

SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE  
Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 3 December 2017, at 10.30am, Green Hotel, Kinross

1       PRESENT:- Messrs Balfour, Campbell, McKay, McLennan, Pirie, Walker & Wight.  
Also present Alan Ayre & Jim Twaddle from the NMFC.

2       CHAIRMAN:- CC welcomed the Chairman and the Secretary of the NMFC and Jim McKay to the meeting. The MFC members unanimously agreed to co-opt Jim McKay of Perth and District A A to the MFC following the resignation of William Duncan.

3       APOLOGIES:- Messrs Picken & Stephen.

4       CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:- JP declared a financial interest under the revaluation heading.

5       MINUTES OF MEETING OF 1 OCTOBER:- These were unanimously approved.

6       MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

Under item 15 AA noted very low numbers of finnock in his area. Others round the table reported evidence of plentiful finnock in their areas.

7       WILD FISHERIES REFORM

There is nothing to report from the Stakeholder Reference Group other than to note the most recent but delayed six weekly SRG report in September, the most recent SRG meeting having been held in April. It is thought that staff time devoted to WFR matters is limited. When or if any related legislation may emerge has not been made known.

8       CROWN ESTATE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The group has not met since the October MFC meeting. Regarding the problems for wild fish which salmon farming has created it does seem that the aspirations of the industry to get to grips with these are moving beyond the stage of unfulfilled fine intentions. The investment in developing anti sea lice measures has been considerable. A member reported bad waste management practice at a closed containment site. While the MFC has held back from all out confrontation with the industry this stance has now been adopted by other bodies. Dialogue with the industry and regulators is the way ahead barring unforeseen developments.

9       CONSERVATION REGULATIONS

As agreed at the October meeting a short note was sent in response to the consultation on the proposed river categories for 2018. MS was commended for the number of factors taken into account in the increasingly complex model which outputs river categories. From the minutes of the convened groups the trend seems to be that the model will move to allow for factors which presently are missing and to introduce further refinements. The letter noted that the lack of a meaningful measure of angling effort was clearly a factor presently missing from the model although a crude measure is now sought in the statutory catch return forms.

One member reported that a category change from 1 to 2 had resulted in the DSFB pressing for angling clubs to adhere to recommendations for retained numbers of fish which may well lead to a spiral of decline in the membership and financial wellbeing of the clubs. He also believed that information relevant to numbers of fish in the system had not been taken into account. He was advised where to pursue his concerns.

10      STANCE ON PINK SALMON

Following on from the discussion at the MFC meeting on 1 October CC circulated a letter for comment before its dispatch on 6 October to Marine Scotland. A response dated 1 November was received from Mike Palmer. This letter covered most aspects of the issues. Additionally available was the report of an international workshop held in Edinburgh on 21 September. This report gave an overview of the irruption of pink salmon throughout Europe this year and made recommendations for responses to it. It was decided that the letter from Mike Palmer called for a reply.

Two highly significant unknowns are whether the pinks are from the stock transplanted to North West Russia, and now established there and in Northern Norway, or from elsewhere and whether the extent and number of this year's arrivals is a one-off or a pointer for coming years. The first unknown should be determined quite soon, the second, time will tell.

A lengthy discussion covered all aspects of the matter while working through the paragraphs of the letter of 1 November and developing responses thereto.

Much of the November letter gave cause for reassurance that the authorities are alert to the potential ecological downsides of pink salmon arriving in numbers to spawn and to die in our rivers. MS seems to endorse the removal of pinks from rivers under existing legislation and in open seasons. Other comments in the letter in relation to a rod fishery for them are surprising. It was agreed that as matters stand it should be communicated to anglers that were they land a pink it should be kept and the fact reported. No doubt the government has been giving thought to legislative changes to cover circumstances similar to or beyond those of this year.

Included in the letter which CC would draft for circulation would be; reference to the outcomes of the Edinburgh workshop; support for research on the wider ecological impacts of significant numbers of pinks in our rivers; and oppose directed fisheries for pinks.

#### 11 NASCO

AW had written to Peter Hutchinson, director of NASCO, on his retirement. Over the lifetime of SANA PH had been ever helpful to the MFC including coming to speak to the committee. AW had received a reply thanking SANA for the good wishes for his retirement after a job well done in advancing NASCO.

#### 12 FISHERY MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND

The FMS AGM took place on 10 November. The final adoption of articles etc was agreed. The FMS website provides a deal of information on its objectives and activities. It will press for any change from one year to the next in the category of a river to shift by only one grade. Some members also consider that the economic consequences of downgrading the category of a river, particularly to grade 3, is apparently neither appreciated nor allowed for by MS. Pink salmon caught by the NE of England net fishery have been marketed in Billingsgate. Pink salmon eggs deposited this year have hatched.

#### 13 REVALUATIONS

Some regard the now zero NAVs of coastal and unused in-river net fishings as effectively introducing an additional levy on rod and line fishings which they do if the DSFBs raise the same annual sums as previously. Since MS has not yet been able to release the distribution of the annual sum paid to the netting proprietors it is not possible to comment on how exactly these proprietors have benefited. It is rumoured that there may be claims for rebates of rates, based on the preceding NAVS, collected by DSFBs for 2016, and 2017 depending on the timing of billing.

One member understood that in his area the assessor had made no concessions to club water NAVs compared to private beats.

#### 14 THE 2017 SEASON

The 2017 salmon season can be summarised as 'the same as last year'. Essentially numbers of inbound fish built up until numbers rapidly fell away in August and thereafter remained very low. Grilse were notably few in number. While good angling conditions provided for scattered flurries of catches in the late season these depended on coloured fish. Anglers will have to revise their views on when and where the prime fishing for new fish can be found if the run patterns of the past few years stabilise rather than that they turn out to be a short period fluctuation.

The season's catch on the Tweed has been the lowest since 1984 and that of the Tay will also probably turn out to be the lowest for some years past.

Sea trout and finnock catches were hard to assess being up here and down there.

#### 15 SANA LTD

There have been two board meetings since 1 October. At the first the chairman of Angling Scotland Ltd gave a presentation on how he envisaged ASL developing. By the second board meeting the chairman of ASL had resigned. This left ASL without a chairman or a project officer. Future funding for angling from Sportscotland is problematic given the reducing money it is receiving from the Lottery and its emphasis on directing funds towards medal winning rather than to recreational sports. The SANA Board has called for the chairmen of the three angling governing bodies to meet with MS on the subject of support for angling development. FMS has a presence in ASL.

#### 16 AOCB

None was raised

#### 17 NEXT MFC MEETING

The next MFC meeting is planned for 11 March 2018 in Kinross at 10.30am.

The 2018 AGM of SANA Ltd will take place on 25 February 2018 when if necessary MFC members in attendance may meet.

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm