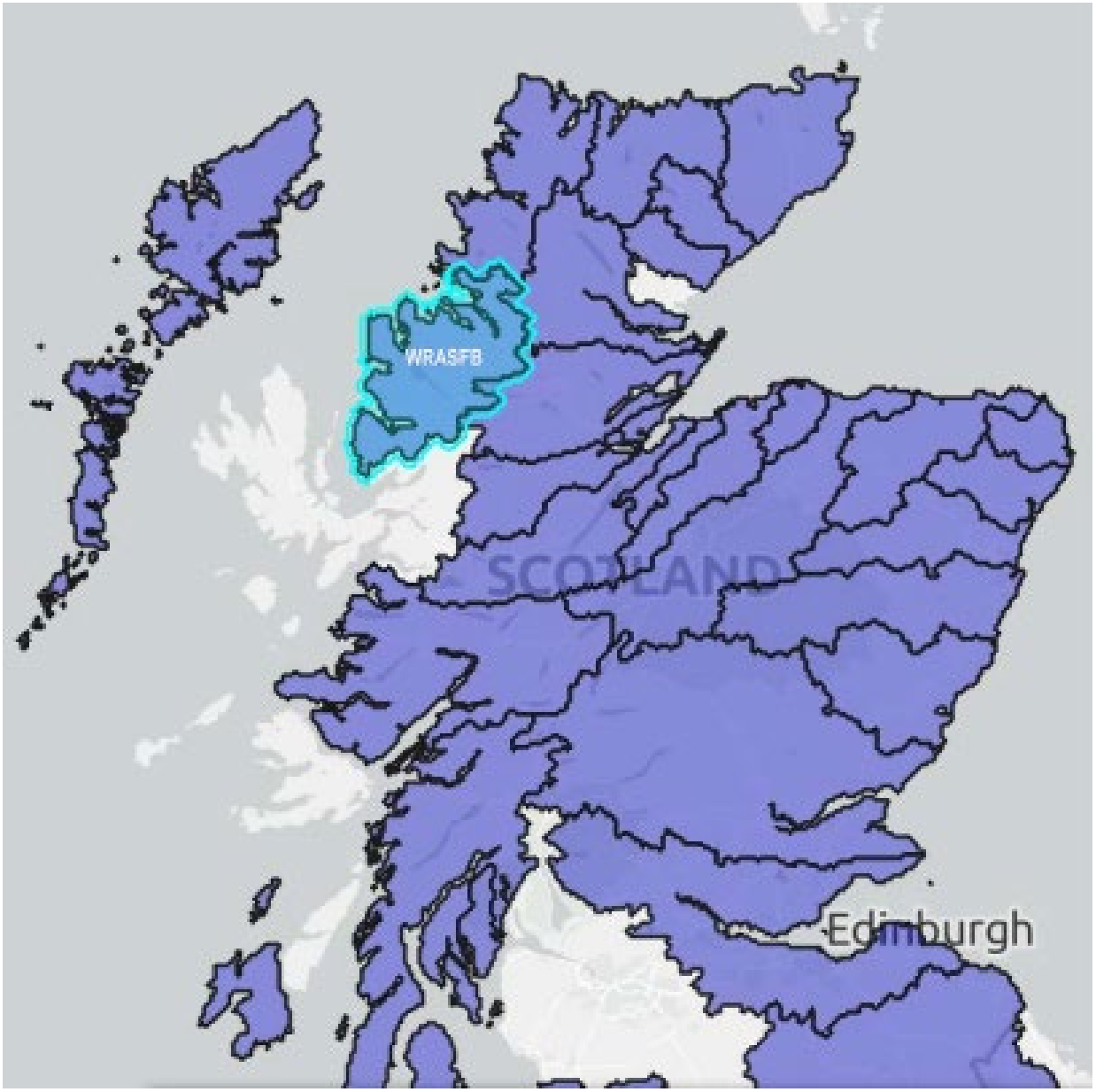
There are no salmon netsmen in the Board area.

Board Staff

The Board meets its obligations with one part-time staff member and voluntary positions:

Kevin Ginty	Clerk to the Board (PT)
Gary Ross	Water Bailiff (V)
Ray Dingwall	Water Bailiff (V)
Neil Morrison	Water Bailiff (V)
Duncan Mackenzie	Water Bailiff (V)
Finlay Owen	Water Bailiff (V)

The Area



What We Do

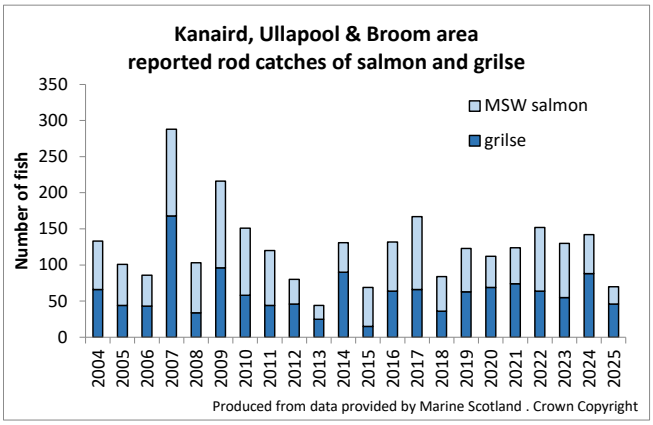
Most DSFBs throughout Scotland are responsible for only one river within one catchment and the funding raised by the levies is used to provide protection and enhancement of salmon and sea-trout stocks throughout the whole system where every proprietor sees the benefits.

