

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

Annual Report 2016



Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

The Clubhouse

106 Biggar Road

Edinburgh

EH10 7DU

Website: <http://www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ForthDistrictSalmonFisheryBoard/>

Twitter - @ForthDSFB

December 2016





Table of Contents

Members 2016.....	4
Chairman's Foreword	5
Catch Returns.....	7
Protecting Fish Stocks	8
Conservation Regulations.....	8
River Forth Fisheries Trust	10
Generally	10
Data collection and monitoring	11
Easing Obstructions to Fish Migration	14
Pollution and other water quality issues	14
Bailiff Duties and Protection	15
Governance	16
Annual Accounts	17
Looking forward.....	19



Forth District Salmon Fishery Board Members 2016

Fen Howieson (Chairman) (Mandated: Cambusmore)	Aly Dickson (Lanrick)
Fiona Simpson (Mandated: Crown Estates)	Tony Cameron (Leny)
Craig Gardner (Mandated: Stirling Council) (until 23 rd May 2016)	Joe McGarvie (Tenant Netsmen Rep) (until 23 rd May 2016)
Scott Mason (Mandated: Stirling Council) (from 23 rd May 2016)	John McKenzie (Mandated: Allan Water Angling & Improvement Association) (from 23 rd May 2016)
Roy Robertson (Anglers' Rep) (until 23 rd May 2016)	George Mackintosh (Anglers' Rep) (until 23 rd May 2016)
Scott Nisbet (Anglers' Rep) (until 23 rd May 2016)	Chris Thomas (Anglers' Rep) (from 23 rd August)
Robert Baird (Anglers' Rep) (from 23 rd August)	Jason Walls (Anglers Rep) (from 23 rd August)

Clerk to the Board: Alison Baker
Superintendent: Lee Fisher

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board
The Clubhouse
106 Biggar Road
Edinburgh
EH10 7DU

Website: <http://www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb>

Finance: William Anderson
c/o Managed Estates
1 Springkerse Road, Stirling, FK7 7SN

Accountants: Douglas Home & Co
47-49 The Square, Kelso
Roxburghshire, TD5 7HW

River Forth Fisheries Trust

Directors 2015

Fen Howieson (Chairman)
Aly Dickson
Jamie Muir
Angus Watson

Dennis Toon
Mike Baillie-Hamilton
Graeme Hedger

Trust Manager: Alison Baker
Senior Biologist: Jo Girvan
Biologist: Sylvian Barry
Project Development Officer: Jonathan Louis
Allan Water Improvement Project Officer: Lawrence Belleni
Forth Invasive Non Native Species Project Officer: Amy Fergusson
Trossachs Water Vole Project officer (seconded to Forestry Commission): Ryan Greenwood
Ecologist/Morphologist: Tommy McDermott
Financial & Office Manager: Jo Bussell Bruce
Plus RiverLife: Almond & Avon Project Team

Website: <http://www.fishforth.co.uk/rfft>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/RiverForthFisheriesTrust/>

Twitter - @ForthFishTrust

Chairman's Foreword

2016 has been a year of consolidation. Work has continued to put in place procedures and policies to ensure that the Board operates as effectively as possible to manage its limited resources. Managed Estate continue to do a great job at collecting the assessments and managing the accounts. The FDSFB office has formally moved to the The Clubhouse on Biggar Road on the outskirts of Edinburgh and the enforcement staff (both employed and voluntary) are getting more support from the office staff there. Alison and her team continue to support the Board and its work, both directly and via the Trust and they have now also moved to a larger office to accommodate the growing number of staff.

There were some changes to the Board in May with the Triennial Elections. The Board thanks Joe McGarvie, George Macintosh, Scott Nisbet, Craig Gardner and Roy Robertson for their time and input during the last three years. And we welcome John Mckenzie, Chris Thomas, Jason Walls, Scott Mason and Robert Baird and look forward to working with them in the future. We should not however forget those that were reelected and continue to support the work of the Board – Fiona Simpson, Aly Dickson and Tony Cameron.

