

## MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 12 December 2021, at 10.30am in the Green Hotel, Kinross

Present:- Messrs Campbell, McLennan, Picken, Pirie and Walker. Also attending were J Twaddle, chairman of the NMFC, and Alison Baker and Grace Wilding of the Forth DSFB and the Forth Fisheries Trust.

1 CHAIRMAN:- CC welcomed members and invitees. A message from J Mackay had been received indicating that his parent club, Perth and District, had decided that he should resign from the MFC.

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs Balfour, Stephen and Wight.

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:- Members had none to declare but took the opportunity to let our guests from the Forth know their affiliations.

### 4 CROWN ESTATE SCOTLAND FISHINGS IN THE FORTH SFD

Our guests outlined their respective roles in the Forth DSFB and the Forth Fisheries Trust. The title of the trust pointedly includes fisheries to imply no restriction to migratory salmonids. The Forth SFD area is extensive, extending from Fife Ness to the boundary between the counties of Haddington and Berwick and thus includes all the rivers flowing into the sea along that coastline. With salmon fishing rights belonging to the Crown in the absence of someone else showing a title to it, there are many CES fishings in the district. Also as industry has declined, water quality has improved and barriers to fish migration have been removed this has resulted in long gone but now revived migratory fishing rights falling to Crown Estate ownership. Although freshwater fishings rights are inseparable from the land the Forth DSFB and the FFT are keen to bring into managed use the many unmanaged, both fished and unfished, fisheries of all types in the district.

The recently devolved CES reviewed its use of its assets and considered not directly letting all its rod and line salmon fisheries. The Forth DSFB sought to be the letting agent for such fishings in its district. After negotiations over two years this is now in place and GW is employed to progress the letting of CES fishings and expanding and regularising the use of all other unmanaged fishings. The multiplicity and even uncertainty of ownership effectively rules out obtaining a protection order for the area.

What has been achieved in the Forth DSFB may well set a precedent for other parts of the country. A lively discussion followed which covered many aspects of the ownership and management of fishings.

### 5 MINUTES OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2021

These were approved on the proposal of OMcL, seconded by RP.

It was noted that the agreed submission on the regulation of finfish aquaculture had been submitted.

Publication of the report on avian predators and the review of stocking policy have been delayed due to Covid and reduced staffing.

## 6 SANA Ltd and ANGLING SCOTLAND Ltd

Discussions on the relationship between SANA and ASL are marking time in anticipation of the outcome of meetings, whether virtual or face to face, early next year. ASL plan an online seminar on 22 January. A SANA AGM is flagged up for the last Sunday in February. Some features of ASL going forward can only be provisionally settled on 22 January since the decisions of SANA at its February AGM will not be known. Where will eligibility, eg for Sniffle competitions, arise is an example of the issues to be debated. An important unknown factor is whether any public funding of angling representative bodies or body from MS or sportScotland will be forthcoming.

## 7 WILD SALMON STRATEGY

CC reported that he was encouraged by the positivity of the group discussions. The expectation is that before the end of 2021 the strategy will be published. This will lay out the overall current position and the pressures on salmon that must be addressed. Next year, the resulting implementation measures will be spelled out and, importantly, how progress on these will be measured. To neatly express what the ambition should be for salmon numbers in our rivers is a challenge.

## 8 NASCO

NASCO is holding a webinar on 14 and 15 December to discuss the salmon fishery at Greenland in 2021 and the progress of the latest modifications made to its management, monitoring, control and surveillance. It is important to bear in mind that this is a subsistence fishery, for internal use, subject to an annual quota and sales to processing factories and exporting of the catches are banned. At the heart of the discussions are international concerns about how the agreed quota came to be substantially exceeded (by >30%) in 2021 despite the new management plan.

## 9 Catches in 2021 and their publication.

During 2021 almost all rivers suffered lengthy periods of low flow and the consequent depressed catches. Fleeting increased flows did result in brief decent catches and when plenty rain fell in the final few weeks of most fishing seasons there were some impressive flurries of catches. Perhaps the year's catch of salmon for the country will be around the average of recent years.

An appeal to the Information Commissioner regarding the interpretation by MS of personal data protection regulations was successful. Consequently when the catch figures reported to MS for 2021 are published they will return to being given for each SFD and in addition for each 'river' for which catches are used in determining the categories for these 'rivers'.

## 10 FMS

JP noted highlights from the November AGM of FMS.

## 11 AOCB

The Scottish Beaver Forum believes that a more strategic and forward looking approach would be beneficial. This would support the aspirations and address the concerns of everyone with an interest in beaver presence. The Scottish Government also announced a revised beaver policy on 24th November and referred to the development of such a strategy.

A National Strategy Organising Group has been set up and CC, (for SANA), was invited to join the group. Alternatives for an organisation are allowed. Meetings over five days before early March are planned. The group's output will be 'Beavers in Scotland : A National Strategy'.

The MFC members present and JT were unanimous that CC accept the invitation.

Although differing views were expressed it was agreed that the stance of most Scottish anglers would be to oppose any introduction of beavers to any part of Scotland except under conditions of close containment.

It may be that the storms Arwen and Barra have wrecked salmon farm sea water cages in Ireland. And what about in Western Scotland?

## 12 Date of next MFC meeting.

At the next MFC meeting the committee office bearers will be elected. CC is prepared to continue in the chair. AW, while remaining on the committee, explained why he no longer wished to continue in the vice-chair. OMcL indicated that he was happy to take on the position.

The next MFC meeting was set for Sunday 27 March. All being well, face to face and in Kinross.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.