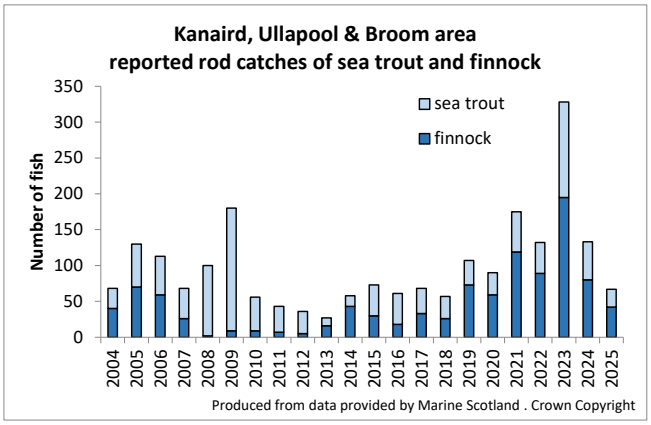
WRASFB however, has one of the highest numbers of rivers / catchments within its boundaries so, recognising the geographical extent of the Board area (Kanaird to Applecross) and the high numbers of rivers within it, WRASFB addresses at Board level only those tasks which are essential or are most effectively handled centrally as part of the Board's statutory remit. All other basic river management aspects remain with the proprietors.

WRFT Biologist's report - Peter Cunningham info@wrft.org.uk

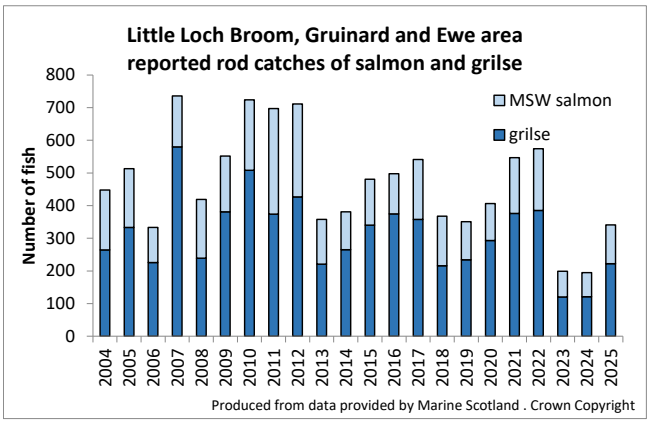
1. Reported rod catches to end of 2025 season. The following graphs have been updated from figures published on 29th April 2026 at https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-salmon-sea-trout-catch/ .

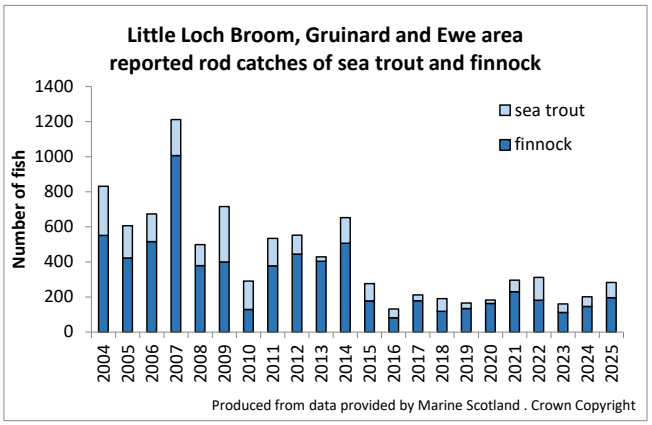
North WR



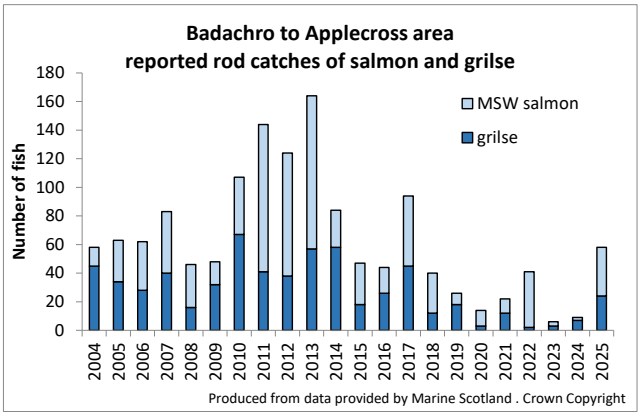


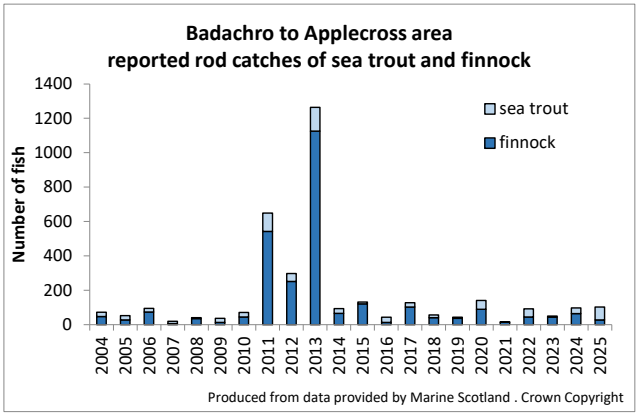
Central WR: Gruinard salmon catch was 1/5 of recorded catch in 2021. Includes some figures for Loch Maree that were not submitted in time to be included in official Marine Scotland catch statistics.





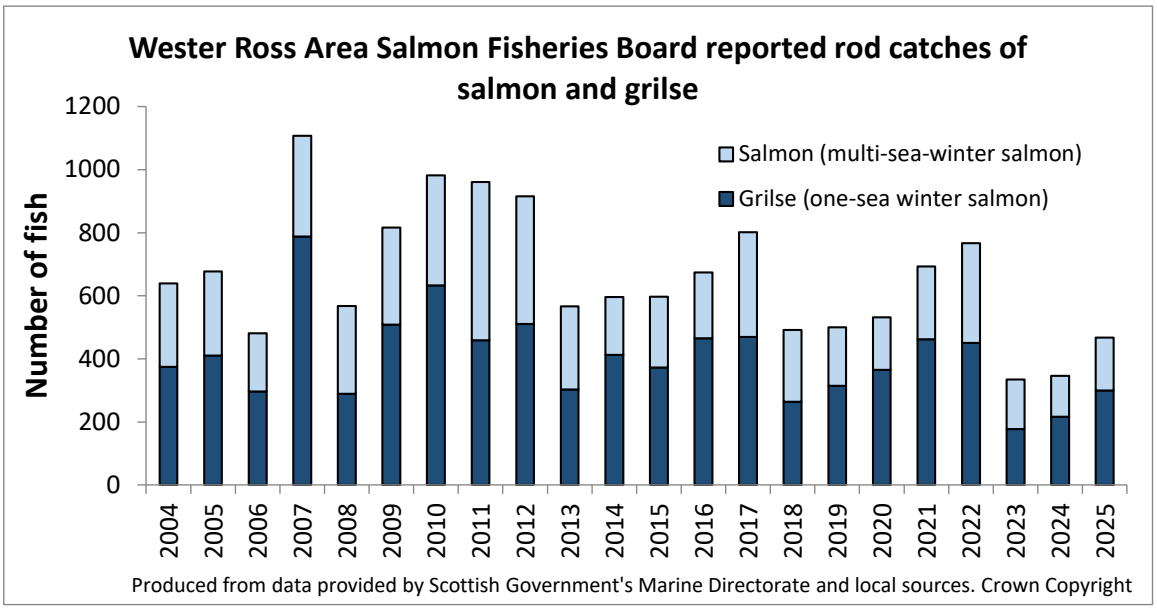
South WR: Badachro catches and Applecross catches have been added to official figures for 2025 following telephone calls; catch return for these rivers were not submitted to Marine Scotland in time to be included in official figures.

