

## MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

<b>WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES</b>		<b>PRESENT:</b> John Mackenzie – Chairman (JM) Richard Wilson (RW) Graeme Wilson (GW) Melanie Smith (MS) Ben Hadfield (BH)
<b>DATE:</b>	22 February 2012	
<b>OPENED AT:</b>	10.30	
<b>CLOSED AT:</b>	13.00	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> Peter Cunningham (PC)      Veronica Mullaney (VM) Peter Jarosz (PJ)              Jonah Tosney (JT)		<b>APOLOGIES:</b> Angus Morrison (AM)              Nigel Pearson (NP) Ian Fergusson (IF)                  Mark Williams (MW) David Barclay (DB)                Richard Greene (RG) Bob Kindness (BK)                 Mary Gibson (MG)

### 1. MATTERS ARISING

**1.i PJ** confirmed that, having consulted those Trustees who were not present at the December meeting, there was unanimous agreement to discontinue the distinction between “Management” and “Trustee” meetings and in future simply to hold Trustee meetings: at (approximately) 6 monthly intervals.

**1ii** There were no other matters arising from the December 2011 minutes that were not itemised on the agenda.

### 2. TRUSTEES

**2.i** Dave Barclay has agreed to take on the role of vice-chairman.

**2ii** Angus Morrison had advised that he had in late January sold the Ewe fishings to a Mr Hugh Whittle and his wife. **PJ** had written to the Whittles (who are understood to be making Inveran their main home) to make contact with them but had so far had no reply. **AM** had not yet submitted his resignation as a trustee but his P.A. had indicated that this would be received shortly.

**2.iii** Ian Fergusson had also written resigning his trusteeship, citing his geographical location and age as his reasons for his decision. Ian has been a trustee since 2006, has represented the southern rivers and has always offered sound advice on wild fish matters.

The trustees wished to thank both he and **AM** for all that they had done for and contributed to the Trust over the years.

**2iii IF's** resignation leaves a vacant position and a replacement for him was discussed. Since his geographical area of interest remains represented by **NP** there was an opportunity to recruit from the north of the Trust's area which has been under-represented since Johnie Parry and Sandy Lindsay's departures. It was therefore agreed to invite Jenny Scobie from Rhidorroch, Ullapool to become a trustee.

### 3. FINANCE REPORTS

**3,i** The updated cash projections produced by **PJ** indicate that this f/y end will see the first reduction of the Trust's (total) cash funds for four years. Although this was anticipated from the start of the year, it may yet be less than originally expected.

**3.ii** Following discussion of the financial support provided by Marine Harvest and Wester Ross Fisheries, it was agreed that WRFT will approach Scottish Salmon Company for a “fish farm” contribution to core funds - **PJ**.

**3.iii** Sweep-netting in 2012 will, hopefully, continue to be funded via RAFTS – this work is providing valuable sea-lice data. There is a distinct possibility (depending on the success of a funding application) of a commitment to additional work on the Little Gruinard which along with sweep-netting and electro-fishing will take up most of **PC's** fieldwork time. That said, the priority now is the finalisation of the biologists' work schedules (with the existing and proposed new work separated) for 2012 by mid March latest: **PC, JT, PJ**.

**3.iv** It was noted that in the current year's budget, some project expenses were not anticipated and therefore not shown. For next year's budgeting estimates for all project expenses need to be recorded.

**3.v JT** stated that the amount of work on Skye for 2012 will depend on how much matched funding is required by grants via RAFTS.

**3.vi** There was a detailed discussion on the Bruachaig Restoration project, following on from a meeting with **BH** and other Marine Harvest people in January at which they offered to provide substantial funding towards the project for a period of years. The following points were agreed:

- The creation of a passage or ladder (to assist access to above the falls) should be assessed and representation made to SNH for its implementation to be sanctioned, permission by the river owner having already been given..
- The carrying capacity of the river system requires evaluation as soon as possible.
- The river should then have the requisite numbers of fry stocked to bring the system up to that level.
- Throughout this period, monitoring and genetic work will be carried out.
- The river should be stocked for five years and then left whilst the full effect of the stocking is monitored.
- Finally, a full report/paper will be produced for peer review – with research questions and answers set out. This project could become a case study and possible protocol for restoration projects elsewhere.
- IScottish and Southern Energy should be approached to seek a substantial increase in their funding for the Bruachaig project in view of their having significantly affected the upper reaches of the system. **BH** who was anyway to be meeting Alastair Stephen of SSE shortly agreed to raise the matter with him.

The project was given 100% support by the biologists and the trustees.

