

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 Wednesday, 12th December 2018.

Present: Iain McLaren (Convener)
 David Barwick
 Geoff Coates
 Alan Dunnet
 Edward Eadie
 Ken Freshwater
 Alastair Gillespie
 David Godfrey
 John Lessels
 Alan Malone
 Claire Mercer Nairne
 Jim Perrett
 Mike Smith
 Duncan Twigg
 Simon Wright

In Attendance: Dr. David Summers, Fisheries Director
 Inga MacGillivray, Clerk to the Board
 Mike Brown
 Simon Furniss
 Peter Greig
 Gary Harkin
 Rona Harkin
 Mike Hay
 Stephen Mannion
 Colin McFadyen
 John McDougall
 Sandy McIntosh
 Cohn O'Dea
 Davie Seaton
 Alex Stewart
 Geordie Stewart
 Steven Watt
 Bob White

Apologies: Grant Tigwell
Ross Gardner

The Convener opened the meeting with a brief description of the fishing year, and reminded the audience about the 2019 Opening Day details.

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Proprietors held on 12th December 2017:

The Minutes of the 2017 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 Bobby White, and seconded by David Godfrey, were approved.

Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December, 2017

The Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2017, 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. 2017 saw a surplus of £32,943.

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

Annual Report 2017/8

The Annual Report 2017/8 had been previously circulated and was taken as read.

Board Activities in 2018 and beyond

Dr. David Summers gave an overview of the events of 2018, highlighting low water levels, abstraction issues, and downward growth rate of grilse as particular problems. He also highlighted some of the main Board activities throughout the year.

Poor Runs

Dr. Summers stated that the returns from our 2016 tagging project indicated a return of 0.77%, and that there was a similar picture for 2017/8 figures. He noted that a similar project on the Conon had a 9% return rate some years ago.

Claire Mercer Nairne asked if the smolts were dying in the river, to which Dr. Summers replied that some could be but that the majority of the problems occurred at sea and this had hit all areas on the East Coast from the Tweed to the Spey.

Duncan Twigg asked if this phenomenon was world wide, to which Dr. Summers replied that England and Wales had been hard hit also.

Marine issues

Dr. Summers went on to explain some of the issues at sea, particularly increasing temperatures in the NE Atlantic. An indicator, mackerel are now migrating much further north and west and this is overlapping with areas where salmon post-smolts may be found. The growth rates of mackerel in these areas is reducing, as with grilse.

He suggested that either the general overall productivity of the Norwegian Sea has declined, or mackerel are now competition for smolts. There was still uncertainty as to whether mackerel are a symptom of marine issues or are the problem for returning salmon.

Board Activities during the year

Hatchery/Kelt Reconditioning Project

Dr. Summers explained that egg production from the hatchery was now its highest since the new facility was taken over in 2011, due largely to TGA and other volunteer help with broodstock collection last year and this year. It was planned to expand the hatchery in 2019. The flume is being removed and will be replaced with further tanks in the spring.

Rewatering of the Garry

Dr. Summers stated that the Garry now had water and that SSE had continued with work to some tributaries. A number of fish have now been spotted spawning in the Garry. He went on to explain that electrofishing studies had been carried out whereby fin clips had been taken and UHI would now analyse these and genetically type them to ascertain the origins of the fish, whether stocked or wild.

Pitcastle Hydro

Dr. Summers explained the Board's input and directed the audience to the annual report should they wish to know more.

NE England Drift net and Fixed net Fisheries

Dr. Summers explained there had been a consultation to ban all netting in NE England. The consultation had finished too soon for the verdict to affect 2018 but was hoped to be effective in 2019.

Salmon Conservation Regulations

Dr. Summers stated that the methodology behind the categorisation process was flawed, and that the Government had acceded this and committed to make changes.

Spring Catch & Release Regulations

The Convener and Dr. Summers had met with Scottish Government and similar regulations would be in place for 2019.

Scottish Invasives Species Initiative (SIS)

Dr. Summers explained that the project was now well under way and that the target for 2019 was to control knotweed and hogweed on the main stem of the river.

Beavers

Dr. Summers explained that Scottish Government was looking into the protection of this species.

Offshore Windfarms

Dr. Summers stated that 3 big windfarms were in development off the mouth of the Tay and that the Board would likely be involved with monitoring of migratory fish.

Future Developments

Dr. Summers explained that the Board's future priorities were many but the main focus would be on reviewing the Board plan, drone surveys, Government electrofishing surveys and removal of Shochie weir.

Smolt Tagging Project

Mike Brown, Operations Manager, then gave a presentation on the smolt tagging survey so far.

Any Other Business

Hatchery/Stocking Out:

Steven Watt asked whether parr were fin clipped when stocked out, to which Dr. Summers replied they were and that anglers could look out for them and report to the Board.

The Convener informed the audience that the hatchery would be increasing production due to a very generous grant from John Apthorp to knock down the existing flume and replace with more tanks.

Steven Watt asked how many new tanks would be installed, to which Dr. Summers replied ten. Steven Watt then asked what this did for stocking out capacity, to which the Convener replied the new tanks would add roughly 30,000 to the numbers to be stocked out. He went on to add that areas were only stocked where they would do most good.

Steven Watt asked that the Board publicise for anglers to look out for fin clipped fish, to which the Convener agreed.

Fishponds

Mike Smith stated that the TGA had brought up the idea of reopening Fishponds but the Convener seemed against the idea.

The Convener agreed that he was personally not in favour of Fishponds and as a Board member had to ensure Board funds were used sensibly. Furthermore, the opening of Fishponds would only benefit the lower Tay and not the whole system.

Steven Watt interjected that the hatchery facility at Almondbank was the “Fishponds” and that the Board did a fantastic job with it.

Bobby White asked if the Board could release more parr, to which Dr. Summers replied this would be done once the new tanks were in place.

Juvenile Surveys

Bobby White asked what the results from the juvenile surveys had been, to which Dr. Summers replied that the survey statistics were to go to Scottish Government for collation and a report would be generated.

Catch & Release Policy

Ted Eadie asked if the C & R policy would be similar to 2018 for 2019, to which the convener replied that the C & R policy would be in line with 2018, but that adjustments would be made should conditions change.

Stocking

Steven Watt asked if there was any possibility of stocking the Braan and main stem of the Tay, to which the convener replied that the Board were not allowed to stock the Braan due to SNH constraints. Cohn O’Dea asked if Catholes could be stocked. Dr. Summers replied that Catholes was good for stocking parr but that the main stem had better spawning grounds so we may not want to stock there, as it already has a healthy juvenile population.

Simon Wright asked if there were future plan to stock the earn, to which Dr. Summers replied that the Ruchil and Beith would continue to be stocked. Furthermore, the Board has been granted permission to catch fish on the Earn by hook and line to check fecundity levels.

Steven Watt proposed a vote of thanks to the Board for their presentation.

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