

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	01 August 2013	John Mackenzie (JM)	David Barclay (DB)
OPENED AT:	10.30	Mark Williams (MW)	Richard Greene (RG)
CLOSED AT:	15.45	Angus Davidson (AD)	Nigel Pearson (NP) (via Skype)
IN ATTENDANCE:		Bob Kindness (BK) (via telephone)	APOLOGIES:
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Henry Dalgety (HD)	Richard Wilson (RW)
Veronica Mullaney (VM)		Melanie Smith (MS)	

1. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the 30th May 2013 minutes – proposed by RG seconded by DB.

2. WRASFB

2.i The board has paid WRFT £3K for biologist's time attending meetings, reading fish scales from rod caught salmonids and et al.

2.ii Lice figures are high in the north of our area – the fyke net at Dundonnell has seen post smolts averaging over 140 lice per fish with a maximum of one fish with 500 lice on it. Since May PC has seen high numbers of sea lice on fish farms in this area. He has a further farm visit organized for next week at Loch Ewe.

During April, May and June the southern rivers have seen good size sea trout with few sea lice.

2.iii Back in April 2013 the WRF Ltd fish farm at Corrie was granted planning permission under the "audit" process. Various conditions, that have been in place since the lease was granted in August 2008, now appear to have been discarded. The board is pursuing the reasons for this with the parties involved in the process, with the intention of the re-introduction of these conditions.

2.iv The reduction in funding from the board will be reported in the WRFT review of 2013.

3. SECOND BIOLOGIST

Interviews for the vacant post took place on Monday 1st July and Matthew Curran was appointed. He will start work on 2nd September 2013 based in Inverness with a changed remit from the original post description. Whilst the post is 50% funded by UHI, the WRFT 50% will need to be generated by the biologist himself.

This generation of self-funding will be monitored over the first three months from 2nd September.

4. FINANCE REPORTS

4.i Cash Projections

PJ reported:

- An application for a total of three years' funding for the Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project has been turned down by the Prince's Countryside Trust.
- PC has completed the sweep-netting programme for this year with some £4K plus having been spent. Once the data has been submitted to RAFTS, the payment of £9K will be made to WRFT.
- The Angling Advisory Project has spent 75% of its budget with still additional work to be completed – this project does require close monitoring.
- Some items within our budget are now overstated – e.g. our insurance costs which may be reduced substantially by moving the bulk of our insurance to Highland Council – as reported in the March minutes.
- The one area of "insurance" cover where the trust is still exposed is legal costs and we should seek to establish the cost of cover from Fish Legal.
- Work on Skye needs more definition but will yield a return for WRFT despite Skye holding credit of £4K relating to the use of the Ford pickup by Jonah (that Skye paid for).
- At the moment (with some known adjustment yet to be made) the overall shortfall could be as high as £45K at the year-end.
- Any electro-fishing can only be done on those rivers where the owners themselves are prepared to pay for the survey – otherwise it cannot be undertaken. There is a possibility of approaching outside sources of funding for this work on certain rivers.

- NP has been looking at the analysis sent to him by PJ comparing the levies raised by the board on the northern rivers to the current contributions paid to the trust by the southern river proprietors.
- Based on the analysis, a proposed review of the southern river contributions does appear to be comparable to levies raised on the more northern rivers (within the board area) and is appropriate to issues that need to be addressed as well as to support that is required. There is a case for raising additional monies to support more general work relating to wild fisheries and planning responses.
- PC will draft up an information précis (for circulation) on the work WRFT undertakes on behalf of both owners of rivers throughout the board area but, in particular, owners of the southern rivers.

4.ii Management Reports

The management reports had been emailed out prior to the meeting and VM said that it would only be those reports warranting the trustees' attention that, in future, she will bring to the meeting for discussion.

4.iii 2013-14 Budget

The budget needs further work to be done to it and VM and PJ will get together to "fine tune" those figures within the budget that might be considered ambitious and/or no longer credible.

5 BIOLOGIST'S REPORT

See report from Peter C (attached below).

Précising his report PC stated that:

- To date he has sweep netted in the Kanaird, Boor Bay and Flowerdale and achieved the designated target quantity in all three sites for the RAFTS project – though the data has yet to be submitted (Item 4.i bullet point two).
- In addition to the three sites mentioned above, PC has also sweep netted in Loch Broom and has received reports regarding the fish caught in the fyke net at Dundonnell. Both of these sites have presented the same results of mainly thin fish that were heavily iced.
- A number of sea trout caught on rod and line, in the river Ewe, have also been reported as heavily infested with sea lice. PC's visit to the Loch Ewe fish farm, where he found little evidence of sea lice problems on the fish there, would appear to indicate that sea trout caught in the River Ewe with high lice infestation might indicate the origin of these sea lice outwith Loch Ewe. They may well originate from the same source as the lice found on fish at Dundonnell and in Loch Broom.
- It was suggested that WRFT should compare/contrast different aquaculture companies approaches to lice treatment and then provide a statement of what they consider to be best practice – before publication of these findings, the wording of the statement should be agreed with the board.
- In order to complete this study, PC will need to visit all fish farms within the trust's area to complete his understanding of who is doing what, where and how. A letter needs to go to John Rea of Scottish Sea Farms formerly requesting access approval for PC to visit their Summer Isles farms – DB.
- PC confirmed that the WRF Ltd sites at Ardessie are constantly holding fish in their 2nd year cycle.
- There will be an Area Management Meeting in the south of the trust's area in the near future that could prove valuable to discovering more about operational activities of the fish farms in that area.
- The government has set up consultations on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Priority Marine Features (PMFs) as well as on marine strategy with a local meeting in both Ullapool and Poolewe in September. RG reported that there are grave concerns over MPAs from in-shore fisheries groups. WRFT will need to respond to these consultations.

6. PLANNING AHEAD

6.i Work Programme

Please see the bullet points under item 5 above for the up to date situation of the work programme.

6.ii Angling Advisory Service

The “mechanics” of this project are almost complete (including the smart ‘phone “apps” that are necessary for reporting sightings of invasive species etc.) and Iain Kinloch will now “populate” the interactive platform with the Skye version of the project. See bullet point three of item 4.i above.

6.iii Bruachaig

PC reported that he had electro-fished an area above the falls and found salmon fry and parr there. BK queried whether these were actually fry rather than large parr – PC stated that both he and Eric Verspoor were convinced that it was fry that were recorded there.

The scientific case, to continue with the intended expansion of this project, is now seriously compromised and, as there is no alternative source of funding available to cover on-going costs, decisions have to be made regarding the existing stock of fish held by BK. Since the beneficiaries of this project are the Ewe proprietors – individual proprietors will be contacted for a view and possible financial input. BK will provide details of costs for the different actions/options.

6.iv Meeting of WRFT with MH 23rd July 2013

Trustees were given an overview of the meeting between WRFT and MH as follows:

Initially, some discussion of a general nature took place initially updating both parties on each others’ situation to date:

- The use of wrasse for sea lice control has to date proven very successful at one M.H. farm site, the stock of which will be harvested this autumn and which has needed no chemical lice treatment at all.
- MH are working closely with SSF – synchronizing production and cross referencing the effectiveness of various medication processes.
- MH has adopted all processes and procedures of land based industries with:
- full training for all operatives on all aspects of the day to day running of their fish farm sites
- modelling of new sites (and all existing sites) for the right specific equipment for each site – there is no longer “off the shelf” equipment used for any site as each site has its own idiosyncrasies
- full commitment to better than CoGP targets for sea lice – have signed up to the World Wildlife Aquaculture Stewardship Council.

Specific discussion then occurred on the following:

- 1) Sea lice monitoring in Loch Duich (Loch Long, Loch Hourn and Loch Torridon)
- 2) Genetic analysis of WRFT’s large “archive” of samples taken from fish caught in the Tournai Trap
- 3) Fish farm visits by WRFT biologist
- 4) Loch Maree catchment research of existing habitat, nutrient monitoring and genetic identification of current sea trout populations by post graduate student
- 5) WRFT education projects
- 6) Kyle Rhea Migration project

6.v Trustees

WRFT is short of two Trustees – possibly three if RW decides to retire. There are some options for possible trusteeship that need to be explored further.

7. AOB:

7.i Change of Audit Requirement

The legal document recording the change (regarding the change of accountancy requirement) to WRFT's Deed of Trust has been duly registered in the Books of the Lords of Council and Session and WRFT have received acknowledgement from OSCR of their recording of the change.

As a result of this change to our deed of trust, trustees gave their approval for a revised procedure for our year-end accounts with VM preparing up to final accounts (on an income/expenditure basis) that will then be independently checked.

7.ii FWPM Seminar

PJ reported that the FWPM seminar had proven to be very successful – all eight participants considered the day to be most informative and thanked Iain Sime (SNH) and Chris Daphne (RAFTS) for their excellent tuition.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting	10/10/2013	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	12/12/2013	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	TBA	WRFT Office	10.30

WRFT Trustee Meeting 1st Aug 2013

WRFT Biologists Report (29th July 2013)

