

SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 1 July 2018 at 10.30am, Green Hotel, Kinross

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

2 CHAIRMAN:- CC welcomed members and noted the release of the 2017 Scottish salmon catches in April and the postponing of the introduction of the proposed conservation measures in England and Wales. The attendance of AW at the 2018 NASCO meeting in the USA maintained an international aspect to SANA's activities. He encouraged members to indicate when they saw an opportunity when they could participate in representing the MFC.

3 APOLOGIES:- J McKay.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:- None were declared.

5 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 11 MARCH 2018:- Their adoption was proposed by CC and seconded by RP

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES:-

CC had a positive conversation with a potential new member for the MFC. He is experienced in both wild and farmed salmon matters but has not yet joined SANA or an affiliated club.

7 WILD FISHERIES REFORM

The SRG met recently but the minutes have not yet been released. The timetable of six weekly updates is slipping. Under-staffing may lie behind this. CC will enquire about the delayed updates.

The status quo prevails in salmon farming. Planning guidelines remain to be re-written. No moratorium on the expansion of salmon farming is in place.

8 SALMON FARMING INQUIRIES

As noted in the March MFC minutes, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee reported on salmon farming and concluded – 'The status quo is not an option.' Since March, the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee has held several evidence taking sessions on salmon farming. These have included representatives of bodies and individuals from the whole spectrum of stances on salmon farming. SANA's submission to the committee is on the website. The committee is expected to publish its report in September.

Links between fish farming and wild salmon are also to be scrutinised by a new project launched by the Scottish Government – the Salmon Interactions Workstream. It will be chaired by John Goodlad and will include representatives from MS, SEPA and SNH.

9 CROWN ESTATE SCOTLAND

CC attended the stakeholder meeting in March and circulated a note on the discussions. There are parties interested in acquiring Crown Estate assets but large scale disposal of assets is not proposed. The MFC does not support any sale of coastal salmon fishing rights. At present all such rights are not in use but there is no certainty but that in the future they might again be allowed to take salmon. CC raised the issue of non migratory fishing rights which the CE owns, either directly or by inclusion. The chief executive of the CE has undertaken to look into this and work is underway to identify where these rights exist.

The question was raised as to why angling clubs would not be keen to purchase fishing rights. Mainly the reason would be lack of the necessary funds. Although there may be sources of funds the conditions attached to grants will often be incompatible with club constitutions. Given that government supports angling development, the disposal of fishings to clubs which make their fishings accessible to the public ought to be encouraged. CC will write about the possible sale of fishing rights to bona fide angling clubs as opposed to syndicates. Members with experience of leasing fishings from the CE found it to be a benign landlord.

10 CONSERVATION REGULATIONS

In Scotland there now seems to be fairly widespread acceptance of the categorisation of rivers regarding angling combined with the cessation of coastal netting. For rod and line the categorisation process has moved to increasingly subdividing salmon fishery districts into distinctive areas. A list of seventeen fixed engine recipients of compensation for being unable to fish during the years 2016 to 2018 has been released. What will happen from 2019 onwards remains to be seen.

All salmon supporting areas are to be covered by a national electrofishing survey. This will take place between July and September and will use 800 randomly selected sites in 27 regions. The project is funded by the Scottish Government, SEPA and SNH and is budgeted at £400 per site. The results will supplement the many local surveys conducted by DSFBs and Trusts and the data will be used to develop a juvenile assessment methodology to incorporate in the assignment of categories. South of the border the anticipated suspension of coastal salmon netting in 2018 did not happen. That was to be combined with the equivalent of categories for rivers in Scotland and included total catch and release for some rivers. This gave rise to a multitude of objections and a commissioned report claiming that the methodology used in the grading of rivers was flawed.

The time needed to deal with these responses resulted in the delaying of the introduction of the conservation measures to 2019 at the earliest.

11 NASCO

AW attended the 2018 NASCO conference in Portland, Maine and reported on many issues with a report also posted on the SANA website.

Locally in Maine the financial input to conservation of the remnants of the former salmon stocks is huge.

The NGO input to discussions continues to creep ahead and their ongoing efforts are having a cumulative effect.

