

SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 19 June 2016 at 10.30am, Green Hotel, Kinross

1 PRESENT:- Messrs Balfour, Campbell, McLennan, Picken, Pirie, Walker and Wight.

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs Duncan and Stephen.

3 CHAIRMAN:- CC welcomed RP back to the MFC. AW had substituted for CC at the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meeting on 2 June. The SANA Ltd board has approved the nomination of OMCL to the Technical Working Group (TWG) on finance, a sub group of the SRG. With aspects of the Crown Estate in Scotland to be devolved to the Scottish Government, the board has also approved the nomination of CC to the committee which will consider the management of the assets of the Crown Estate in Scotland. With the several groups in existence and others a possibility in relation to Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR), any member with an interest in representing SANA Ltd should inform CC.

4 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 13 MARCH 2016:- unanimously adopted.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 13 MARCH:- covered under following headings.

6 WILD FISHERIES REFORM

Since the MFC meeting on 13 March there have been quite a few circulations of notes on meetings, alerts to documents on the web and opportunities to comment on several responses to consultations emanating from the WFR process. The response from the wider SANA membership to postings on the SANA website has been zero which could be interpreted as assent. Scottish anglers appear to be largely disengaged from the progress of WFR and not particularly conversant with the details of the proposed future management of Scotland's fish in fresh water although the matter of rod licences is frequently raised.

In conjunction with the NMFC a response to the major consultation on WFR was submitted before the deadline of 2 May. Upwards of six hundred responses were submitted to the SG and an analysis of these is underway.

Whilst the SG is making an effort to engage with anglers and encourage support from them for WFR they are encountering opposition rather than support. Officials have been encountering stances of – what will I gain and what will it cost. Consequently the SRG have asked the angling representatives to spell out the benefits of WFR to angling as they perceive them. After exchanges with the NMFC and the Coarse Anglers a response has been made. It largely repeated what was contained in the response from SANA to the earlier main consultation. Essentially WFR, if done appropriately, could be to the benefit of anglers in Scotland but if the details are not correct angling opportunities and the number of anglers might well both shrink.

Members reported a variety of 'beliefs' which they had heard expressed. These included, a rod licence was inevitable, there will be sixteen FMOs, that for coarse anglers a rod licence would be a national permit.

Official minutes and AW's notes on the SRG meeting of 2 June are not available yet. AW indicated some topics which had been considered.

The first meeting of the TWG on finance remains to be called. The group's main issue seems likely to be to identify a few million pounds of new annual funding if the ambition for FMOs is to be realised. It was noted that a levy of one penny on every harvested farmed salmon in Scotland would raise annually around £300K. In a similar vein the successor to the Crown Estate Commissioners in Scotland might consider funding for FMOs from the rents it receives from aquaculture sites.

With Aileen McLeod having lost her seat at Holyrood, the new minister in charge of WFR is uncertain, Fergus Ewing or Roseanna Cunningham? *(It is now known that WFR is in the portfolio of Roseanna Cunningham and aquaculture in that of Fergus Ewing.)*

7 SALMO TRUTTA

Present legislation in Scotland distinguishes sea trout and brown trout with sea trout being included in 'salmon' in much of it. It is now recognised that there is simply salmo trutta or trout but individual specimens can have a variety of life histories. SANA was asked by the SRG to comment on the way forward for legislation in the light of present knowledge. CC and AW drafted a response which, after circulation to members and the NMFC for comment, has been dispatched.

8 NASCO

AW attended the 2016 NASCO meeting held during the first week of June in Germany. Of particular interest was the session on impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon. AW had been away since returning from Germany and will circulate a report in due course. The representative of international salmon farming made no concessions to recreational salmon fishing interests and at NASCO sea trout are effectively ignored during official sessions. The use of triploidy to mitigate the consequences of escapes has been given little consideration by the industry in Scotland. The NASCO website holds numerous, some lengthy, papers for the meeting. These include ones relating to Scotland and, at present, brief minutes of some sessions. AW recommends reading CNL 16 26.

9 LICENCES, TAGS, CATEGORIES ETC

Apart from the legislative details of the rules for those having a licence, and corresponding tags for salmon taken, and that net and coble fisheries are operating, no further information about the scheme were known. Had licences to be applied for? How was the number of tags for a fishery allocated?

The allocation of a category to a river remains controversial for a few. MS is open to considering any information not captured during the assessments for 2016. No further information is to hand as to when or if a corresponding scheme for sea trout may be introduced.

10 ASFB AND RAFTS

Notes had been circulated on the joint members meeting on 16 March to discuss a response to the WFR consultation. Both bodies are posting on their websites the minutes of their joint working group on WFR.

The highlight of the annual conference on 17 March was the talk on conservation limits and categories. The presentations are on the web sites

The ASFB/RAFTS Annual Review for 2016 was released on 16 March. The review is on both websites and a link is on the SANA web site.

11 ESKS AND YTHAN

All quiet on the Esks at present. Members noted the content of a letter from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to a third party relating to Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd.

No update known regarding seals or netting at the Ythan.

12 THE 2015 FIGURES AND THE 2016 SEASON

The reported catch figures for 2015 were released in April by MSS. The format was much changed from previous years. Enquiries revealed that this was how it was going to be as other work takes priority and as staff numbers decline. After learning new tricks the usual files were compiled and circulated and an updated file comparing net and rod retained fish posted on the SANA website. While the NE of England net catch of salmon for 2015 is in NASCO papers the sea trout figure is nowhere yet to be found.

The salmon plus grilse rod catch in Scotland during 2015 was 10,000 up on that of 2014 but it was just half that of 2010. The sea trout rod catch reported in 2015 was slightly up on that of 2014 but continues to run at a figure well below that of earlier years and that in the absence of a once very much larger net catch.

Regarding salmon catches so far this year, members reported no consistent pattern across the country even in neighbouring areas. Thus the South Esk in the absence of nets at Usan has been very disappointing while the North Esk has seen good numbers and even fish deaths. Of the big four, the Spey and Tay have been very reasonable, the Tweed okay while the Dee has improved a little on its abysmal 2014 season.

It too soon for any certainty on the sea trout season but thus far several venues have not started off productively although fish have been seen in numbers in a few places.

13 NMFC MINUTES

It was noted was that the NMFC struggles for members, not unlike the MFC. While combining the two committees might be considered in an FMO future, the agendas of the two suggest they had best both remain for now.

14 EGM AND SANA LTD

At the EGM on 5 June, despite adverse views from the floor, the motion to join an Umbrella Angling Group, provided that it is in the interests of the SANA membership, was unanimously carried. With SportsScotland holding the purse strings for a significant part of SANA funding and clearly exerting a degree of pressure to support the concept, the decision was the sensible one.

Although not part of the EGM a discussion on rod licences ensued afterwards. The president emphasised that SANA's position remains that it is opposed to rod licences and the Scottish Government is wary of the concept with no stated intent to introduce one. There are some who would tolerate a 'management and conservation levy' if it was for the greater good while others are vehemently opposed to anything that looks like, sounds like or even hints at a rod licence. Draft minutes of SANA Ltd board meetings are now being circulated.

15 AOCB

A major conference on sea trout was held last autumn in Dundalk, Ireland. Based on the conference papers, a book 'Sea Trout: from Science to Management', edited G S Harris, will be published later this year.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was set for 10.30am on Sunday 25 September in Kinross.

The meeting concluded at 1.15pm.