1. Sea trout and sea lice monitoring

A mixed picture so far this year, with high numbers of sea lice on sea trout in the north of the WRFT area. At each of our RAFTS sweep netting sites (Kanaird, Boor [Loch Ewe] and Flowerdale [Gairloch]), we caught the sample of 30 post-smolt sea trout required during the month of June. Sweep netting sessions were carried out at the **Kanaird** on 11th and 27th June and a total of 52 trout were caught, including many fish larger than post-smolts. These fish had generally between 20 and 50 lice; some had over 100 lice or damage from sea lice. Condition factors were mostly below 1.0, so the fish were thin. At **Boor Bay**, successful sweep net sessions were carried out on evenings of 10th, 21st and 25th June and a total of 31 sea trout were caught, mostly small post-smolts of less than 200mm in length. Few fish carried any lice; and nearly all of these fish were thin. Many of these fish may have been in the sea for only a few days prior to sampling. At **Flowerdale** 41 sea trout were caught over two sessions (7th Jun and 8th July). Nearly all the fish were small post-smolts of less than 20cm, and as at Boor Bay, very few carried sea lice and fish were generally thin.

No sea trout were caught on sweep netting exploratory visit to the mouth of **River Broom** on 26th July; one finnock was taken using rod and line by Johnny Whitteridge which carried 56 lice. Spotting suggested higher numbers of lice earlier in the summer.

I have no information for 2013 so far from the Loch Carron area or further south in the WRFT area.

Skye: a sample of sea trout was taken from the Varagill estuary on 5th July (see below).

In addition to the sweep netting, sea trout were sampled using fyke net from the mouth of the **Dundonnell River** by Alasdair MacDonald. Between 6th June and 20th July over 50 sea trout were taken. The average number of lice was over 100, some fish had over 200 lice and a few had over 500 lice. These are some of the most heavily louse infected sea trout recorded to date. I received the field data sheets for further analyses yesterday.

Rod and line samples of sea trout were taken from the **River Ewe** on 8th July (PC) and 23rd July (Steve Kett). 14 fish were taken, mostly finnock of between 200 and 300mm in length, larger than those that had been sampled at Boor Bay nearby. They were also fatter (higher condition factor) and carried between 3 and 135 sea lice.

For help with sweep netting so far this year, thank you to Arran Matheson, Ian McFadyen, Marcus Munro, Ailsa McLellan, Angus Davidson, Gunnar Scholtz, Hugh Richards, Colin Milne, Jim Buchanan, Andrew Ramsay, Johnny Whitteridge, Alasdair MacDonald, Alan McGillivray, Farquar and Jamie Renwick and friends, Louis and Scott; Steve Kett, Andy Vicks, Hugh Whittle and family and friends, Ray Dingwall, Mark Williams, Pete Bridgman, David Mullaney, Garry Bulmer, Terry Doe, Mark Everard, Carl Forbes, David Barclay and Bill Anderson . . .

For comments on the the sea trout monitoring report for 2012 which can be found on the WRFT website via links at: <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=162> are welcome. What analyses and information would be most useful in 2013?

2. Salmon farm visits

I visited the MH Isle Ewe salmon farm on 16th July. I was unable to inspect the salmon as the fish were all to be harvested by the end of the following week, and it would not have been possible to anaesthetise them due to the withdraw period for MS222. However I saw the fish as they came up for food and using the underwater feed camera, and would have seen adult lice on the fish had they been present in large numbers. I had no reason to doubt reports from the staff that the numbers of lice on the farmed salmon had been very low throughout the production cycle. I thanked Stevie and other staff for accommodating a visit at a busy time.

Unsuccessful attempts were made to contact Scottish Salmon Farms to arrange a visit to the Summer Isles farms (messages left for John Rae and Colin Findlay).

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation's sea lice reports are being published on line at:

http://www.scottishsalmon.co.uk/science/sea_lice/regional_reports%281%29.aspx

Note that during the period January to March 2013, the average numbers of adult female lice on farmed salmon between Kennart and Gruinard, the area which includes the SSF Summer Isles farms and Wester Ross Fisheries farms, was over 4 lice per fish, i.e. over 8 times the CoGP lice treatment threshold level. This very high on-farm sea louse population correlates with the high numbers of lice recorded on sea trout in the area.

In contrast, the Loch Ewe area, which contains only the Isle Ewe salmon farm, reported very low numbers of lice well below the CoGP threshold.

These figures are consistent with observation I have made on salmon farm visits.

3. Juvenile fish surveys

Glenmore River on 15th June (pre-stocking check with Nick Sanders and David Huntington) – small salmon fry were found in the main river and trout in the tributary streams. Thank you to Nick and Liz Sanders for hospitality!

Sand River (29th June) Gairloch Gathering demo: many salmon parr and trout; no salmon fry.

Bruachaig (10th July) Wild spawned salmon fry were found in the main river at sites below the Heights of Kinlochewe for the first time since the 1990s. These fish may have been progeny of salmon that ascended the falls of their own accord or via helping hands in 2012. Salmon parr, assumed to be of stocked origin (fry stocking in 2012) were also present. CPUE levels were low; however water temperatures were over 20C, and many fish were seen escaping the e-fisher.

