

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

DRAFT

Minutes of Annual Meeting of the Proprietors within the Tay District held in terms of Section 44(1) of the Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 held at Birnam Institute, Birnam, Dunkeld at 11am on Tuesday, 8th December 2015.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
Alastair Riddell
John Wood
Alistair Munro, P&KC
D R Milburn
Simon Wright
Claire Mercer Nairne
Mike Smith
Callum Towns
David Godfrey
Gary Harkin
Edward Eadie
Ian Wood
Iain Wood
Ian Dalglish
William Jackson

In Attendance: Dr. David Summers, Fisheries Director
Inga McGown, Clerk to the Board
Stephen Mannion
Mike Brown
Gavin Clark, SNH
David Brown
Simon Furniss
Geordie Stewart
Bob White
Gordon Pollock
John Lessels

Apologies: John Apthorp, Eric Starke

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Proprietors held on 12th December 2014:

The Minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting of Proprietors were previously circulated in the Annual Report and taken as read. There were no matters arising, and on a proposal by David Brown, and seconded by Simon Furniss, were approved.

Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December, 2014

The Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2014, which were incorporated into the Annual Report, had been circulated and were taken as read.

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the accounts and the main variances year on year. 2014 saw a surplus of £35,757 due largely to a provision release against revaluations of £30k.

There were no questions, and on a proposal from David Brown, and seconded by Simon Furniss, the Accounts were approved.

Annual Report 2014/5

The Annual Report 2014/5 had been previously circulated and was taken as read. On a proposal by Callum Towns, and seconded by Alastair Riddell, the Annual Report was approved.

Board Activities for 2015 season and beyond

The Chairman explained that the Wild Fisheries review had dominated much of the Board's time over the last year, and handed over to Dr. David Summers to summarise the year's activities.

David Summers gave a brief review of the year, highlighting in particular, the catch figures for 2015, the Wild Fisheries Review, the Licence to Kill, the Hatchery, the River Garry, and a future Tummel smolt project.

2015 saw an encouraging start in Spring, and David Summers went on to explain that the 2015 catch figures were likely to exceed the 2014 figures, which had been relatively poor. Although the season started fairly well, the autumn run was slightly disappointing which may have had a number of causes, not least a widespread poor return of grilse.

Dr. Summers then went on explain the Wild Fisheries Review in detail, giving its history before progressing to the current situation. He told the attendees that, at the recent ASFB AGM, the Government appeared to be listening to the collective Boards' view that redistribution of funds between rivers was not an option. He ended the topic by stating that further consultation on the Bill could be expected around February 2016, with the Bill being laid before Parliament anytime from August 2016 onwards.

As to the recent kill licence scenario, Dr. Summers stated that Andrew Thin's report had been in favour of introducing a quota scheme for salmon which would be administered with carcass tags. The Government had then proposed introducing such a system through a consultation earlier in the year. However, following widespread objections over the practicability of such a scheme, in September there was another consultation in which quotas and tagging had been abandoned in

favour of a new proposed system whereby rivers were allocated to one of three distinct categories of health. While no change in practice was required in category 1 rivers, mandatory catch and release would be required in category 3 rivers. The Tay was in category 1 but the Earn and the Eden were in category 3.

David Summers then focused on catch and return handling techniques, and asked that anglers try to keep the fish in the water if possible, and not to hold them by the tail, as well as minimizing any human contact with them, as it could have significant effects on their survival.

The hatchery then became the source of discussion, with Dr. Summers explaining that we have used the hatchery fish to stock the River Garry with a fairly high degree of success which can be evidenced from electrofishing studies. As well as stocking out eyed ova and unfed fry, we are rearing fish to parr stage and fin clipping them to make identification easier. He then urged anyone who hadn't seen the facility to come and have a look.

As to the River Garry, Dr. Summers stated that it was meant to be rewatered by the end of December 2015 per the EU Water Framework Directive, but as no decisions had been made as yet, that deadline was clearly not going to be met.

