**LOCHABER DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

 **2013 ANNUAL REPORT**

The annual report summarises the work of the Lochaber DSFB in 2013, particularly with regard to the delivery of its statutory functions, powers and responsibilities.

**Membership**

**Clerk** – Jon Gibb, Fuaim Na Mara, Curtaig, Morar, Invernesshire, PH40 4PD.

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**Board Members**

Michael Mann (Chairman) Lochy

James Semple Shiel

Alan Kennedy Ardtornish Estate

Angus Kelly Lochiel Estate

Iain Donnelly Angling Club Rep

David Gunn Angling Club Rep

Kim Malcolm Netting Representative, Cuil Bay

John Veitch Lochy

David Stewart-Howitt Moidart

Grace Henderson Morar

Tom Leslie Ailort

**Lochaber Trust Representative** Dr Diane Baum

**Board Advisors**

Fraser Symonds SNH

Allan Henderson Highland Council

Kenneth Knott Forestry Commission

Bob Younger Fish Legal

**Catches**

Catches of migratory fish were generally depressed in 2013 on all rivers and lochs in Lochaber.

The River Lochy reported a 30% decline on the previous year’s total, with a particular lack of 1sw grilse for the 3rd year running. A promising spring run of MSW salmon was followed by 3 months of drought which did not help catches. Runs of late summer and autumn fish were poor.

Cuil Bay netting station reported poor conditions for net fishing and catches were poor.

The Shiel system had a lacklustre salmon season but the headlines went to the very large trout (up to 21lbs) that were being caught in the loch. While some anglers were calling these ‘sea trout’, it was felt that some of these fish could be trout that have been moved from underneath the cages following the removal of the Dalilea fish farm last year.

The River Aline was very poor with only half a dozen salmon caught. There appeared to be more juvenile trout present than in recent years.

The Rivers Nevis, Coe, Leven, Ailort and Moidart all reported poor numbers of salmon and grilse

Loch Morar had an average year for salmon with some good sea trout reported to be present in very good condition.

**Conservation Policy**

The 2009 conservation policy of the Board was altered in 2012 to accommodate the refusal of Cuil Bay netting station interests to adhere to the previously agreed 5 year policy. A new policy was drawn up that was agreed by all net and rod fishing interests in the region and this was operational in 2013 -

**“All fisheries in Lochaber must continue to operate 100% catch and release until 15th June, however Cuil Bay netting station may operate from 1st May but must release all wild hen salmon and all sea trout until 15th June. Only one bag net can be used until 15th June. A record of all killed and released fish caught within this period must be forwarded to the Fishery Board by the end of June each year. All killed fish throughout the year should be tagged in the usual fashion with an individually marked 'S MacLachlan' tag to identify them as legally caught and an indication should be given to the Fishery Board at the start of every season as to the main outlets where fish are being sold in order to assist the bailiffing of poached fish from the region. Identification of adipose fin clipped fish should continue and the totals, with weights and dates caught, must be reported by 31st August each year to the Fishery Board.”**

The ability for netting stations to sign up to an agreement not to net for 5 years at all in return for a 100% reduction in levy remained open. During the year another station – Keil House – signed up to this arrangement.

**Fisheries Protection and Bailiffs**

The Board issued issued 18 water bailiff warrants in 2013. One new bailiff passed the exam in the spring and one left fisheries employment, both in the Morar catchment. One candidate from the Moidart catchment is taking the exam in March 2014.

All bailiffs have been issued with a new hard plastic warrant card with a hologram and ID photograph. These new cards will be valid for 5 years.

Two poaching cases were successfully prosecuted in Fort William Sheriff Court in 2013 – both took place in the Lochy catchment and both resulted in large fines. The water bailiffs involved should be commended as without alert patrolling and accurate reporting neither prosecution would have been possible. Another case is due to be heard in Fort William Sheriff Court in March 2014.

**National consultation responses**

Responses to the following national consultations were sent by the Board in 2013, the details of which are available from the Clerk on request –

* ASFB input sought on the DSFB’s new Code of Good Practice
* Coire Glas planning application being handled by Scottish Ministers
* 2nd round Water Framework Directive RBMP, consulted by ASFB

**Local consultation responses**

Responses to the following local consultations and development applications were sent by the Board in 2013, the details of which are available from the Clerk on request –

* Planning application new feed barge and pen layout Marine Harvest Loch Lochy
* Planning application tidal power array Marine Harvest Isle of Muck farm
* Ongoing fish farm review process to provide permanent planning permission – responses given to applications from the Lismore North, Fishnish and Fiunray sites.
* Achnasaul Allt Dubh hydro (Loch Arkaig, Lochiel Estates)
* Allt Na Criche hydro ( River Ailort, P Berradelli)
* River Arkaig, Archimedes turbine proposal (Lochiel Estates).
* Upper and Lower Suilaig hydros (Loch Eil, Fassfern Estate).
* Dubh Lighe hydro(Fassfern Estate)
* Annat Farm hydro (Corpach, community scheme)
* Allt Nan Caillach hydro ( Strontian Community Company)
* Allt Aracabi and Cheanna Mhuir hydros ( Loch Arkaig, Lochiel Estate)
* Drimnin House hydro
* BEAR Scotland contact re bankside repairs on roadside at Loch Lochy
* Transport Scotland Allt Dearg replacement (Loch Eilt)
* Contacted for comment on proposed engineering works on the railway bridge at the bottom of the River Lochy.

