

MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE  
Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 26 September 2021, at 10.30am on Zoom

Present:- Messrs Campbell, McLennan, Picken, Pirie, Stephen, Walker and Wight. Also attending were J Twaddle, chairman of the NMFC, and Antje Branding of Marine Scotland.

1 CHAIRMAN:- CC welcomed members and invitees.

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs McKay and Balfour.

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:- CC indicated that his former employment would have presented conflicts when discussing the item on agricultural policy in Scotland.

4 MINUTES OF 20 JUNE 2021:- CC proposed that they be approved with the addition of a note regarding ASL. This was to clarify that the comments on ASL's status appeared well founded at the time of the meeting but had subsequently been disproved. David Ogg is still in post as ASL Chairman and the organisation has a full complement of directors. This was agreed.

5(i) SANA Ltd and ASL.

CC reported that J Twaddle had convened a board meeting of SANA Ltd. Directors have been appointed and SANA Ltd is effectively up and running having been brought back from the brink. Instrumental in achieving this have been J Twaddle and Andrew McIntosh, former administrator, who has voluntarily assisted in putting the accounts in order and getting the necessary documentation to Companies House. CC is not a director of SANA Ltd but for the present continues to be involved in board affairs.

D Ogg remains as chairman of ASL and ASL has a secretary and a finance officer. The secretary, Gus Brindle, contributed to getting the SANA Ltd board back on its feet. ASL is healthily active but presently does not have an income stream of its own.

5(ii) Avian predators on fish.

The report from MSS is still in preparation.

5(iii) Regulation of the finfish aquaculture sector.

Prof Griggs has been appointed to chair a committee to review the regulation of aquaculture. The resulting report is eagerly awaited. In some quarters this is regarded as kicking the can not only further down the road but completely out of sight.

5(iv) Wild Salmon Strategy Group.

Its next meeting is tomorrow, 27 September. CC will attend. AB indicated that past short staffing had delayed progress on several initiatives.

As a footnote to this subject, the Nationalist and Green parties do not have field sports identified in their collaborative agreement at Holyrood.

5(v) Review of Scotgov policy on salmon stocking.

One of the delayed issues but on the agenda of the WSSG meeting.

5(vi) Scotgov consultation on Agricultural Transition in Scotland.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is 17 November. Its preamble includes 'Following on from the period of simplicity and stability we are moving forward to put in place a successor to the Common Agriculture Policy that will guide farming, food production and land use for many years to come.'. In our submission to the River Basin Management consultation we raised the impact of agriculture on the aquatic environment and consequently on fish. Forestry, increasingly becoming an adjunct in farming, is another influence on water quality and the pattern of run off. This consultation allows us to address other sections of Scotgov on land use impacts on fisheries. There is scope for increased forestry in Scotland but from the fisheries stance it must be the right type of trees in the right places. The fisheries minister, M Gougeon, on a recent visit to Glen Clova, said all the right things regarding farming and forestry.

Drawing on the River Basin Management response, it was agreed that CC should draft a response to the consultation. The NMFC will be involved in finalising the submission and ASL may wish to endorse.

6 NASCO

AW reported that the full set of papers tabled at the 2021 annual meeting are now on the NASCO website. AB indicated that member countries are expected to submit their revised implementation plans by the end of November. With the UK now an individual member of NASCO, rather than as part of the EU, its stance is no longer constrained by being part of an EU delegation.

The 2022 NASCO annual meeting will take place in Edinburgh.

7 Catches in 2020 and this year

In May details of the catches reported to MSS were released. These give monthly figures and continue using the areas which were first used for the 2019 figures. Prior to 2019 the 109 salmon fishery districts were the areas used for grouping catch figures. In order not to infringe data protection legislation regarding personal data many of the smaller neighbouring SFDs were combined or added to a neighbouring SFD. This gave 56 new reporting areas some matching with single SFDs. This change from 109 to 56 areas upset a few as it destroyed continuity of data onwards from the run of figures from 1952 to 2018. To partially appease the few, two files were released which for 2020 gave monthly figures for 64 of the 109 SFDs and 93 of the 173 areas to which a category is assigned.

For 2020 the reported catch of salmon plus grilse was 45,366 while that of sea trout was 13,313. 93.3% of the salmon plus grilse and 88.2% of the sea trout were returned. Observing covid precautions, particularly during the first half of the 2020 season, meant that angling effort was reduced. In setting categories for 2022 which are partially based on catches during 2020 MSS analysed catches in earlier years and suggested that with normal angling effort a further 22%, or 10,000, of salmon plus grilse would have been landed. The 45,366 with the added estimate is larger than or comparable to any of the 2014 to 2019 reported catches and those of several years around the millennium.

Commercial netting in Scotland is now minimal. The only operation of note is on the Tweed where during 2020 292 salmon, 496 grilse and 419 sea trout were taken. Anglers on the river kept 523 salmon, 320 grilse and 508 sea trout.

This year, members reported that lengthy periods of low flows had impacted on angling effort and success. When rain fell in quantity there had been decent sport for those on the river banks. Whether a late flurry in catches awaits those fishing during the final weeks remains to be seen. All the pointers are to a continuing pattern of most salmon and grilse arriving on the coast from late spring to early autumn, depending on what you regard as autumn.

#### 8 FMS

FMS continues to expand the range of information and alerts which it circulates. Much appreciated by members.

#### 9 AOCB

Noted that the Scottish national electro fishing program, started in 2017 but cancelled for 2020, was funded again during 2021 and will continue during 2022.

10 The next meeting of the MFC was set for Sunday 12 December. The intention is that it will be in person at Kinross.