Regarding the future, David Summers was excited to announce that the Board were embarking upon a potential project with Marine Scotland Science, The Tay Foundation and SSE to assess marine survival rates of salmon smolts leaving the River Tummel. Salmon smolts would be trapped in the Tummel system and tagged with "PIT" tags. On their return as adults, these fish would trigger a detector in the fish pass at Pitlochry Dam and be individually identified. Such a scheme could also be adapted to measure survival rates of smolts passing through hydro turbines. In the past, staffing had been the main reason this project had not progressed, but with Mike Brown about to join the Board early in 2016 as Operations Manager, this issue had now been resolved.

Any Other Business

Conservation plan responsibility for Category 3 rivers:

Simon Wright of Lochlane & Laggan asked with regard to the potential to have rivers recategorised and in particular category 3 rivers, who would be responsible for the conservation plans. DS replied that after attending a meeting with Roseanna Cunningham MSP and Marine Scotland Science, it appeared that the fundamental methodology, the accuracy of which he questioned, seemed fairly inflexible in so far as changing categories was concerned. While altering the flawed model didn't seem an immediate option, MSS did seem to be interested in receiving any relevant data they might not have that might be fed into the model. While MSS had not provided any detail regarding the proposed conservation plans, he assumed that MSS, fishery boards and trusts, together with proprietors and all other interested parties would possibly be involved in the production and delivery of conservation plans.

Sustainability calculation:

Bob White then asked how the sustainability number had been calculated in determining which category a river was in. David Summers replied that the calculation involved estimating how many eggs a river required to adequately populate with juvenile salmon. The problem lies in the fact that very few rivers have the data required to make the calculation. Indeed, the North Esk has a figure of 9.8 eggs per square metre, whilst the River Bush in Northern Ireland uses 3.5 eggs per square metre. The figure applied across all Scottish rivers was effectively the average of a wide range of figures quoted in the literature, 5.45 eggs per square metre. Dr. Summers considered that it was clearly not right that a single figure should be applied to all of Scotland's diverse rivers. In particular, he considered that lowland rivers with relatively poor salmon habitat (e.g. much of the Earn and Eden) may have conservation limits set at twice what they can achieve and they would thus never hit targets.

Spate damage?

Bob White then asked what with the recent spates, do these not have a catastrophic effect on spawning? He then emphasized the importance of the hatchery with respect to stocking out. David Summers stated that good numbers of stocked out fish appear to have survived in electrofishing studies. He went on to say that the floods of 2006 caused huge amounts of damage on the Tilt and other areas, but in the following years, numbers through the Pitlochry counter had been up, so perhaps abnormal spates were not always as catastrophic as first thought.

Worming:

Mike Smith congratulated the Board on the annual report and asked, as the Board had advised against worming after 31st August in their conservation leaflet, how did the Board feel about some beats worming fairly heavily into September. The Chairman replied that many beats had endured a tough time towards the end of the season with low water and few fish, and therefore they had resorted to worming during that period. Ian Dalglish remarked that worming was not the only useable method.

Eden season extension:

Ian Young of the Eden Angling Association thanked David Summers for all his hard work with respect to category 3 classification, and asked whether the Board would consider helping the Eden to extend their season to the 15th November, considering the Eden has no spring component to speak of and the main run of fish is during October and November. Historically their season was 15th February to 15th November.

Dr. Summers replied that given the Board's experience with season extensions, this process might be very long and drawn out. Furthermore, considering the Eden is category 3 and could potentially become 100% catch and release, he questioned whether the proposal would stand much of a chance with the Government in terms of conservation. He added that the logical time to address this issue would be when the Eden conservation plan was drawn up, but he didn't have a timescale.

The Chairman added that the Board was still pursuing changing the methodology behind the proposed categorization process and the Eden may well find if it was reclassified it may no longer be category 3.

There was no other business and the Chairman closed the meeting.