The Wild Fisheries Reform rumbles on – much work is being done behind the scene but it was a shame the legislation was not included in the 2016/17 parliamentary session. Input on working groups continues to ensure that the Forth District continues to feed positively into the changes. Changes are also in discussion to the sectors representative organisations (Association of Salmon Fishery Boards and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland) to ensure there is unity of representation. And the Board continues to discuss the road towards being a Fisheries Management Organisation and the changes required to all species fisheries management.

In the meantime, the Scottish Government's Conservation Limits have been updated and whilst it is good to see the river-by-river assessment, problems and mistakes have been made on the current proposals and this is taking time and representation by the Clerk and Senior Biologist to resolve. The importance of data collection and management and its use in determining the health of our rivers continues to be debated with the Conservation Limits and other aims of the Wild Fisheries Reform. The extent and robustness of the data collection and its use is high on the agenda. The options available to the Forth has been limited in the past due to resources but alternatives are now being reviewed in light of the potential requirements of the Conservation Limits and WFR.

The work that the Board's Superintendent, Lee Fisher and his team have been undertaking this year is beginning to show some success. With the pilot Tyne/Esk team working well, Lee (with assistance from David Graham) has been working diligently in the estuary area to set up networks of intelligence and prevention work. The enforcement team now have been enhanced with Jonathan Louis working with them to provide coordination, training and other office support, allowing the bailiffs on the ground to get on with what they do best.

The Board continues to support the Trust which is now the largest Fisheries Trust in Scotland. Closer links are being forged with new methods of communication between the Board and Trust teams, as well as being in the same office. For the Trust, this has been yet another year of growth with the successful funding of the RiverLife: Almond & Avon project. With that project, three catchments now have dedicated projects and staff. This is not only seeing works being delivered on the ground but is allowing the core fisheries management work to be developed further. The turnover of the RFFT for 2015-16 was just under £1m – not a bad investment for the Board's £60k!

It was good to see that despite the lack of (and then overabundance!) of water at the end of last season that the catches across the District remained steady last year. At the time of writing, we have not got the catch returns in for 2016, but there are good reports from most rivers so hopefully these will manifest themselves in some good numbers. Catches across Scotland remain poor in places and there are



rumours of a lack of a back-end run in some rivers (most particularly the Tweed). The issue of marine survival continues to cause concern. It is important that, whilst it is difficult for us to influence what happens at sea, we ensure the best habitat and conditions for all returning salmon possible given much of the issues and pressures across the District.

The categorisation of the District under the 2016 Conservation Limits did cause some legitimate concerns particularly between adjacent rivers with different categories. The Board has been working closely with some of these rivers to try and assist with the declining membership numbers. The Crown Estate Commissioners have provided some financial help to those rivers that have Crown leases and Scottish Government has provided funding to FishPal to assist clubs on category 3 rivers. The Clerk continues to submit fishing reports to Trout & Salmon on behalf of those owners and clubs who wish to be included and the feedback is that these reports have raised awareness of the quality and amount of fishing opportunities in the District. Work will continue over the winter to work towards the opening of the 2017 season.