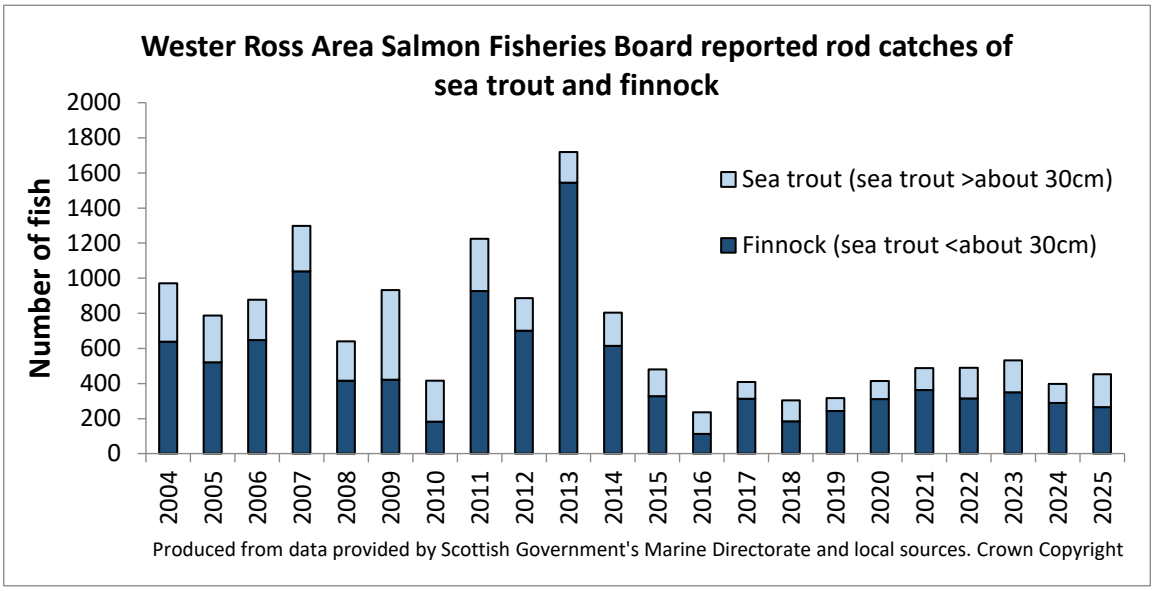




Graphs for whole of WRASFB area (north, central and south WRASFB areas, combined)

Salmon and grilse

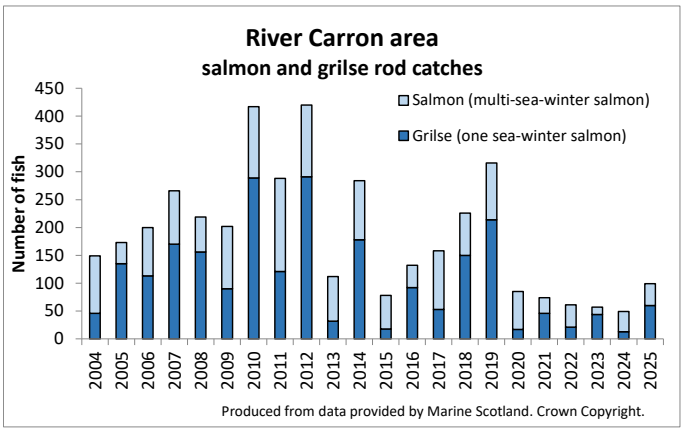


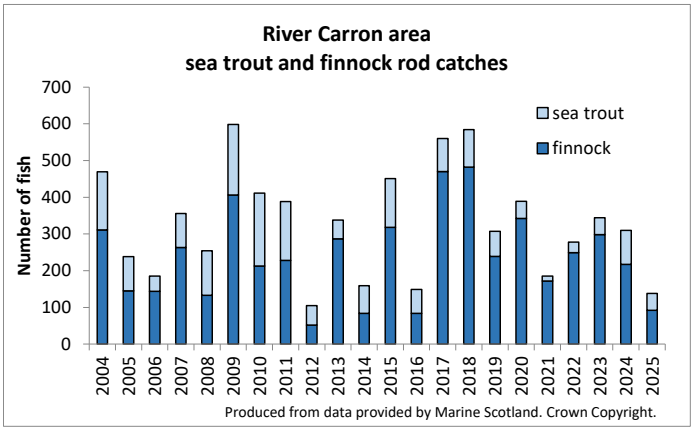


For reported salmon catches, 2025 was an improvement from 2023 and 2024; especially for rivers in the core part of the WRASFB area (Little Loch Broom to River Ewe system). Catches for 2025 for the south of the WRASFB area include a sizeable increase in salmon and grilse, primarily based on catches for one river which were not submitted to Marine Scotland in time to be included in the official figures published at the end of April; and also increased fishing effort.

