**LOCHABER DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

 **2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

The annual report summarises the work of the Lochaber DSFB in 2014, 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 fairly disappointing in 2014 on all rivers and lochs in Lochaber, but once again the picture was very mixed.

The River Lochy reported a 25% decline on the 5 year average for salmon and grilse but sea trout catches were the best in 40 years (this was thought to be due to a combination of better lice control on Loch Linnhe fish farms and more anglers fishing for sea trout). For the 4th year running a lack of 1sw grilse depressed overall numbers and conditions (low water and unprecedented high water temperatures) made catches lower than the stock of fish in the river might suggest.

Cuil Bay netting station reported a poor grilse run as well. Sandy McLachlan released 9 hen salmon in the month of May under the Conservation Agreement.

The Shiel system had a very late season with most of the fishing after August. One bank of the river reported a similar amount of fish to last year (which was an average year) whereas the other side, which is far more lightly fished, reported a very poor year for catches.

The River Aline was very poor again similar to last year. Conditions would not have helped this very ‘spatey’ river.

The Rivers Coe, Ailort and Moidart all reported poor numbers of salmon and grilse (again these are spate rivers that suffer in a dry year) whereas the River Leven (which benefits from an artificial flow from ALCAN) did surprisingly well.

Loch Morar had an average year for salmon whereas the river suffered through a lack of summer rainfall.

**Conservation Policy**

The following local conservation policy was operational in 2014 -

**“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. There were no applicants to the scheme in 2014.

**Fisheries Protection and Bailiffs**

There were 18 warranted bailiffs currently working on both a paid full-time and voluntary basis in the region in 2014. All have now been issued with the new style plastic ID cards which are valid for 5 years.

One bailiff card was removed in 2014 due to a police complaint about the individual.

Two candidates are expected to take the bailiff exam in March 2015, one from the Morar catchment and one from the Loch Arkaig catchment.

There were no prosecutions of fishery crime in 2014 but 2 cases (both for illegal rod fishing) ended with Fiscal warnings. Only one netting incident was reported to the Clerk in 2014 – a very large net that was lifted from the mouth of the River Lochy in June.

**National consultation responses**

Responses to the following national consultations were sent by the Board in 2014, the details of which are available from the Clerk on request –

* ASFB input sought on the Fisheries Review to formulate their response
* ASFB economic benefit from fisheries survey
* Presented LDSFB response to the Fisheries Review.
* Liaised with Icelandic and Norwegian river interest about an alliance surrounding aquaculture expansion and shared knowledge

**Local consultation responses**

The following local consultations and development applications were dealt with by the Board in 2014, the details of which are available from the Clerk on request –

* Loch Eil Outward Bound hydro
* River Arkaig Archimedes screw turbine scheme
* Concerns to SEPA about cumulative impacts of several hydro schemes in a single catchment, with reference to Loch Arkaig and Loch Shiel
* 3 mini hydros at Roshven
* 2 hydro proposals above Monessie Falls near Loch Treig
* Pre application consultation on small scheme in Glencoe
* Rio Tinto scheme on the River Cour (above impassable limit)
* A scheme to the east of Aonach Mhor (above impassable limit)
* Hydro scheme on the River Kiachnish (Three Mile Water)
* MHS application for 4 new pens at Loch Arkaig (no increase in biomass)
* Forwarded an oyster farm application to Shiel sub Board with some brief comments
* Retrospective planning application for Invasion Bay fish farm in Loch Sunart
* MHS application for a new fish farm at Maclean’s Nose near Kilchoan (the Board are involved in ongoing discussions with MHS, SNH and Highland Council about this application).
* An application by Hjaltland for a 2000t site in Loch Slapin in Skye – the Board objected and were pleased to see that the Highland Council rejected the application
* An application by Scottish Seafarms to expand the Nevis C fish farm – the Board objected and also forwarded the application to Morar and Knoydart interests.
* Several consultations about bridge works/improvements on the Glenfinnan to Lochailort road down the side of Loch Eilt. (The Fishery Trust are currently making their own responses on these applications and are advising the contractors/applicants. The Board are being kept informed of these discussions).
* WFD consultation on next RBMP plan
* Distributed information to regional proprietors and managers about current national legislation surrounding catch and release and future proposals

**Representation at meetings**

The Board attended and participated in the following meetings in 2014-

* Morar sub Board and the River Lochy Association
* Meeting with Marine Scotland to discuss fish counters on the River Lochy
* Marine Scotland Science and SSPO meeting to discuss possible research work on aquaculture in the Loch Linnhe area
* Managing Interactions Project meeting
* Linnhe/Lorne AMA meeting
* SEPA meeting with reference Coire Glas pumped storage scheme and operational issues at Mucomir power station
* Several meetings with Marine Harvest to discuss local operational matters
* Crown Estate – meetings to discuss a new Management Pilot Initiative
* Meeting with SSE and contractors to discuss cabling under the River Lochy
* Meeting with Rio Tinto to discuss River Lochy and RT Tailrace issues
* Several site visits to proposed local small scale hydros
* Dealt with SEPA and SSE about unacceptable eel deaths at the Mucomir turbine on the River Lochy
* Met with SEPA to discuss siltation issues on Loch Arkaig hydros

**Stocking consents**

Stocking applications for the following catchments were approved in 2014 – Lochy, Shiel, Conaglen, Ardtornish, Strontian, Fionn Lighe, Ailort, Inverie and Kingairloch.

Many of these applications involved giving direct technical advice. 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 net wild broodstock if such an activity is planned after 31st October *(it is illegal not to have this licence in your possession before netting 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 adapt to any changes that are brought about through any new Fisheries Legislation due to the ongoing Fisheries Review, and will be stressing the importance of retaining such core functions as fisheries protection and enhancement in any future management structures.

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 migratory 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 was one complaint received by the Board in 2014. This was concerning the removal of a bailiff warrant. The complaint was dealt with in compliance with the Board’s complaints procedure.

**Good Governance compliance**

Meetings

The annual meeting of qualified proprietors was held on 2nd October 2014 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. The minutes from this meeting can be viewed on the Board’s website.

The annual public meeting for 2015 will be held on 12th March 2015 at the Alexandra Hotel Fort William at 10am. This meeting has been publicised by means of the Board website and all local angling clubs have been informed.

Annual Report and Accounts

This annual report will be published on the Board’s website and a copy sent to Scottish Government on 13th March 2015

The accounts for 2014 are published on the Board’s website and a copy will be sent to Scottish Government on 13th 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.