Fen Howieson
Chairman

October 2016

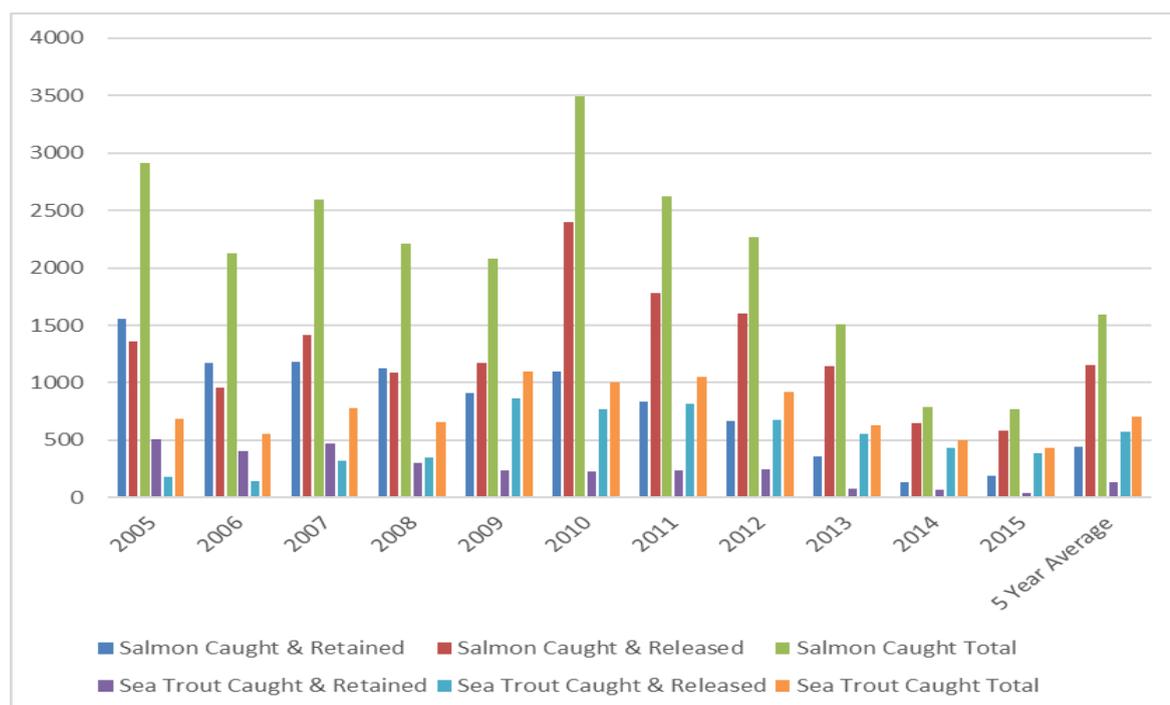
Catch Returns

The Forth DSFB has chosen again to use the statistics provided by Marine Scotland to display the catches across the District. There are some differences between the returns submitted to FDSFB and Marine Scotland so this has been done for the sake of consistency. Discussions are ongoing dealing with areas of disparity.

2015 produced similar returns as 2014 which bearing in mind there was low water conditions until the very last week of the season and then a deluge, this inspires some confidence that had the fishing conditions been better the catches would have shown an improvement from the previous year. The pattern in the Forth closely follows the catches across Scotland. The Forth seems to have (despite some rumour to the contrary) fairly stable angling effort unlike some rivers, but further work is required.

There is however a downturn in terms of the 5 year average with the loss of the 2010 results and the 5 year average is now at the same level as the late 1990s.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5 Year Average
Salmon Caught & Retained	1175	1184	1122	910	1096	837	668	362	138	187	438
Salmon Caught & Released	953	1414	1089	1170	2399	1783	1601	1144	652	586	1153
Salmon Caught Total	2128	2598	2211	2080	3495	2620	2269	1506	790	773	1592
Sea Trout Caught & Retained	405	467	305	234	227	236	243	80	67	39	133
Sea Trout Caught & Released	146	317	351	860	773	816	676	552	433	391	574
Sea Trout Caught Total	551	784	656	1094	1000	1052	919	632	500	430	707





There are indications that Season 2016 has been a better year, if not with actual catches certainly a higher level of angling taking place on many rivers. With many of the District catch and release due to category 3 status, the proprietors within the Teith SAC have continued to encourage catch and release and Stirling Council have reduced the number of tags and restricted day ticket sales. We hope therefore that the levels of returned fish will have been maintained within the SAC which is after all a Special Area of Conservation!