For sea trout, the increase in catches of sea trout in the central area (Little Loch Broom to River Ewe) was offset by a drop in catches in the north (Kanaird to River Broom). This may be partly related to changing fishing effort; however, anecdotes from anglers who fish in the sea suggest that many of the larger sea trout around Loch Broom area in spring 2025 carried high numbers of sea lice with lice – damaged dorsal fins, potentially affecting their survival.

Comparison with the River Carron (to the south of WRASFB area)





The very low reported grilse catch in 2024 for the River Carron district concurs with a prediction of harm to post-smolt salmon from rivers in this area following very high sea lice levels recorded on sea trout at Applecross in May and June 2023, reported and discussed here: https://www.wrft.org.uk/files/Applecross%20Sea%20trout%20monitoring%20report%20Nov23.pdf.

The higher reported grilse catch in 2025 (compared to 2024) concurs with a prediction of less harm to emigrating post-smolts from the River Carron in 2024 during a spring period when many of the farms were fallow and sea lice numbers on sea trout recorded at Applecross were lower than in 2023.

See https://wrft.org.uk/files/Applecross%20Sea%20trout%20monitoring%20report%202024_final.pdf

Reported rod catches of grisle and adult salmon for the River Carron are consistent with the hypothesis that less than half as many post-smolt salmon may survive to return to freshwater as adult fish following a year when the post-smolts migrate through coastal waters (Loch Carron, Outer Loch Kishorn, the Inner Sound) when many salmon farms are in their second year of production and recorded sea lice levels on sea trout at Applecross are high; than in intervening years when salmon farms along the migration route are fallowed or in the first year of the production cycle; and sea lice levels recorded on sea trout at Applecross in May and early June are low.

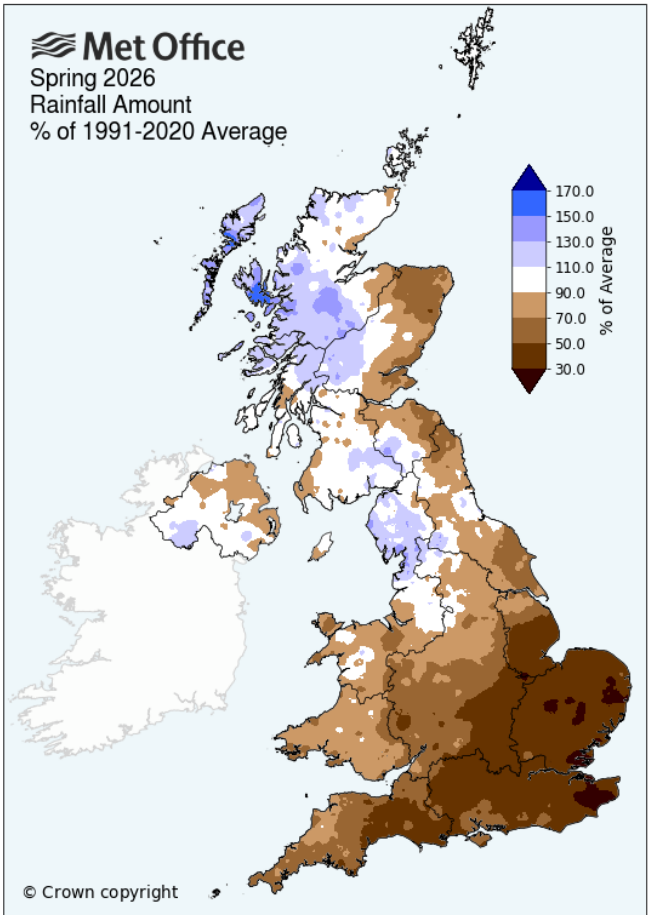
Ratios of reported grilse to reported MSW salmon are also consistent with this hypothesis, with more grilse than MSW salmon in odd years, and more MSW salmon than grilse in even years.

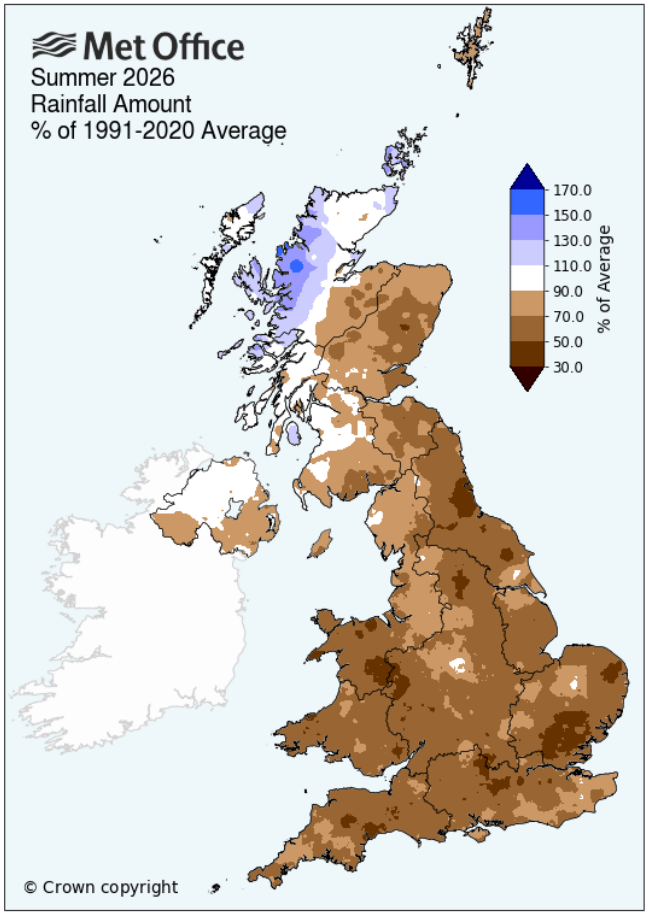
2. 2026 weather overview

So far, 2026 has been a relatively good year for sea trout and for wild salmon in the river systems of Wester Ross. There was a brief period of low water at the end of April and into early May which may have delayed migration of salmon and sea trout smolts from some rivers; however thereafter water levels have been generally good for supporting production of juvenile fish and for salmon anglers in contrast to much of the rest of the UK which experienced drought conditions and very high temperatures.