**3.vii** , A sea trout restoration project, to start within the next two years in Loch Maree was also discussed, with the following points agreed:

- There is an urgent need for detailed information on the results of the samples taken so far in order to establish the genetics of some four apparently geographically distinct populations.
- All aspects of the factors that may be impacting on these populations must be considered – unblocking of burns, habitat improvement work etc.
- Brood stocks based (separately) on each of these four populations should be raised.
- The use of genetics will clarify how this will take place.
- The aim is to see the return of large (6- 8lb) sea trout in the Ewe system as soon as possible.

## **4 BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS**

### **4.1 Peter Cunningham's biologist's report (attached below):**

- The RAFTS report on sea trout sampling will soon be issued – then both WRFT's and RAFTS' reports will be in agreement.
- Despite changes in run timings, there has been an increase in grilse runs across all systems.
- The Conon carrying capacity project has reached the stage of researching whether nutrient enhancement would further enhance the carrying capacity of the river – **PC** will talk with John Armstrong regarding the type of nutrient pellet that could be used. **BH** offered both a contact name for the production of such a pellet and details of the options in pellet constituents and undertook to raise this with a supplier from whom **MH** purchases very large quantities of feed. **PC** will report back his findings (and costs) before any further work is done on this.
- The cost of mink traps which had initially been met by the Trust had now been refunded by **WREN**. It was confirmed that mink control is not a Trust priority and that as there is and will not be a budget for this, involvement should be limited to providing contact with keepers/ghillies for those involved in the project

#### **4.ii Jonah Tosney's biologist's report** (nothing to add to the report.- copy attached)

- JT is currently looking at a project that should qualify for funding under Axis 4 of the EFF and is now waiting for the setting up of the Highland Council's Fisheries Local Action Group who will be the Highland area distributor of this European funding.

**4.iii** A formal agreement establishing the protocol for the WRFT biologist to visit WRF Ltd fish farms is almost formalised – this procedure has become necessary in the light of certain events last year in the Little Loch Broom area.

Visits to Marine Harvest sites are on-going with prior arrangements of the visits agreed by telephone or email.

**JT** will talk to John Rea (Scottish Sea Farms) in order to establish visiting arrangements for **PC** to the Summer Isles fish farm sites.

#### **5. CROWN ESTATE SEABED LEASE**

WRASFB's approach to the Crown Estate for the leasing of an area of the seabed in the Loch Broom/Little Loch Broom area has, finally, received a response. This states that there is already sufficient protection from the various bodies (responsible for such protection) for wild fish interests in that area and that they (CE) see no need to enter into a lease of the seabed to WRASFB. A way forward towards this aim may lie in the possible establishment (by Government) of a Wester Ross Marine Protected Area.

#### **6. AOB**

**6.i PC** had produced an excellent draft response to the Aquaculture and Fisheries Bill Consultation document and this response along with the ASFB response (from Alan Wells) had gone out to both trustees and board members for their comments. To date their responses were unanimously in support of the draft produced by PC as well as ASFB's response document. WRASFB will be replying by 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 with WRFT being referred to in the board's response.

**6.ii MS** outlined the latest information from UHI covering the impending establishing of a Rivers and Lochs Institute.

- Eric Verspoor will be involved to run the genetics work.
- It will include a wide involvement from both groups and individuals.
- The principal aim will be to carry out leading edge science.
- This will help take forward projects such as the Bruachaig Restoration.
- Should provide an independent aspect and act as an umbrella organisation for the funding of future projects.
- There is the hope to provide an educational base for MSc and PhD projects.

<b>NEXT MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Trustees' meeting	29/03/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting & AGM	06/06/2012	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	15/08/2012	WRFT Office	10.30

**1. Juvenile fish-survey reports** (core funded and also some contract fishing)

A draft river report has been completed for the Gruinard River and comments have been received from respective estate managers. The report includes results of juvenile fish surveys, sea lice monitoring, arctic charr sampling and a review of options for protecting riparian habitat. A similar report for the rivers in the north of the WRFT area (Kanaird to Dundonnell) is currently in preparation and is scheduled to be complete by the end of February.

**2. Sea trout sampling**

Data from all fish sampled in 2011 have been compiled and a report summarising the results of sampling at each site in 2011 is in preparation. I aim to have a draft report ready for the meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Permissions have been requested from the Scottish Government to commence sweep netting before end February (and for other fish sampling work in 2012).

