

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTTISH FRESHWATER FISHERIES

REVIEW OF STATISTICAL BULLETIN GROUP

MINUTES OF THE 1st MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 27 APRIL 2009 - SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT LOCAL OFFICE, STRATHEARN HOUSE, BROXDEN, PERTH

In Attendance

Louise Donnelly (Chair)	Marine Scotland
Andrew Dailly	Marine Scotland, Secretariat
Jackie Anderson	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)
Tony Andrews	Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST)
John Pirie	Scottish Anglers National Association (SANA)
Willie Shearer	Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland (SNFAS)
Gordon Smith	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)
Andrew Wallace	Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) & the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB)

Apologies

Alistair Duguid	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
-----------------	---

Introduction and Terms of Reference

1. LD welcomed everyone to the meeting and all attendees introduced themselves.
2. LD informed the meeting that the MSS reporting of salmon and sea trout catch statistics will remain the same this year as previous years.
3. JP requested clarification on the disclosure of the proceedings of the review group. The group agreed to publish papers submitted to it and agreed minutes on the SG website and include this in its terms of reference.
4. LD informed the meeting that Marine Scotland will consult with its communications, economists and analytical services colleagues during this review to assist the work of the group.
5. Discussion took place on what organisations collected catch statistics. JP stated that SANA does not collect any catch information. TA stated that AST is very interested in Marine survival and collects information from a variety of sources e.g. internationally and from the Salsea Merge Project. TA stressed the importance of MSS dataset but would wish it to be produced in real time. WS stated that SNFAS does not collect any catch information.

6. AW stated that all DSFBs can now collect catch statistics as a result of ‘The Conservation of Salmon (Collection of Catch Statistics) (Scotland) Regulations 2006’. The main challenge on reporting is with the return of forms from owners and lessees. The key components of information on catch statistics the ASFB has an interest in is 1) the national level, 2) the regional level, 3) the catchment level and 4) spring v summer.

7. ASFB would like to see the inclusion of rod effort data reported in the bulletin and also make use of counter data. AW also stated that if the review group are to look at data at the management unit level then there will be a need to consider if the information is commercially confidential.

8. TA expressed a view on the information provided in the bulletin on ‘rod per day’ and stated this doesn’t really inform anything as it is more dependant on the skill of the angler.

9. WS stated that when the statistical bulletin was first published net fisheries caught the bulk of the catch. In more recent years this is no longer the case as most fish are now caught by angling. Thus, for a number of reasons there is a need to review the categories into which catches are recorded, e.g. monitoring and ageing net catches showed that the bulk of the spring component of the catch was caught before 1 May each year. On this basis it was agreed to publish salmon catches in two groups January to April and May to December which have since been used to determine spring and summer salmon catches. It would now seem sensible to change the grouping to January to May and June to December but it may require some monitoring of rod catches before taking this decision.

10. WS continued to state that the results from monitoring the net catches showed that netsmen divided catches into salmon and grilse with a high degree of accuracy when both sea age groups were present in the fishery. Therefore recording catches as salmon and grilse was meaningful and useful. A more accurate breakdown into salmon and grilse, when both sea age groups are present in catches, could now be obtained by recording salmon catches according to the weight of the individual fish caught, e.g. less than 3.5kg, 3.5 – 6.5kg and over 6.5kg. The SNFAS would support this change.

11. WS informed the group that SNH may have juvenile data on SAC rivers which could be used for future reporting.

12. GS stated that if some hydro-counter data was to be included in the review Alistair Stephen (SSE/IFM) may be able to advise the review group on this aspect.

13. LD informed the meeting that Marine Scotland will discuss the work / proceedings of the review group with David Bassett (BTA), Simon McKelvey (Conon DSFB/IFM) and Alistair Stephen (SSE/IFM).

14. As a separate issue TA informed that group that the Celtic sea trout project got the go ahead as did the North Sea project (a 1.2€million EC funded project).

Marine Scotland Science paper

15. GS gave an introduction to the MSS paper. The main change over the last few years is that an interpretation of stock status based largely on fishery data is now included.

16. GS stated that the review group have to make a decision on whether to make the bulletin as detailed as the information that is collected. The bulletin is being produced for a reducing number of stakeholders and by far the majority of work the Laboratory at Montrose undertakes comes from ad-hoc requests for information.

17. There was discussion on the production and distribution of the bulletin becoming web based. This would allow all those returning catch forms on their fisheries to be sent the bulletin electronically. This has never happened previously. Such developments would require resources and specialist database developer time. There is currently no provision within Marine Scotland Science programme for such a development

18. There was discussion on trying to reach synergy between the issue of the bulletin and the catch form leaflet. At the moment these are issued at the start and end of September respectively. Also discussed the possibility of producing some form of overall highlights annual catch data on a 2 sided leaflet.

19. GS explained the situation with regards to data protection on personal information, when it is disclosed and should not be given to a third party and only used for the purpose of which it is intended.

20. GS informed the meeting that any information MSS has collected can be disclosed subject to the Data Protection Act. More information on data protection and FOI is in the MSS paper.

Next steps

21. It was recognised that there is duplication of effort with MSS and DSFBs issuing catch return forms. It was agreed the MSS and ASFB will initially hold discussions with the Tay, Spey, Dee and Tweed and one west coast DSFB on sharing data, catch return forms and include discussion on effort of rod and line data.

22. MSS will enquire about the scope for system development. This could be a recommendation that could come from the review group.

23. The question of whether the bulletin will include data on other species in the future will be dependent on what information is available and can be reported etc. GS pointed out that this will have implications regarding the current format of the bulletin and other resource issues.

24. Group agreed to move towards a predominately web based publication for the catch statistics. Also look at publishing a 2/3 page key headlines leaflet similar to that of the Environment Agency.

Next meeting

25. The next meeting will be held at 10.30am on 22 June at Strathearn House, Broxden, Perth.

Agreed actions:

- **TA agreed to report back to the review group on relevant aspects of the Celtic sea trout and North Sea projects.**
- **MSS will make contact Alastair Stephen (SSE/IFM), Simon McKelvey (Conon DSFB/IFM) and relevant DSFBs regarding counter data.**
- **Marine Scotland policy will hold discussions separately with BTA, SFCA and ASSF.**
- **Marine Scotland will hold discussions internally on Introductions for possible inclusion in the Statistical Bulletin.**
- **Marine Scotland will hold discussions with Drew Jamieson (Founder member of Consultative Committee on Protection Orders / ex Chair of Scottish branch of IFM) for views on the Statistical Bulletin.**
- **MSS and ASFB agreed to hold discussions outside the review group and report back at its next meeting on proposals to include effort data on the catch return forms.**