Wester Ross was the only part of the UK where the summer 2026 rainfall was over 130% of the 1991 to 2020 average in 2026 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rainfall maps for Spring and Summer 2026, compared to the 1991 to 2020 average. Source: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-actual-and-anomaly-maps . Note that these maps are based on the HadUK-Grid dataset. Maps for the most recent year are provisional. Maps for previous years are updated on an annual basis in-line with the latest version of this dataset. Contains Met Office data © Crown copyright 2026; copied under the Open Government Licence.





For our field teams, high river levels have delayed some of our planned juvenile fish surveys; however, there have been many good sunny days with light winds to get on with other activities.

3. Spawning herring; bait balls of herring fry, sprats and sandeels

Our fish survey year started in late February with shore watches for signs of shoals of herring approaching spawning grounds. An abundance of spawning herring in coastal waters is great for other wildlife and fisheries; subsequently herring larvae and fry provide ideal food for migrating post-smolt salmon and sea trout.



Wildlife associated with herring shoals seen from the shore in early March 2026 included three minke whales, a humpback whale, 20 porpoises, 20+ seals (mostly grey seals), pods of common dolphins (mostly further offshore); and up to 40 gannets (that's down from several hundred in some previous years).

Observations from the shore suggested major spawning events from 4th March near North Erradale; and to within 300m of the shore near Carr Point around 18th March. Dive teams (from elsewhere) confirmed widespread herring spawn on the seabed both to the north of Gairloch (west of North Erradale – Melvaig) and to the south-west of Gairloch (west of Opinan and South Erradale). Herring spawn was observed on clean maerl gravel and on sugar kelp as in 2025 (see https://wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=261).

In August 2026, shoals of sandeels, juvenile herring and sprats attracted hundreds of guillemots and razorbills which created bait-balls near the surface attracting flocks of gulls (several species), gannets, common dolphins, porpoises and minke whales, all of which could be seen from the shore around Wester Ross. Several thousand seabirds were seen in Loch Gairloch on 30th and 31st August; the biggest seabird gatherings in Loch Gairloch for several years.



Wester Ross based wildlife tour boats recorded minke whales lunge feeding on bait balls of juvenile clupeids close to Gairloch (left).

(left) minke whale feeding on a bait ball of small clupeids, possibly including juvenile herring in late August 2026 just outside Loch Gairloch. Photo by Donna Hopton, Gairloch Wildlife Cruises)

In early September many of the seabirds dispersed away from Loch Gairloch following a change in weather conditions.

Thank you to many volunteers for helping to watch for signs of spawning herring and to dive teams for support and for reporting observations of herring spawn during March; and to observers on wildlife tour boats and elsewhere for reporting observations.

4. **Sea trout sampling update (to mid September 2026)**

Wester Ross was formerly well known for its sea trout fisheries including those of Loch Maree. Sea trout (sea going *Salmo trutta*) have been sampled by WRFT in coastal waters around Wester Ross since 1996 to learn more about factors affecting sea trout productivity. A major issue of concern has been the infestation of sea trout by the parasitic sea louse, *Lepeophtheirus salmonis.* In 2026, sea trout were sampled from the shore by the WRFT sweep netting team at five sites around Wester Ross between April and early October primarily to inform nearby salmon farm Environment Management Plans [EMPS] of lice levels on wild fish. Samples of trout were also taken at new sites near Kishorn to provide data for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency [SEPA] which has been tasked with developing a sea lice regulatory framework for salmon farms.

Sea trout sampling team at Flowerdale, Loch Gairloch, in July 2026



Table 1 summarises results of sampling up to the middle of September 2026

The main findings were as follows:

In the Kanaird estuary north of Ullapool, 30 fish were sampled on 2nd June: a mix of sea trout and 'estuarine' trout. Some of these fish had lice-damaged dorsal fins, indicative of high lice infestation in nearby waters earlier in the spring.

The largest samples of sea trout were taken at Gairloch. In contrast to samples taken in previous years including 2023 and 2025, none of the fish sampled at Gairloch in 2026 carried sea lice numbers high enough to be a likely cause of premature mortality,

Few sea trout were sampled at Torridon; those seen, including some adult fish, carried low numbers of parasitic lice.

There were fewer lice damaged sea trout in samples taken at Applecross in 2026 than in 2025. Only four sea trout with over 0.3 lice per gram fish weight were recorded; all these fish were small post-smolt sea trout and were taken at Applecross on 19th May 2026 demonstrating high lice infestation pressures in the sea not far away.

Table 1 Summary of results of sea trout sampling around Wester Ross in 2026 (up to 20th September 2026, north to south). All fish were caught using a seine net unless stated otherwise. [table to be updated ahead of meeting following netting sessions at Kanaird, Flowerdale and Gruinard Bay in late September 2026]

Date	Location	Number of fish in sample	Average length (mm)	Average condition factor*	Sea lice prevalence (%)	Sea lice infestation intensity*	Average number of lice per gram score	Average dorsal fin damage score*	Comments
02-Jun-26	Kanaird	30	195	0.97	47	7.4	0.02	0.07	
11-Aug-26	Kanaird	11	276	1.07	27	5.7	0.01	1.05	
19-Jun-26	Gruinard	5	252	1.29	40	1	0	0.2	
31-Jul-26	Gruinard	2	252	1.04	50	6	0	0	
01-Sep-26	Gruinard	0							
28-May-26	Firemore	0							waves too big
27-Jul-26	Mel. Chalres	0							waves too big
27-Jul-26	Balnaluib	0							
16-Apr-26	Gairloch	15	249	0.86	67	4	0.01	0.68	
12-Jun-26	Gairloch	30	162	1.05	3	7	0	0.03	
14-Jul-26	Gairloch	18	279	1.12	59	5.2	0.01	0.92	
27-Aug-26	Gairloch	31	332	1.12	97	5.7	0.02	1.18	
21-May-26	Torridon	2	133	0.89	0	0	0	1	
30-Jun-26	Torridon	6	208	1.07	0	0	0	0	
20-Jul-26	Torridon	8	335	1.17	88	13	0.02	0.88	
26-Aug-26	Torridon	1	195	1.01	0	0	0	0	off shore wind
16-Sep-26	Torridon	2	212	1.06	0	0	0	0	too late in season?
19-May-26	Applecross	30	165	0.82	33	14.9	0.11	0	
16-Jul-26	Applecross	3	167	1.07	0	0	0	0	
18-Aug-26	Applecross	12	248	1.11	67	7.7	0.02	0.96	rod & line catch; river too high to net
04-Jun-26	Kishorn	25	326	1.15	24	3.67	0	0.76	mix of estuary trout and sea trout
02-Jul-26	Kishorn	16	345	1.04	0	0	0		tide out; Saprolgenia on some fish
13-Aug-26	Achintraid	1	120		0	0	0	0	