Greenland has agreed to a subsistence fishery of 30 tons, down from 40 tons, combined with no renewal of a licence if no catch return is made.

Faroe have a fishery but have not exercised it, holding that up as their contribution to salmon conservation in contrast to the NE of England coastal fishery.

Scotland managed to get away with making no response on aquaculture issues which were highlighted at the 2017 special session.

The NE of England coastal fishery was passed over very quickly. Perhaps because 2018 is probably the final year of the fishery.

The International Year of the Salmon is to be 2019. It will cover both Atlantic and Pacific species. It is essentially an outreach effort and NGOs will be doing much of the organising. The AST have a matching project.

Gyrodactylus salaris has now reached two Russian rivers although Norway is gradually reducing the number of its infected rivers.

Pink salmon numbers in Northern Norway and Eastern Russia continue to expand. It is estimated that their biomass in the area which they have colonised now exceeds that of the native Atlantic salmon. There have been reports that the species is adapting to the climatic conditions it finds itself in with autumn hatchlings not all heading immediately to sea but remaining in the river until the following spring.

England and Wales reported poor juvenile recruitment in dry years, an effect which might well be present in Scotland. The main stressors are considered to be dams, water quality and climate change.

Post smolt tracking projects are underway to try and identify when and where major losses occur. One is in the Moray Firth.

The 'grazing' paper on mackerel now present in quantity further North and suggested to be impacting on grilse numbers got a cool reception from government delegates. The paper is interesting but would ICES have got it so wrong? Whatever the actual mackerel biomass, Iceland and Faroe are both ignoring the ICES suggested TAC and taking fish in their own EZs to push the total catch to 1.5 times the ICES recommended TAC. Past observations of mackerel catches have given no indication of significant salmon bycatch. However there is a project to sample water from boats to search for salmon DNA. There is a wealth of reading in the papers for the 2018 conference. These are on the NASCO website.

AW was thanked for his work related to NASCO and it was hoped that he would be able to continue and attend the 2019 meeting which will be held in Tromsø.

12 FISHERIES MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND

It continues to publish helpful updates on its activities and fisheries related matters.

13 SALMON CATCHES

The Scottish figures for 2017 were published during April and both CC and JP circulated updated files. CC's 'fish killed' paper is on the website.

Ignoring the initial year, 1952, the R&L catch of just under 50,000 has only been less twice viz in 1976 and 2014. The figure will probably move above 50,000 when all late returns are included as evidenced by figures in the FMS 2018 Review. The sea trout catch of 18,300 has only three times been lower, these all in the past ten years.

From NASCO papers the 2017 NE of England net catch of salmon was 9,157. This lies in the lower end of the range of catches experienced by this fishery over the past twenty years. The associated sea trout catch for 2017 remains to be published.

Turning to 2018 there have been disappointing salmon catches generally from the start with low river levels from late spring onwards giving challenging angling conditions. Little information on sea trout was to hand other than that quite a few hefty ones were evident on fishpal sites.

14 SCOTTISH WATER CONSULTATION

The deadline for responses is 31 August. The NMFC has agreed that the MFC compose a response. CC will draft one for circulation. His reaction to the consultation was that it was less ambitious than it could be. Effluents today contain phosphates and while the technology to remove them exists it is mostly not in place. The monitoring of outfalls to the sea is only limited. The lack of capacity to contain storm events when untreated sewage is allowed out via consented sewage outfalls is an ongoing problem.

15 NMFC MINUTES These were noted.

16 SANA LTD

The next SANA board meeting is on 12 July. Given the allocated funding there will be no manager for ASL only an administrative function. SANA Ltd will also be on limited funding.

17 AOCB

The government has published a consultation on pike conservation measures. CC has responded that SANA supports the proposed measures.

There was a discussion around the government funded Scottish Angling National Development Structure delivered through FMS by a network of trained volunteers emerging from a Scotland Angling Volunteer Award Course. Ian Robertson of Countryside Learning Scotland will develop and co-ordinate the project. This is not I Robertson's first foray into angling development.

18 NEXT MFC MEETING

The next MFC meeting was suggested for Sunday 30 September 2018 in Kinross at 10.30am. Should this date become difficult please notify the secretary.

The meeting concluded at 1.45pm with a vote of thanks to the chairman.