**3. Catches of salmon and sea trout**

Detailed catch figures were obtained from Ray Dingwall and Graeme Wilson for salmon caught in 2010 and 2011 and from Bob Kindness for fish caught in 2011. I've contrasted catches from these rivers in a report which can be found on the wrft webpage by following links at: <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=141>

At the SFCC biologist meeting at Faskally on 26<sup>th</sup> January, Simon McKelvey (Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust) reported how the composition of salmon returning to the Blackwater trap (Conon system) has changed from predominately grilse to mostly larger 2SW fish in the last few years, proposing that this relates to a 60 year cycle; similar observations have been made in Norway. Around Wester Ross catches of 2SW salmon were much higher in 2011 than for many earlier years. However, in contrast to the Blackwater trap, the grilse catch for many rivers in Wester Ross in 2010 was high. The success of the 2009 smolt-year class of salmon from rivers in Wester Ross correlates with a 'glut' of sandeels recorded and reported around Wester Ross in early summer 2009 and unusually fat sea trout sampled in local waters suggesting that the abundance of food fish may be part of the explanation for the high catches of grilse in 2010 and 2SW salmon 2011. In 2010 and 2011 sea trout grew steadily. However, none of those sampled were as fat (as high condition factor) as those sampled in 2009.

Prospects for 2012: if sandeel abundance in coastal waters at smolt migration time is a major factor determining the strength of subsequent rod catches of adult salmon in local rivers, one would anticipate unusually high numbers of large 3SW salmon, modest catches of 2SW salmon and modest catches of grilse. If feeding conditions further offshore (e.g. around Faroes & Greenland) are of more importance in determining catches, good catches of 3SW salmon, good catches of 2SW salmon, and modest catches of grilse can be anticipated in 2012. If there is indeed a 60 year cycle and there a longer-term change in the sea age and run timing of salmon is underway, expect even fewer grilse in 2012 than in 2011, however, another good year for 2SW (&3SW) salmon . . .

**4. Bruachaig Salmon Restoration project** (funded by the Scottish Government via RAFTs and Ewe proprietors, with support from Coulin Estate, and from 2011, from Scottish and Southern Energy).

I'm anticipating finding many 'wild' salmon fry in summer 2012 from natural spawning in the Bruachaig following the transfer of rod caught salmon from below falls to above falls last season. A captive broodstock is being grown on by BK; eggs are not anticipated until 2013. Contrary to last report Neil Morrison has a small number of eggs from Kinlochewe River origin broodstock taken in 2011. Some of the eggs once hatched and grown on could be retained to add to the captive Bruachaig broodstock. However, prior to any stocking in 2012, a thorough e-fishing survey will be carried out to assess distribution and densities of 'wild' origin salmon fry. PJ and Melanie Smith met Ben Hadfield in January to discuss this project. Subject to agreement of all parties and funding, genetic samples from fish stocked to date will be analysed to enable subsequent recognition of an returning adult salmon to the Bruachaig 'falls pool' and other parts of the Ewe system in 2012 - 2014 as of 'stocked' or 'wild' origin.

**5. Herring Project** (SG funded via RAFTS in 2009 and 2011)

Sue Pomeroy is making great progress and has already made a series of interesting recordings. The interviews include information about some of the places around Wester Ross where herring spawn(ed). PJ & Sue can explain further . . . ! This project is now moving quickly; a follow up project is being developed by the Wester Ross Environment Network. Many thanks to all fishermen who have agreed to be interviewed.

## 7. Consultations and responses (core funded)

JT & JM can report progress regarding submissions in reference to SSC's application for a new 2k tonne farm in Outer Loch Torridon.

Answers to questions in the Scottish Government's current Aquaculture & Fisheries Consultation have been drafted and emailed to PJ and JM in anticipation of a WRFT or WRASFB submission.

## 8. Proposed Fish farm visits.

PJ can provide an update on progress to agree a framework for farm visits (see Table c/f below with fish farm summary info.)

## 9. Biosecurity issues (core funded)

**Mink:** At WREN meeting on 16/2 Gunnar Scholtz (SMI <http://www.scottishmink.org.uk/>) reported that over past year, 20 mink were caught in Wester Ross and nearby: Gruinard Bay, Laide, Isle of Ewe, Skye, Loch Duich and most recently one on Tanera Mor (January 2012).

At meeting with Nicola Tallach on 17/2, PC agreed to correspond with all those who were involved with trapping last autumn and seek their support for a second phase of mink trapping around the coastline from Torridon to Little Loch Broom in March 2012. We'd also like to arrange some training for those with less experience of trapping success and will approach local keepers to see if they can help with this.

## 10. Some other activities since last meeting:

- **Newsletter 27** can be found on the WRFT website at: <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=140>
- The **Scottish Marine Protected Area (MPA)** project is progressing with quarterly 'Stakeholder' workshops; one imminent. 'Search areas' have been outlined and redefined: on-going assessments includes appraisal of the occurrence and distribution of 'search features' (currently mostly habitat related but including 'sandeels' and 'Skate'). At least in so far as MPAs should provide better protection for many of the habitats which are of importance to sea trout and salmon either directly (habitats in which sea trout feed) or indirectly (habitats and places which are of importance to the small fish that post-smolt salmon and sea trout feed on), the MPA programme is potentially of some importance to the future prospects of respective species and the fisheries they support around Wester Ross. You'll find further background info via the WRFT website.
- Data sheets and other info have been compiled in completion of **fish survey contracts** relating to possible HP developments within the area.
- Data for the Little Gruinard SAC contract has been uploaded onto the SFCC e-fishing data base.
- **Carrying Capacity Project.** Currently we (Cromarty Firth FT, MMS Freshwater lab & WRFT) are investigating options for management trials where some study streams receive nutrient enhancement treatments analogous to the retention and cycling of salmon carcasses.