The submission of catch returns is a legal requirement from all proprietors and as the Conservation Limits are based on the catches returned it is important that all proprietors complete and submit their catch return form.

Protecting Fish Stocks

Conservation Regulations

The Board only issued one conservation code last year and that was for the Teith SAC as all other areas were catch and release as required under *The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016*. The *Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations 2014* continued to be in force making the killing of a salmon before 1 April an offence. The 2016 Regulations caused a number of issues in some parts of the District and the Clerk and Trust staff have been working with those areas affected to help where possible. The Trust Biologist now sits on the Marine Scotland & Local Biologist Liaison Group (MSLBLG) which is part of ongoing liaison to both refine the data used and develop the models for the determination of the Conservation Limits. This has been very valuable however there is still some way to go particularly on the issues of practicalities and management of what is a theoretical assessment. The base of all the assessments is the catch return so we would urge everyone to ensure that their return is made.

The *Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2017* have been assessed on a river-by-river basis and after some discussions with Marine Scotland Science the following was proposed based on the three categories below. The limits attempt to assess the ability of the river to sustain salmon populations but there are some fundamental issues with the model; it is based on catches (which do not reflect angling effort); habitat use (which do not reflect condition of the habitat) and presence or absence rivers (or part of rivers) (which do not reflect strength or density of population present). Also to note is that the assessment assumes that any local management interventions (eg FDSFB Conservation Codes) are continued.

Category	Probability of Meeting CL	Effectively CL Met in:	Advice
1	At least 80%	4 out of 5 years	Exploitation is sustainable therefore no additional management action is currently required. This recognises the effectiveness of existing non-statutory local management interventions.
2	60-80%	3 out of 5 years	Management action is necessary to reduce exploitation; mandatory catch and release will not be required in the first instance, but this will be reviewed annually.
3	Less than 60%	≤ 2 out of 5 years	Exploitation is unsustainable therefore management actions required to reduce exploitation for 1 year i.e. mandatory catch and release (all methods).

Not all rivers in the District were assessed separately, those rivers which have not submitted a catch return have been assessed on a District basis. The consultation was issued without any prior consultation

with either FDSFB or RFFT and both errors and management issues have arisen, these are being dealt with by the Clerk and Senior Biologist.

River	Proposed Category	FDSFB Comments
River Leven	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Code
River Tyne	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Code
River Almond	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Code
River Avon	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Code
River Carron	Category 1	FDSFB & Larbert & Stenhousemuir Angling Club have disputed the accuracy of the assessment.
Teith SAC	Category 1	FDSFB have disputed the assessment as the SAC is in 'unfavourable condition' according to SNH and requested further justification
River Forth*	Category 1	FDSFB has disputed this as the catches and areas have been calculated incorrectly

* - The area and maps issued for the consultation showed only the River Forth (but not its main tributary the Teith), but we were verbally informed that the Forth was deemed to include all parts of the Forth/Teith SAC, Allan and Devon together with the Estuary to some point adjacent to Kincardine Bridge. If so then the area had been substantially under calculated. The rationale for the inclusion of the Devon and Estuary areas has also been queried. FDSFB requested that the Devon be assessed separately.

Marine Scotland re-ran the models for the Carron, Forth/Teith/Allan and the Devon. The finalised Conservation Limits which were laid before parliament in respect of the Forth were as follows:

River	Category	River	Category
River Leven	Category 3	Teith SAC	Category 1
River Tyne	Category 3	River Forth*	Category 2
River Almond	Category 3	Allan Water	Category 2
River Avon	Category 3	River Devon	Category 3
River Carron	Category 2	District (including Estuary)	Category 3

Netting for Atlantic salmon continues to be prohibited for coastal nets for 3 years – to protect mixed stock fisheries. Netting for salmon is therefore prohibited in the Forth coastal waters (i.e. all areas within the Firth below the Forth Rail Bridge). The status of the Forth estuary has been categorised as part as the Districtwide assessment and continues to be Category 3.