***Notes:**

Condition factor = (fish weight [grams] x100) / ((fish length [mm] /10) ^ 3)

Prevalence = % of fish in the sample carrying sea lice

Intensity = average number of lice on the lice infested fish in the sample

Dorsal fin damage score : '0 no dorsal fin damage; 1 up to 1/3 of dorsal fin damaged; 2 between 1/3 and 2/3 of dorsal fin damaged; 3 over 2/3 of dorsal fin damaged

Primary purpose of sampling

- to inform Ardmair salmon farm EMP
- WRASFB funded exploratroy sampling in Loch Ewe
- to inform Torridon salmon farms EMP
- to inform Caol Mor (East of Skye) salmon farms EMP
- SEPA contract sites

WRFT was also contracted by SEPA via Fisheries Management Scotland to sample sea trout by Loch Kishorn, just to the south of the WRASFB area. In addition to sea trout (carrying low numbers of lice), many estuarine trout were caught. In the sample taken at Kishorn on 2nd July 2026, some of the trout had ulcerations around the head, thought to have been caused by the cotton mould *Saprolegnia* spp. There is currently much concern in other parts of Scotland that new *Saprolegnia* strains are developing that cause higher levels of mortality of wild salmon. Fish kills in the River Findhorn and other east coast rivers have been linked to Saprolegnia.

Please follow FMS biosecurity advice and disinfect with Vircon Aquatic (or similar product), especially after fishing in a river or loch where high concentrations of fish pathogens may be present.

At nearly all sea trout monitoring sites, many of the larger trout had damaged dorsal fins indicative of sea lice infestation earlier in the year or in earlier years. Anglers also reported catching sea trout with lice-damaged dorsal fins, particularly around the loch Broom and Little Loch Broom areas.

Sea trout of 300mm carrying 69 sea lice with (below) associated damage to dorsal fin and pelvic fins. Kanaird, 2nd June 2026.







Two factors may have contributed to lower sea lice levels recorded in 2026. Firstly, many nearby salmon farms, including those in Loch Torridon and by Loch Kishorn were fallow from late winter prior to initial sampling in April. The reported cumulative on-farm biomass of salmon between Gairloch, Loch Carron and the Isle of Skye during spring 2026 was the lowest for many years. An extended fallow period at this time of year with corresponding low concentrations of infective stage sea lice in nearby coastal waters may also improve survival of post-smolt salmon as they migrate through nearby coastal waters. Thank you to fish farm operators MOWI, Bakkafrost and Scottish Sea Farms for fallowing their farms during this period.

Secondly, wet summers help to limit infestation of sea lice on both farmed and wild fish. *L. salmonis* lice are unable to survive for long in freshwater. Indeed, salmon farming companies often use freshwater baths (now on large well boats) to help to control sea lice on farmed fish.

Further north, however, salmon farms in west Sutherland reported high numbers of lice on their fish during spring months, so the onward migration of post-smolt salmon from Wester Ross may have not been entirely free of high sea lice infestation pressure. Monitoring of wild salmon in the River Laxford by the Atlantic Salmon Trust may help to clarify the impact of sea lice infestation in coastal waters nearby.

One cause for celebration:

On 19th June 2026, the WRFT sweep netting team led by Nic Butler caught the largest sea trout recorded by Wester Ross Fisheries Trust to date (since the trust was formed in 1996), a fish of 630mm, 3250g (7lb). The WRFT Biologist (when he returned from holiday in Uists!) recognised thi fish by its spot patterns as one that had previously been caught in 2024, when it measured 540mm. What a fish! Well-done everyone 😊

See how they grow . . .

Sea trout length 540mm, 9th August 2024, weight not recorded. No sea lice, dorsal fin damage 1.



Sea trout 630mm, 3250g (7lb), condition factor 1.30, 19th June 2026, 1 preadult louse.

Same fish as the one above! About 9.5 or 10.5 years old (to be confirmed by scale reading . . .)



For permissions and support for sea trout sampling in 2026, thank you Keanchulish estate, Eilean Darach estate, Dundonnell estate, Gairloch estate, NTS Torridon, Beinn Damph estate, the Applecross Trust, members of Achiltibuie Angling Club, Nature Scot Beinn Eighe NNR, Fisheries Management Scotland, WRF Ardmair salmon farm and many helpers. Sea trout sampling was funded by MOWI, Bakkafrost, WRASFB, and SEPA via FMS.

5. Juvenile fish survey report to date (end September 2026)

Salmon fry missing from the headwaters of the River Ewe, River Balgy and main spawning burn at Tournaig

Following a detailed survey of juvenile salmon distribution and occurrence in Wester Ross in 2025 (see Status of Juvenile Salmon in Wester Ross Report for 2025), juvenile fish surveys have been carried out in just five river systems so far this year (2026): the River Broom, the little Tournaig River, the Bruachaig River (above the Bruachaig falls, near Kinlochewe), the Torridon River and the River Balgy.

Our main findings have been as follows: Although much modified by historic channelisation and embankment, the **River Broom** provides ideal habitat for wild Atlantic salmon and retains an important population. In July, salmon fry and parr were found throughout the accessible area of the River Broom at levels of abundance indicative of healthy populations. We also explored in the River Cuileig above the Linn falls where local anecdotes suggested salmon were historically present; but found no juvenile salmon here. Our survey of juvenile salmon in the Broom this year is part of a contract for the Scottish Wildlife Trust [SWT]. Inverbroom (which includes most of the left bank of the River Broom) is now the SWT's largest nature reserve.