**11. Proposed work programme:** this has been prepared and will be circulated separately prior to the meeting following comments from PJ . . .

## 12. Past events & meetings

- PC attended the **SFCC Biologists meeting 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> January 2012**, MSS Faskally, and presented an update on some of the WRFT activities at the meeting. The meeting covered many different subject areas and a report was drafted and is available for anyone who would like to consider options for future WRFT activities in light of developments in other parts of Scotland.

## 13. Future events / activities:

- RAFTS 2012 AGM & Council Meetings, 28<sup>th</sup> March, SNH Battleby Centre, near Perth
- RAFTS/ASFB Conference 29<sup>th</sup> March, SNH Battleby.

**14. Leave:** PC plans to head south to Perth on 28<sup>th</sup> March following the WRASFB meeting for the RAFTS Annual conference on 29<sup>th</sup> March, and then have a few days holiday prior to returning..

**Table 1 [cf. from WRFT Trustees 14/12/11]:** Some information for discussion at meeting on proposed visits to fish farms by WRFT biologist(s) in 2012. Note that there may be changes at some sites in consented biomass prior to 2012; and the anticipated year of production cycle is based on information relating to recent patterns of production at respective sites and may also be subject to revision.

Location	Operator	Combined SEPA Biomass (tonnes)	Anticipated year of production cycle	Suggested time of visit(s) by WRFT Biologist	Priority	AMG?
Summer Isles farms	Scottish Salmon Farms	1850	1	latter part of year	Medium	No
Loch Kanaird	Wester Ross Fisheries	1050	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	No
Corry, Loch Broom	Wester Ross Fisheries	1050	1	latter part of year	Medium	No
Ardessie	Wester Ross Fisheries	662	2	any time after May	High	No
Isle Ewe	Marine Harvest	1369	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Aird, Kenmore, Camus	Scottish Salmon Company	2000++	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Upper Loch Torridon	Marine Harvest	2000++	1	latter part of year	Medium	Yes
Loch Kishhorn Farms	Scottish Salmon Farms	4000++	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes
Upper Loch Carron	Scottish Salmon Company	1375	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes
Sron, Alsh, Duich(& ?Hourn)	Marine Harvest	8000++	2	Priority: Feb-April	High	Yes

[end]

## **Jonah Tosney's Biologist's Report for trustees' meeting, 22/02/12**

- Aquaculture Responses – objection lodged through WRASFB to a proposed new 2000 tonne Scottish Salmon Company site in Loch Torridon. The objection was on the grounds that the loch already supports a high farmed biomass and Marine Scotland data show lice numbers to have been high in 2011 and although SSC set stringent lice management targets they were unable to show that these targets could be met. JT also present at Torridon Community Council meeting with MS and SSC at which the council expressed concerns and later lodged an objection.
- Aquaculture Planning – SSC attended a Lochcarron Community Council meeting to update the council on plans for a 2000 tonne new site next to the existing site in Loch Carron. Formal application expected in the next few weeks. Council were aware of the plans and expressed few concerns.
- Scottish Salmon Company meeting. JT met with SSC staff to discuss various issues. SSC agreed to allow JT to attend lice counts at the Loch Carron and Torridon sites and expressed willingness to cooperate on future research projects that may be relevant to development, particularly projects that may shed light on salmon migratory routes out of sea lochs, or sea trout feeding movements within sea lochs.
- Marine Harvest agreed for a WRFT biologist to attend lice counts at any of their sites and invited JT to visit a site with the Marine Harvest vet.
- SEPA approached WRFT for comments on a CAR (Controlled Activities Regulation) licence application for sea lice treatments at the proposed SSC Loch Torridon site. WRFT raised no objection to the treatments but expressed concern about the potential for sea lice proliferation and the effects of the medications on the wider environment. Neither issue is within SEPA's remit. JT awaiting further feedback.
- Skye Fisheries Trust work – JT, PJ and Peter Kinloch (SFT) submitted four funding applications to RAFTS for 2013 and 2014 for further electro-fishing work, salmon and trout in the classroom, an economic evaluation of the importance of angling to the Skye community and a genetics and tracking project using fish caught at sea by Skye's one remaining netsman. Bids are for INTERREG funding and total approx £60,000