

NMFC Report – 2019

The Non-Migratory Fish Committee held five meetings between Dec 2018 and Dec 2019 inclusive. Members were joined by David Manion from Linlithgow AC, who had expressed interest in SANA's work. We invited him to our June meeting to help put him in the picture, and he looks forward to serving on the committee in future. Members

Members	Home Area	Meetings attended
A Ayre (V/Chair & sec)	Falkirk	5/5
J Campbell	Glasgow	4/5
A McAlpine	Falkirk	5/5
J Mathew	Wishaw	5/5
K Mackie	Carluke	4/5
J Twaddle (Chairman)	Cumbernauld	5/5
D Manion	Linlithgow	2/3

are, shall we say, mature and mainly from the Central Belt, so we would welcome more and younger keen volunteers, particularly from other parts of Scotland. Much business is conducted by email so attendance at every meeting is not essential. If anyone wishes to join us they should contact the SANA office for more information.

Our remit

We try to keep abreast of matters that affect game fishing and inform the Board of any actions we think SANA should take. We respond to consultations and other initiatives that may affect angling, collaborating with the MFC when appropriate. Our responses are usually copied to the SANA website for information and for feedback of which we get precious little. In 2019 our responses included the Crown Estate's new management regime's plans for salmon and trout fishing, and also a SNH consultation on changes to the General Licence (see below).

SANA is a corresponding member of The **National Access Forum** which monitors the operation of the **2003 Land Reform Act** via the **Scottish Outdoor Access Code**. Though angling is not covered by the Act, the Code offers basic advice to the public on fishing, so it is important that we are aware of proposed changes. We are represented by the NMFC secretary who receives NAF minutes and ancillary documents, and responds as necessary to any moves that might affect anglers. Recent proposals concerned additional advice on the control of dogs in the countryside without any mention of angling, so a reminder was sent about the need for owners to keep their dogs out of the water when anglers are present.

Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)

There is a new head of the Government's Salmon and Recreational Fisheries. Antje Branding, succeeded Simon Dryden in August, but so far we've heard nothing from her. Little WFR progress been made for many months, with the last six weekly update published in August 2018.

The NMFC wrote to Cabinet Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, in June over the lack of progress, and erroneous remarks concerning Protection Orders by an MSP during a debate in the Scottish Parliament. She replied saying Ministers are fully aware of discussions and issues regarding Protection Orders, and "*when time permits we shall address them*". She added that "*given other priorities*" they will be focusing efforts on "*the twelve pressures on wild Atlantic salmon*".

Meantime we continue to await with growing impatience action on POs, on trout and other species matters, and on fisheries management plans..

Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)

FMS concentrates on salmon, and one of its directors advises civil servants on fisheries matters, though we rarely hear mention of trout and grayling. We are told

that salmon habitat improvements benefit other species, which is generally correct, but what about waters where salmon are not present? We continue to keep an ear to the ground and remind FMS of other species management when we feel it necessary.

Another group we keep an eye on is SEPA's Fish and Fisheries Advisory Group. Together with DSFBs FMS is represented on the group, though according to the SEPA website there has not been a meeting for a couple of years.

Clean water and Fly populations

Many rivers here aren't as badly affected by poor water quality as some south of the Border but that is no cause for complacency. Clean water is essential for healthy fish stocks. Where farmers and land managers are negligent and allow chemicals and slurry run-off to enter drains and streams it can result in a build up of algae and sediment that can harm invertebrates and fish eggs downriver.

Fly hatches are widely less prolific than they used to be resulting in fewer rising trout. FMS worries over poor salmon recruitment and minimal numbers of smolts reaching the sea. Problems include predation and less feeding in the ocean, but it may be that falling insect levels contribute during the parr stage.

SEPA recognises that diffuse pollution is a significant problem and has some dialogue with FMS over improvements to water quality, which in turn would help aquatic flies. There are global worries over declining bee and terrestrial insect populations, to the extent that a new word has been coined - *insectageddon*, so more and regular river-fly and water quality monitoring by River Trusts, Salmon Boards and angling clubs would not come amiss.

Predation and General Licence consultation

The Anglers Trust continues to press DEFRA over damage done to fish stocks by cormorants and sawbill ducks south of the Border; it wants the birds to be better controlled by having them listed on the General Licence. In September the NMFC and MFC responded independently to SNH's consultation on changes to the General Licence list in Scotland, both asking for cormorants and sawbills to be included.

Beavers

In May the Scottish Government gave beavers European Protected Species status, which allows them to naturally expand their range across the country. They are well established in Tayside and are expanding in the Forth system. SNH is developing management plans to deal with problems they may cause to farmers and land managers, though whether they will listen to any complaints anglers may have is debatable. Their aims are listed on the SNH website.

Reservoirs

One of our members continues to monitor new fees charged by SEPA for the continuing safety of reservoirs. It transpired that his own club's loch was placed into a wrong category. The club challenged both this and the fees charged with some success, so others should be vigilant and aware that all may not be as it should be with SEPA's determination of dams and reservoirs.

Alan Ayre

Dec 2019