In contrast to the Broom, **the little Tournaig River system by Loch Ewe** is one of the smallest to have supported wild salmon. Since 1999, WRFT has monitoring juvenile salmon and trout emigrating from the river in the spring and adult salmon and sea trout returning to freshwater via fish traps in an old fish ladder. Numbers of fish travelling in both directions have fallen to low numbers in recent years. Earlier this year, a new downstream trap was installed using trap sections recovered from the former Marine Scotland Science Shieldaig Seatrout Project trap by Loch Torridon. Fewer salmon smolts were recorded during the spring than anticipated; this was thought to be partly due to low water and predation; a brash-dam blockage caused by a fallen tree may have obstructed downstream progress.

In August, salmon fry and one-year-old parr were found in the lowest 400m of the Allt na Coille, the spawning burn above Loch nan Dailthean demonstrating spawning of salmon in 2025. However, no salmon fry or one-year old parr were found above the lower falls in this burn.

Otters frequent the burn; and on 11th August 2026, 20 harbour seals and 30 very energetic common dolphins were seen to within 500m of the burn mouth.

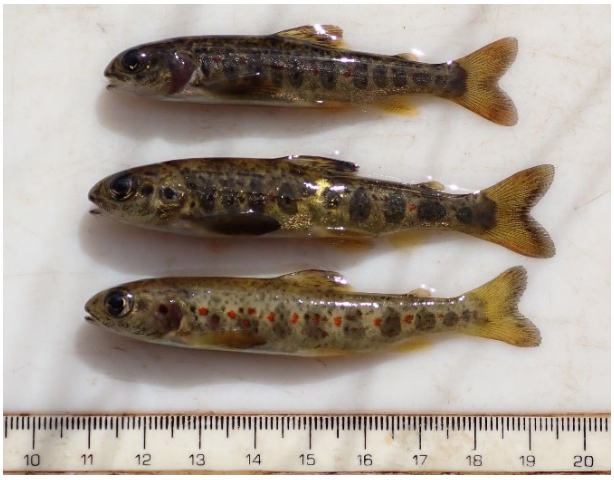
The Bruachaig River flows into the Kinlochewe River which flows into Loch Maree. WRFT supported a stocking programme to restore a self-sustaining wild salmon population in the Bruachaig River until 2012. Two run-of-the-river hydropower projects were subsequently developed in the Bruachaig River; a fish pass was installed through the intake weir of the lower Bruachaig falls scheme to enable adult salmon to reach the large area of habitat where juvenile salmon had been stocked in earlier years.

Salmon spawned above the falls and fish pass in 2018 and in several years up until 2023; these may have included progeny of fish stocked in earlier years. On 25th August, no salmon fry were found at any of the four electro-fishing sites surveyed above the Bruachaig falls. However, at one of the sites in slightly deeper, faster flowing water, some large 2+ or 3+ year old salmon parr were recorded (*below right*).





The Torridon River and the **upper parts of the River Balgy** were surveyed to inform the Torridon salmon farms environment management plan [Torridon EMP]. Water levels were high on the day of survey at Torridon (29/7); however moderate numbers of salmon fry as well as parr were found at core sites in the Torridon River and at two sites in rivers above Loch Damh. However, in the River Balgy system (9/9), salmon fry were not found in the Allt Eisg; no juvenile salmon were found in the burn flowing into the top of Loch an Loin by Glasnock.



(below) these juvenile salmon from the Loch Coultrie burn where it flows into Loch Damh on 9th September 2026 had slightly eroded caudal fins and / or opercula.

6. New interpretation panels by Gruinard Bay

Four new interpretation panels have been put up by a layby by the A832 over looking Gruinard Bay between Laide and Second Coast to provide information about wild fish and other wildlife, the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area and the importance of the area for wild Atlantic salmon conservation.









Thank you to Aultbea Estate, the local grazings committee, The Highland Council, Sea Changers, Wester Ross Biosphere, Little Loch Broom Marine Life, North Highland Initiative and R. Wotherspoon Fencing Ltd for permissions and for support.

7. Scottish and Southern Energy Networking [SSEN] Western Isles electricity link – impacts to fisheries in Dundonnell River

The WRFT biologist has attended meetings with Dundonnell estate to address concerns relating to wild salmon and sea trout populations in the Dundonnell River associated with on-going works in preparation of installation of the new 1.6 GW Wester Isles electricity cable.

8. Wester Ross Seagrass Restoration Project. Seagrass meadows provide ideal habitat for sea trout in the sea. Funded by SSEN via Scottish Marine Environment Enhancement Fund [SMEEF], this project now aims to restore 1.5 ha of seagrass meadows by 2028 in Loch Ewe where seagrass was formerly present within living memory.

We were delighted to welcome India Thomas to the WRFT team as the new seagrass project officer, with Diorbhail Wentworth taking on the role of seagrass project manager.

Thank you very much to Duncan and Kate Donald for much support and for providing a project base and to Nic and Nicky Butler with much work to get the project going. Further updates from Diorbhail.

Thank you

Thankyou also to Dr Sue Ward (former WRFT Administrator) Leah Booker (new WRFT Administrator) and Veronica Mullaney (WRFT Bookkeeper) for much behind the scenes work including project grant application preparation and reporting; paying invoices; and to Dr Michael Aitchison (former WRFT Chair) and Dr Steve Kett (new WRFT Chair) for regular management meetings to review progress and address any issues of concern.

During the summer and autumn of 2026, WRFT has been supported by Mairin T (Working with Rivers Intern, funded by Nature Scot via Fisheries Management Scotland), Nic B, Chloe H, Ant H, Micky MJ, Steve B, Ginevra H and many other helpers at our regular sweep netting sites.

