

From: Scottish Anglers National Association, 28 January 2009

To: Mixed Stock Fisheries Working Group

MSFWG0904

MIXED STOCK FISHERIES – SANA POSITION PAPER

1. The Scottish Anglers National Association (SANA) is the officially recognized sports governing body for game fishing in Scotland. Adequate populations of fish in Scottish fresh waters are a necessary precondition for our members' recreational and sports activity.

Summary

2. In summary, the SANA position is:
 - Any Mixed Stock Fishery (MSF) has the potential to put at risk migratory fish populations. That risk is realised if it removes so many fish that there is inadequate numbers of breeding stock to maintain a fish population.
 - Given the now very high level of catch-and-release being undertaken by anglers in Scotland, angling is unlikely to pose a risk to fish populations.
 - Therefore, the potentially critical MSFs are those undertaken by estuary and coastal nets. The catches of both should be further investigated to determine whether they take significant and damaging numbers of fish from vulnerable stocks/populations.
 - In the meantime, wherever existing information justifies action, close seasons should be adjusted and/or quotas imposed on MSFs to limit further damage to vulnerable stocks, especially stocks of sea trout and spring salmon.
 - As a particular priority, publicly owned MSFs should cease.

Background

3. SANA recognises that the rod and line fishery has become a relatively larger component of Scottish migratory fish catches (see paragraph 7, below). This follows severe curtailment of the fixed engine and net and coble fisheries in recent years. The fundamentals of the situation are that a fish in a rod and line fishery may or may not be caught but it has value as quarry and, if caught, is not necessarily killed. A fish caught in a net fishery is killed and is not available to the rod and line fishery. Further, a rod fishery is inherently inefficient and of the small proportion captured, a high proportion is returned. Therefore, it is most unlikely that angling in a river/loch can have a detrimental impact on specific fish populations let alone stocks of other catchments.

4. SANA acknowledges netting stations as heritable property of owners, often families with a long history of harvesting sustainable surpluses and with a shared interest with anglers in ensuring a continuing harvest. We also accept the principle that valid roles can be performed by professional net fisheries – providing supplies to the food chain, generating information about salmon/sea trout runs, discouraging other predators and displacing/preventing illegal netting activity. However, netting practices should continue to be regulated to ensure adequate escapement.
5. A peculiarity of the current situation is that some publicly owned net fisheries remain. For these, we believe human rights considerations regarding heritable property do not apply. [Confirmation has been sought.] Given that the economic value of fish in freshwater salmon and trout fisheries greatly exceeds that of a fish killed in a publicly owned net fishery, and that compensation would not be payable for their removal, we see no justification for their continued existence.

Angling and Netting Impacts on Wild Stocks

6. There appears to be little knowledge of which stocks are impacted by the remaining net MSFs. If a fixed and small proportion of all stocks were equally impacted, there would be less cause for concern than if the harvest was concentrated on a few stocks, or on a few populations within each stock. The opportunity to know more properly about what is going on seems to lie with genetic identification of populations. The first half of such knowledge has already started from analysis of fin clips from certain in-river samples. As a matter of urgency, it would be prudent to start identification of MSF catches.
7. In the meantime, our principal guide must be conventional catch statistics. The adopted definition of stocks, consistent with NASCO guidelines, is that the sum of populations of different fish in a single catchment represents a stock. Therefore, out of river fisheries are MSFs. In river fisheries (net and coble and rod and line) are multiple stock fisheries to the extent that vagrant fish may be captured, viz. salmon and sea trout entering a non-natal catchment.
8. To deal first with the potential of rod and line fisheries as exploiters of multiple salmon stocks, consider the following harvested fish numbers. [Table below] It is clear that nets are not at all significant exploiters of early spring fish (up to end April). Therefore the onus for conservation of early running populations has fallen on the rod and line fishery which has a combination of voluntary and mandatory obligations to return spring fish, usually defined in terms of up to end May or end June. Whether nets are having a significant effect in May and June should be investigated by the Working Group. If FRS can produce January to April figures, presumably May and June figures can also be made available to the Group. *FRS supply monthly figures to DSFB employees e.g. for the recent Dee stock review. Also, FRS has used such figures in a number of leaflets/reports. The end April split estimates numbers of nSW fish and nSW+ fish where n is 2 or more.*

9. As regards sea trout, the very large catch in North East of England nets must be a continuing cause for concern for the Scottish east coast rivers. Genetic typing of Scottish sea trout and analysis of fish from the 3 North of England net fisheries would be useful. As regards the in-Scotland capture of sea trout, some focus is required on the net and coble fishery. Sea trout are expected to visit estuaries of non-natal rivers during their sea-feeding periods. The significant places of net capture in 2007 were Tweed, South Esk, North Esk/Bervie, Annan and Ugie. *Ugie was more prominent in previous years.*

Numbers of fish killed in 2007

	Rod and Line	Nets	Total	Nets as % of total
Whole season salmon and grilse catch, landed and kept in 2007	35,581 – net of 61% release rate	19,897	55,478	36%
Jan-April salmon catch, landed and kept in 2007	1,151 - net of 74% release rate	86	1,237	7%
Post April Salmon and Grilse catch in 2007	34,430	19,811	54,241	37%
Whole season sea trout catch, landed and kept in 2007	10,383 - net of 52% release rate	5,574 – of which 2,299 in Tweed and 53% captured by net and coble overall *	15,957	35%

*Source: FRS Note that the nets' capture of fish in the 2008 season is likely to have been markedly lower, following closure of the Strathy and North Esk netting stations. * The 2007 North East England drift, T and J nets' capture of sea trout was 17,566 with a reported average weight of over 4lbs (2.01 kg). A portion may be Tweed and Forth fish.*