The following consultations were sent to the relevant sub Board or management group for responses - Ardtornish Long term forest plan; River Shiel Moss Road, Acharacle; Loch Eilt road bridge replacements; Dalilea hydro Loch Shiel. The Lochaber Fishery Trust was also asked for their advice on several of the above applications.

**Representation at meetings**

The Board attended and participated in the following meetings in 2013-

* Morar and Shiel sub Boards and the River Lochy Association
* Scottish Government Rural Affairs Committee site visit to Drimsallie Hatchery
* SEPA meeting with reference Coire Glas pumped storage scheme and operational issues at Mucomir power station
* Scottish and Southern Energy – operation of Mucomir
* Several meetings with RAFTS/ASFB to discuss potential Scottish Aquaculture Research funding for local sea lice experiment using the Lochy smolt programme
* Several meetings with regards The Managing Interactions Project
* Linnhe/Lorne AMA meeting
* Several meetings with Marine Harvest to discuss local operational matters
* Crown Estate – new process to improve wild/farmed fish relations
* Several site visits to proposed local small scale hydros

**Stocking consents**

Stocking applications for the following catchments were approved in 2013 – Lochy, Shiel, Conaglen, Ardtornish, Strontian, Fionn Lighe, Ailort, Inverie and Kingairloch.

A letter has recently been circulated to all fishery proprietors and managers who intend to undertake any form of stocking in 2014. It clearly states that any introduction of artificially reared fish must have a clear evidence-based objective and sufficient means to monitor the success of any stocking activity. Specifically, applicants have been informed of the following –

Parties seeking consent to collect wild brood-stock, rear their progeny and release them into a freshwater river or loch system must –

* **Apply to Scottish Ministers for a licence to collect wild broodstock if such an activity is planned after 31st October *(it is illegal not to have this licence in your possession before collecting broodstock);***
* **Specify the origin of the fish from which stock will be taken;**
* **Where those fish will subsequently be released and at what life stage;**
* **Provide evidence to support the need for artificial intervention and demonstrate that the stock and carrying capacity is sub optimal. This should include evaluation of any negative effects on existing wild fish populations;**
* **Provide an evidence base to clearly state anticipated outcomes from the programme;**
* **Provide a description as to how the effectiveness of the action will be monitored;**
* **Taking account of brood-stock removal, demonstrate that sufficient numbers of adult fish are left to support natural production from that area;**
* **Record mortalities (including loss of adult brood-stock, and ova and fry from hatchery);**
* **Report on the outcome – what was the measured effect by monitoring the outcome?**

**Priorities for 2014**

The Lochaber DSFB will continue to undertake its statutory function using all of the available powers wherever necessary to protect and enhance migratory fish in the Lochaber region. The Board will also work closely with the Scottish Government’s review of freshwater fisheries management due to take place in 2014 in order to secure improvements to the delivery of this function.

The Board will continue to aim to keep levy as low as possible to deliver this function and the aim of this is for proprietors to invest locally in the research and management of their fisheries through their local sub Boards and management groups. The Board will continue to support this practical management of the fisheries while offering a central administrative facility (for instance in the issue of bailiff warrants, stocking consents etc).

The Board will continue to engage with all processes for the improvement of migratorty fish and these will likely include negotiations with the fish farming industry, the Scottish Government, the hydro-electric industry and local fishery interests. The Board will also continue to work closely with the biologists at the Lochaber Fisheries Trust.

**Complaints to the Board**

There were no complaints received by the Board in 2013. The complaints procedure is available on the Board’s website.

**Good Governance compliance**

Meetings

The annual meeting of qualified proprietors was held on 26th September 2013 at the Alexandra Hotel, Fort William. This meeting was publicised on the Board’s website and a copy of the notice was sent to the Scottish Government. One member of the public chose to attend. The minutes from this meeting can be viewed on the Board’s website.

The annual public meeting for 2014 will be held on 21st March 2014 at the Alexandra Hotel Fort William at 10am. This meeting has been publicised by means of the Board website.

Annual Report and Accounts

This annual report will be published on the Board’s website and a copy sent to Scottish Government on 23rd March 2014.

The accounts for 2013 are published on the Board’s website and a copy will be sent to Scottish Government on 23rd March 2014.

Complaints

The Board has set up and maintains a complaints procedure which can be viewed on the Board’s website. This has been sent to the Scottish Government. Details on the number of complaints and how they were disposed of are included above.

Members’ interests

The register of members’ interests is available from the Clerk on request. We have included a standing item at each Board meeting inviting Board members to declare new/amend existing interests and all such instances are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.