Tournaig (28th July) – salmon fry were found at the highest site for the first time for three years, and at high CPUE. This follows record grilse run last year. Water levels were rising; salmon fry were found at three of the 4 other sites fished before we called it quits!

Future e-fishing surveys are planned in August and September to include: the Sguod system (wild trout spawning), rivers in the south of the WRFT area and various surveys on the Isle of Skye . . .

4. Other notes

- **WRFT Review July 2013:** a draft was completed in early July; final additions and corrections imminent.

- **Student projects: Ruby Neervoort** (VU University Amsterdam, via SAMS) has been awarded her MSc following completion of her thesis '*Herring stories – as told by a fisher: a social and political analysis of the historical changes in the Wester Ross herring fishery over the last 50 years*', based on the herring interviews carried out by Sue Pomeroy. **Vu Dang** (Middlesex University) was awarded a 1st class honours BSc degree following field work on the lochs and lochans in the Gairloch Hills with supervisor Dr Steve Kett during the summer of 2012, and **Will Parry** (Aberdeen Uni) was awarded a 2.1 honours BSc degree following thesis project on trout lochs around Little Loch Broom. Well done Ruby, Vu and Will!
- **Lochan Uaine expedition** (9th July): with Prof Eric Verspoor, Carl Forbes (WRFT life member), Dr Mark Everard (author and fish biologist) & co: samples of colourful wee brook trout were caught in the headwaters of both Torridon River and Coulin (Ewe system) rivers. Thank you also to Dr John Ogle and friends for supporting everyone before and after the trip.
- **Consultations and responses:** comments were prepared for WRASFB in response to the WRF Ardmair planning application; and the Summer Isles salmon farm reviews; Grudie HP scheme (to complete . . .);
- **Skye work** (for Skye Fisheries Trust): sweep netting for sea trout at mouth of Varagill river (5th July) to inform response to SSC salmon farm application). Walk-over survey of Loch Buidhe and Loch Lonachan to inform response to Scottish Water proposals for water supply developments. Thank you to Peter, Berni and Ian Kinloch for hospitality; Derek Dowsett, Martin Leslie and Mrs Leslie, Portree Angling Club members for help at Varagill and Duncan Currie at Broadford for much information.
- **Tournaig trap** (supported by Marine Harvest): Ben reported the first grilse of the year in the upstream trap this morning after yesterday's rain: a fine, quite fat, fish. Well done Ben!
- **Scottish Government consultations** on Marine Protected Areas etc: the MPA consultation documents and related consultations can be found at:

Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas in Scotland's Seas

Start date 25/07/2013 - End date 14/11/2013

Following the Cabinet Secretary's report to Parliament in December 2012 on the Progress to Identify a Scottish Network of Marine Protected Areas, views are sought on the possible Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) presented in this consultation.

Consultation on Priority Marine Features

Start date 24/07/2013 - End date 13/11/2013

Marine Scotland is consulting on a number of proposals to take forward integrated marine planning for Scotland's seas. The National Marine Plan proposes that Priority Marine Features should be specifically taken into account in future planning and decision making. The recommended list of Priority Marine Features (PMFs) represents 80 habitats and species of marine conservation importance for which it would be appropriate to use either area based measures such as Marine Protected Areas, or non-area based mechanisms or a mixture of both to achieve better protection. Action will be prioritised via a three-pillar approach, i.e. species measures, site-based measures, and wider seas policies and measures as set out in Marine Scotland's Marine Nature Conservation Strategy.

- **Marine feeding:** sandeel kill in Gruinard Bay (14th June) photos and samples were taken by Johnnie Parry; the samples have been sent to MS fish health Inspectorate (Keith Beaton SEPA has recently been following this up). The sea was a degree or two cooler than usual earlier in the summer; now things are warming up: I watched 3 feeding minke whales near Melvaig two nights ago.
- **Laide Wood** (25th July): another fine time; Dave B caught two very large water beetles; and many other wee fish and other aquatic beasts were seen / sampled. Thanks to Dave and Jan Barclay for help.
- **Mink:** mink reported and caught at Mellon Charles; also seen near Applecross. Gunnar Sholtz's contract is about to end; from next week we will need to play a leading roll in monitoring and controlling mink in the area. Gunnar has been a huge help and also with sweep netting at Kanaird and Dundonnell. Thank you Gunnar!
- **Whisky:** bottles of fine malt were received from Carl Forbes (WRFT life member) and Alfie Gudgeon (Duke of Edinburgh Award work experience helper)'s mum. Thank you very much to Carl and Christian (and to Alfie for all his help)! I shall celebrate the end of a successful field season, when it comes, with a wee dram . . . [end]