Following on from the confirmation of the Conservation Limits, FDSFB (following advice from RFFT and in discussion with proprietors and clubs/associations) has issued Conservation Codes which can be found on the FDSFB website under reports.

The Board continues to aim to achieve 100% catch and release of spring salmon across the District and continues to include within any conservation code the return of all fish caught before 1st June and will continue to do so. This year a target catch & release percentage has been included and this will form part of the monitoring at the end of the next season. The Forth is still a recovering fishery with many pressures both historic and current and it is the responsibility of all to ensure that it is handed over to the next generation in good condition.

River Forth Fisheries Trust

Generally

The Board continues to financially support the RFFT by way of a donation. This again was £60,000 and for 2016 it looks like RFFT have increased this investment many times over (2015/16 turnover: c£950k; 2016/17 turnover projection £650k). In 2016, the Trust has been involved in the following:

- Monitoring and scientific data gathering by electrofishing and habitat surveys to inform management policy and plans – >100 sites surveyed
- Updating catchment and individual river system fisheries management plans. Fully engaged in the process of establishing a new system of Scotland-wide catchment plan templates as part of the Wild Fisheries Reform with staff sitting on a number of Marine Scotland/Fisheries Trust Working Groups.
- Continue working relationships with statutory bodies, government agencies, communities and fishery proprietors / organisations across the District together with relevant funding partners to support implementation of projects arising from management plans.
- Positively engaging in the process of change from Wild Fisheries Reform to ensure that there is the best available outcome for the Forth District.
- Provide technical advice on policy and operational matters.
- Through targeted educational programmes raise awareness of the water environment and its wellbeing within the catchment.
- Review and respond to consultations (planning etc.) and pollution incidents providing advice and training as may be necessary, at both national and local level.

The Trust continues to manage and develop a number of catchment wide programmes of work funded by SEPA Water Environment Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, SNH, Scottish Government and other local funders. These are:

- Allan Water Improvement Project – Integrated catchment management and works to address issues such as flooding, barriers, INNS, etc. Including peatland restoration, woodland creation and barrier assessments. (Main funder: Scottish Government, SNH, SEPA WEF and FCS) (Budget: 2015 £90k; 2016 £40k)
- RiverLife: Almond & Avon – 7 major restoration projects and associated community works, education, training and awareness raising. Now entering a delivery phase of 4 years (Main funders: Scottish Government, SEPA WEF, City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council and Heritage Lottery Fund) (Overall budget: £6.7m: 2016 £1.03m; 2017 £1.675m; 2018 £1.68m; 2019 £1.5m; 2020 £0.83m)
- Forth Invasive Non Native Species Programme (phase 4) – continuing the work of previous phases with a combination of contractor and volunteer control of INNS on priority rivers. (Main funders: SNH, SEPA WEF, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, Falkirk Environment Trust, LandTrust.) (Budget: 2015 £45k; 2016 £43k)
- Midlothian Esks Barrier Easement Project – easement of currently impassable barriers throughout the catchment. Unfortunately, due to changes in SEPA WEF funding this project has not progressed. The Trust is still in dialogue with SEPA WEF over its future.
- Headwaters (or Fish in the Park) – a collaborative project with Loch Lomond & Trossachs Countryside Trust, Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, Argyll Fisheries Trust and Tay DFSB. In development this project aims to deliver within the National Park improvements to habitat and development of angling and other engagement. (Main funders: Various TBA.)

The Trust also responds to statutory, formal and informal consultations from Scottish Government, SEPA, Forestry Commission, Network Rail, Local Authorities, Scottish Water and SSE. The process of dealing with these plus ongoing liaison with agencies, local authorities and statutory energy suppliers, as well as local groups and stakeholders, allows the Trust to influence works being undertaken which affect our

rivers and also contribute to policy and decision making.