Fisheries Management

Whilst the physical day-to-day fisheries management aspects are left to the proprietors' discretion, the Board, with assistance from WRFT, deals with all aquaculture, hydro planning applications and consultations. *See Wild Fisheries Reforms below for further details regarding Fisheries Management.*

Overview

In late 2025, discussions were held with Bakkafrost and MOWI regarding scheduling practices to minimise the sea lice populations. The Loch Torridon farms (both operators) are now under synchronous fallow, meaning there should be time for the sea lice populations to decline to very low levels before the farms are stocked again. Monitoring via SEPA is communicated via a weekly emailed spreadsheet. Elevated lice levels at Ardmair in the autumn were noted. Further consultations were had between MOWI and Scottish Sea Farms regarding the possible synchronising of practices further North around Ardmair. It was concluded that their productions schedules could not readily be aligned.

SSEN held consultations with SEPA and the Board regarding impacts to the Dundonnell River during the laying of a High Voltage DC cable. The cable will carry power generated by wind farms in the Hebrides underground to Beauly. A large number of culverts under the road beside the Dundonnell River will be replaced and the road reinstated. Significant concerns were raised over the potential pollution of the watercourse with run off from the works. The Trust was involved in these discussions, and continues to be involved in monitoring now that the work is under way. A copy of the relevant CAR licence issued to the contractor, R.J.McLeod, was obtained and the remediation measures required discussed with the Trust and the landowner. Additional measures deployed included a silt trap following tree stump removal works.

The EMP meeting for Torridon was held on 24th November 2025, and for Ardmair on 24th March 2026. Information was exchanged and discussions took place, particularly directed at reduction of on-farm sea-lice.

The Board were consulted on the ASC audit for MOWI for their activities around Rum and Muck.
The Board also contributed to the ASC assessment for the Bakkafrost sites at Aird and Sgeir Dughall in February 2026. The ASC re-assessment for the Bakkafrost sites at Aird and Sgeir Dughall was approved in June 2026. We were not advised of the outcome re Rum and Muck.

We continue to engage with FMS in a range of topics. FMS provide weekly sea lice monitoring data which are circulated to FMS members. Provisionally reported catch returns for salmon and sea trout in 2025 were the lowest on record. The Board continued to support PhD research into Saprolegnia.

The Board liaised with WildFish.org on a range of matters including the possibility of funding for conservation work by the Trust.

In April 2026, concerns were raised with the Board by Don Staniford regarding animal husbandry at MOWI's Ardessie farm. This was widely circulated and was responded to by the Trust.

The Board meeting of 29th April 2026 reviewed the year's activities and set the levy for the forthcoming year. The Highland Council had conducted a revaluation of the fishings in the Board's area, which were used to set the levy when they became available.

Mackenzie Kerr Ltd of Inverness were appointed as the Board's new accountants for the year to 30th March 2026.

During September 2026, concerns were raised over the escapes of farmed salmon smolts and the consequent implications for introgression. The new framework in place provides for compensation to be paid in cases where farmed fish have escaped and their origins can be proven. Proof of origin is ascertained by DNA

testing. The Board liaised with the Fish Health Inspectorate and FMS following information received from sampling in our area.

The next round of EMPs is planned for November 2026, in order that any decisions taken can be put into effect before the next smolt run in 2027. EMP meetings are planned to take place on the same date in November so as to facilitate a common and inter-connected approach to the EMPs.

Peter Jarosz
The Board was very sad to learn of the passing of Peter Jarosz in March 2026. Peter was Clerk to the Board for many years, and also worked with the Fisheries Trust. He was instrumental in setting up some of the IT infrastructure still in use by the Board today, and was well known for his insight and diplomacy. He had lived in the area for a number of years and was well known for his charity work locally.

Fisheries Protection

The limitations on WRASFB levy income means it is not financially possible for it to employ any full-time water bailiffs but it authorises those who have passed the bailiff qualification course of the Institute of Fisheries Management. Although directly employed by individual fisheries, combined operations within the Board area have been carried out in past years. The Scottish Government moratorium on coastal / mixed stock netting operations throughout Scotland, continues to be in force. It is also a criminal offence to be in possession (and also to kill) wild salmon from a river in the Board area with a category 3 conservation status.

Fisheries Development

In the Board area, the bigger rivers are usually fully booked during their normal fishing season. For others that are fully dependent on rain, these are not readily let and anglers have not been keen to buy any days on rivers that may or may not have water or fish. There is licensing of angling to local communities, e.g. the Shieldaig Angling Club has enjoyed a rent-free licence to fish the Balgy river in recent years.

Wild Fisheries Reform

Whilst few of the recommendations of the WFR have been given effect to by ScotGov, one important development was that SEPA accepted a role as the future regulator for sea-lice interactions between aquaculture and wild fish, with powers to grant or refuse development consents.

Following consultations, SEPA announced the new Sea Lice Regulatory Framework imposing targets on the aquaculture industry sites specifying permitted levels of sea lice and remedial actions that may be required. Existing licenses were amended with Notices of Variation. In February 2025, the aquaculture industry applied to DPEA and appealed all 260 Notices of Variation issued by SEPA under CAR. This issue is ongoing.

Compliance with Good Governance Requirements

Governance

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 requires all DSFBs to operate in a transparent manner. As part of this, WRASFB uses the FMS Code of Good Practice. A copy of the code can be found at the FMS web site: www.asfb.org.uk/publications.

This section of the report details how the WRASFB meets and proposes to continue to meet the terms of the reporting requirements of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013.

Meetings

The annual and proprietors' meetings for this year have been made open to the public and advertised on our web site (www.wrasfb.dsfb.org.uk), along with agenda information. They have also been advertised in the local press, at least 21 days prior to the scheduled meetings taking place. The Board meeting for 28th October 2026 has been advertised on the website and made open to the public. The minutes of all meetings, once approved, are also published on our web site.

Complaints

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 requires all DSFBs to establish a formal complaints procedure. A copy of the WRASFB complaints procedure is available at WRASFB Complaints Procedure. There were no complaints made to the Board in 2025-2026.

Declaration of Interests

All members of the WRASFB are required to complete and keep up-to-date a declaration of interests relevant to their position on the Board. The current register is available at the WRASFB office.

Financial Accounts 2025-2026

To be presented at the meeting.