

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING

Birnam Institute, Birnam, 7pm, Tuesday, 25th March 2014

MINUTES OF MEETING

Board Members Present:

William Jack (Chairman)
John Wood
William Lindsay
David Brown
William Jackson
Simon Furniss

In attendance

David Summers (Fisheries Director)
Inga McGown (Administrator)
Steve Keay (Hatchery Manager)
Lee Fisher (Operations Manager)
Craig Duncan (Bailiff)
Ron Whytock (Bailiff)

Also in attendance were 45 members of the public.

Before the meeting copies of the Agenda, Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2012 and the Annual Report 2012/13 were circulated to everyone.

Annual Report and Accounts:

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees, and then went on to explain the origins of the Board's income, and where the monies were spent.

He then asked for any questions, of which there were none.

Activities over past year and activities for coming year:

DS then went on to talk about the activities the Board had undertaken in the past year, and what was forthcoming for this year, and in particular highlighted the following areas:

1. **Catches:**

Last season was particularly good for the Tay and DS outlined the possible reasons for this, including weather and whether stocking had had any part to play in it.

2. **Season Extension:**

DS explained the history of the season extension, and the fact that the licence had been granted for 2014 also. The next step for us as a river will be to decide whether we wish to make the extension permanent or not. The income to the Tay Foundation has been over £30k for both 2012 and 2013. The Board proposes holding an EGM in November 2014 to vote on this topic.

3. **Hatchery/Kelt Reconditioning Project:**

DS then went on to explain the role of the hatchery and the kelt reconditioning process within that. He then went on to inform the attendees that all staff have now moved to the Hatchery building just before Christmas, and Offices and a meeting room have been installed to facilitate this process.

4. **River Garry:**

The River Garry has been a contentious issue for many years, but DS stated that SEPA are now on the verge of a decision and that we should have an answer regarding water flow by the end of the March 2014.

5. **Monitoring of Fish Stocks:**

DS informed those attending that the Board has been using fish counters and electrofishing data to analyse the health of the fish in the Tay system.

6. **Catch & Release:**

DS gave details of our Catch & Release policy.

7. **Tummel Smolt Tagging Project:**

A new initiative is being considered to PIT tag smolts in the River Tummel. This project is in the process of being scoped and hopefully commenced in the near future.

8. **Beavers:**

DS explained that there was now a population of in excess of 100 beavers living in Perthshire. He urged all interested parties to either inform himself, the Tayside Beaver Study Group or SNH regarding any beaver damage, as the decision to make them a permanent feature has not been made yet, and more data gathering is required.

9. **Hog Roast Lunch:**

The Lunch held in August 2013 raised over £40k for the Tay Foundation, and DS congratulated all who had helped to make this the resounding success it was.

10. Fisheries Review:

DS outlined the latest developments in the Scottish Government's Fisheries Review and its potential impact on the Board.

LF then gave a short presentation on the work of the bailiffs, specifically focussing on the cases which had been successfully brought to Court.

The Chairman then answered the queries that had been submitted prior to the meeting, namely:

Catch & Release

The Chairman explained that the policy was clear that everything should be returned in the spring, and from then on, one male fish per angler per day up to a maximum weight of 10lbs. He went on to explain that he had received a lot of complaints about the code not being adhered to in certain beats this season, but went on to say the only way to absolutely curb this would be to implement a mandatory catch and release policy.

Stocking:

The Chairman explained that stocking the River Garry would be one of the key objectives for the hatchery in the near future.

Netting:

The Chairman explained that concerns had been put to him regarding the widely discussed proposals from the Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland to resume coastal netting in the spring. However, the Chairman cautioned that gaining spring fishing might not really be the objective and that there may be a wider agenda. He therefore cautioned against knee-jerk reaction to this threat.

Loch Tay Selling Rights (J Young):

J Young outlined the problems he was facing whilst trying to sell his Loch Tay salmon fishing right. This apparently related to issues with registering a share of the loch with the land registry. Nobody in the room was aware of this issue, as other rights had in fact been sold in recent years. The Chairman stated that the Board could put the case to Fishlegal, who we are a member of, to see if they had an answer. JY agreed this was a good idea.

Summing up

The Chairman then summarised that the two main concerns for the Board at present were to keep costs minimal without impacting on performance, and to maximise the number of smolts that leave the river.

There then followed a question and answer session:

A member of the audience asked whether reared fish from the hatchery would be as hardy as natural fish found in the river, and the implication being that we would weaken our river

stock through interbreeding. The Chairman replied that our eggs are from native wild stock and are only used to restock areas from which wild fish have been lost, thus minimising any potential negative impacts on naturally spawned fish. We have had huge interest from Norway regarding our kelt reconditioning program, with particular reference to restocking collapsed rivers. This is something we could do should such a thing occur here.

A member of the audience asked how long it would be before the River Garry has its flow restored and when would adult salmon return, to which the Chairman replied that water should be coming next year, but it would be a few years after that before adult salmon would come back.

A member of the audience asked about a proposed hydro scheme on the River Braan, and whether we had objected. DS replied that that area of the Braan was inaccessible to salmon and therefore outwith our remit as a Board. Our stocking policy is no longer to stock above natural waterfalls, unless done for some experimental purpose.

A member of the audience asked whether we could name and shame those beats that were killing fish, to which the Chairman replied that the only way we could ensure no killing was to introduce a mandatory catch and release policy.

A member of the audience asked what the procedure would be to introduce a mandatory catch and release. The Chairman replied that the Board would have to consult all interested parties and hold an EGM in order to vote for or against mandatory catch and release and only then apply to Scottish Ministers. The Chairman reminded the attendees that our spring catch and release figure on the Tay was over 90%, so it was basically a small number of fish that were being killed.

A member of the audience added a caution against mandatory, stating that even fish that were bleeding and about to die would have to be put back under mandatory, and this was obviously not something that any angler would want to have to do.

There were no further questions and the Chairman then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.