

Atlantic Salmon Trust



Honorary Scientific Advisory Panel Meeting held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on 16th April 2009

Special meeting to discuss a national strategy for research and restoration of sea trout stocks throughout the British Isles and Ireland.

AGENDA

0900 to 0930 Opening address – *How well have we done since 2004?*

0930 to 1000 Five minute summaries of ongoing work

1000 to 1100

1. Improvements in the acquisition of catch data and stock data
2. Improvements in managing sea trout stocks using biological reference points
3. Update on the role of stocking and enhancement

1100 Coffee

11.30 to 1300

4. The role which genetics might play in managing sea trout stocks
5. Sea trout as a sentinel species for the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive, national biodiversity obligations
6. Update on sea lice control and sea trout stock status along the west coasts of Scotland and Ireland

1300 Lunch

1400 to 1500 Items 7 and 8

7. Understanding the marine life of sea trout
8. The communications challenge – discussion of possible next steps (setting up of a sea trout web portal for anglers, managers and scientists?, follow up workshop?, 2011 symposium ?)

1500 Close

Notes taken by Ivor Llewelyn.

The summaries of ongoing work took up most of the morning. There were descriptions/progress reports on the 3 inter-reg projects: Celtic Sea Trout (Nigel Milner), Living North Sea (Alistair Maltby), AARC (Dylan Bright), and reports from Ron Campbell (Tweed) and Marcus Walters(?). John Armstrong described current work by Marine Scotland and Neil Auchterlonie by the Environment Agency. David Mckie stressed the need for action on the West Coast. In response to a question by John Solbe about other pressures on sea trout Graeme Harris mentioned cypermethrin sheep dips, Andy Moore climate change and I referred to the impact of agriculture (sedimentation, water quality) in Southern England. Key issues that arose (and were reflected in Ken Whelan's list) are the need for research at sea in the North Sea, with a meeting involving sea fish interests in the various Government research labs and depts; the need for a sea trout portal, with links to other sites such as the EA database; and the need for a set of index rivers for sea trout.

We then covered the remaining items on the agenda.

On 1 (catch data), Ken raised the problem of long range interception of sea trout, citing catches off the Loire which were virtually uncontrolled. There was an international dimension to this which made co-operation with other countries, agencies etc essential.

On 2, Neil Auchterlonie said that he EA were working on the development of biological reference points for sea trout. Andy Walker said that sex ratios, which varies considerably between stocks, would be a critical component of any reference point developed for a particular stock.

On 3, Simon Johnson referred us to the WTT document on stocking, which was on their website. Alistair Maltby suggested that the AST might take the lead in spreading information on best practice on stock enhancement. Ken said that

more work was needed on the genetic component of individual stocks. (4), and suggested that it would be useful to get key experts together to design the necessary research.

There was agreement, but no discussion, of the sentinel role of sea trout (5), and then an update on the sea lice situation (6)

It was agreed that (7) - the marine life of sea trout - had already been effectively covered, and (8) was dealt with as part of Ken's summary of the key issues and proposed actions. I am sure you have a full list of these, so I won't repeat them

In discussion a couple of points emerged. Both the Living North Sea and Celtic Sea Trout proposals include funding for the establishment of interactive portals. Also Eric Verspoor referred us to Community Action funding under Framework 7. This could be used to support co-operation between EU projects and partners. However, the funding was for a set period only.

Finally, we agreed in the margins that the small steering group Ken proposed should comprise Andy Walker, Nigel Milner, Alistair Maltby, Brian Sheilds, Graeme Harris you and me. I asked Neil Auchterlonie if he was happy for Brian to do this; he was, so do you want me to approach Brian. I think everyone else has been asked.

Summary of points from notes taken by Neil McKerrow:

1 Marine Survival

Develop discussion and establish mechanism by which salmon and sea trout can be integrated as part of wider pelagic trawls –ie equipment, training, procedures (rather than dedicated cruise surveys)

2 Information Pieces

A) Agreed that important as part of case for restoration to publish catch records as part of move towards greater consistency of data, collated on a national basis. Ideally, would include foreign catches and international components, covering effect of long distance migrants. May need liaison group established.

B) Best practice on stocking –consider an (Atlantic Salmon Trust) Policy covering risks and benefits of stocking programmes, bearing in mind that arguments can be polarised and situation complex. Possible

reproduction/update of Andy Ferguson pamphlet, and Burrishoole info also volunteered to be available.

- 3 Develop arguments and rationale for sea trout as sentinel species to be included in national biodiversity obligations as environmental 'aquatic canary'. Needs a ready reckoner as to how to assess and promote as a critical bio-indicator. This would lead to sea trout being listed as a priority species.
Needs clear statement of role, reasons, and advice why sea trout are a sentinel species. (This will open up potential sources of funding).
Importance of community benefits of species restoration.
- 4 Develop inventory of indexed rivers for (salmon and) sea trout –go through anglers Groups who are keen to help, and establish robust stats for selected rivers and work up.
- 5 Attempt genetic mapping of sea trout –a collective effort to identify individual stocks, leading to advice/guidance. Consider putting in place an experiment –if only to demonstrate complexity. (NB Burrishoole has major tracking record of environment/ecology and run/spawning timings.)
- 6 Establish support/umbrella sponsoring group to coordinate, communicate, and champion sea trout works –Atlantic Salmon Trust? To include Atlantic Salmon Trust portal covering reports, research, seeking partnerships, with linkages eg Bangor, Aberdeen, ART, EA.

Other Points noted

- 1 General recognition of importance of JW's Restoration report being widely published into the public domain.
- 2 Can the Atlantic Salmon Trust help by defining what is meant by 'sustainability' when it comes to aquaculture?