The Trust also continues to work with schools across the District delivering Fish in the Class and INNS activities, which are always very popular. Further partnerships are being developed with tertiary educational organisations within and beyond the District including Stirling, Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier Universities, Rivers and Lochs Institute and Inverness College, who are supporting a number of projects ranging from genetics to project monitoring to training provision.

Data collection and monitoring

(Report by Dr Joanna Girvan, Senior Biologist and Sylvian Barry, Biologist for RFFT)

Electrofishing for juveniles has long been one of our most useful and feasible methods of collecting field data for fisheries management, and as usual, we have surveyed upwards of 100 sites this season (see electrofishing report below). However, in addition to electrofishing, the Trust is looking at the best ways to provide effective data collection on other life stages of the fish species e.g. adult stock levels and smolt output. This is part of the process to work toward Wild Fisheries Reform and best practice. The following types of data collection and monitoring are either in process or in development:

Adult fish counters

One of the most useful measures we can know is how many adult fish are entering a river system. This type of data would determine accurate stock levels and enable very precise conservation limit setting. Often, the nearest comparator to this is derived from rod catches, which have historically been related to fish stocks. This measure is still being used to inform conservation limit setting in the absence of better data, but is recognized as being inherently flawed but the best (or only) data that is available.

The ideal scenario would be to have a fish counter located near the mouth of the river system or tributary being managed. This is incredibly difficult and expensive, and could even result in detriment to the salmon and sea trout populations by reducing accessibility. Fish must be channeled through a narrow gap such as a fish pass in order to be counted. This requires a structure like a weir to be present or specially built across the channel. Since fish passes seldom work as effectively as planned, it is out of the question to start building structures purely for this purpose. The best we can do is locate one within an existing structure (whose situation may not be ideal) and modify it, if this is feasible. Even then, the fish counters themselves, and the additional engineering that may be required to house them, are very expensive.

Until March 2016, there were no fish counters anywhere in the Forth District. An opportunity presented itself to install one on Fankerton Weir as a hydro company were installing an Alaskan fish pass as part of their scheme. This season, all being well, we will have the opportunity to count fish entering the previously inaccessible Carron Glen. This will give us valuable – and directly measured – data on fish numbers and patterns of recolonization. Following recolonization ¹, we may be able to use this data to estimate total population size. Two further fish counters are planned for the River Almond, one on a weir near the mouth and one on the uppermost main stem barrier. These will not only enable us to estimate fish stocks on the river, but also track the extent to which barrier easements give fish greater accessibility to spawning habitat throughout the whole system.

Ideally, we would like to be able to count fish entering all our major river systems and major spawning tributaries, in particular, the River Teith. The most likely barrier where a counter could be located on the Teith is Lanrick Weir, but there would be high costs involved to create an appropriate housing structure and to modify the weir so that all fish pass through it. This would have to be done without reducing the overall passability of the structure, and so would have to be designed very carefully. The Trust has made

¹ Recolonisation may take some time. It may be counted as the point at which the upstream spawning habitat is as fully utilized as possible, with young produced in that reach returning there to spawn.

various attempts to raise funds to address this problem, but funding that can be used for this purpose is difficult to find and currently remains elusive.

Smolt traps

Smolt traps can be used on smaller rivers to count young fish moving downstream on their seaward migration. Measuring smolt output allows an estimate of the productivity of a tributary or river system to be made. This year, we built a very basic wooden smolt trap and put it to use for a slightly different purpose – to find evidence (or otherwise) of smolts in the River Almond being directed into the Union Canal instead of finding their way to the Estuary. We didn't find any smolts in the canal feeder sluice this year, and so the trap was not really tested. Options are being explored for a placement next year in one of the spawning tributaries of the Teith, but we would have to have a clear reason for doing so as the trap must be checked every day and so is resource intensive. Ideally, we would have a rotary screw trap (a more effective type of trap) that we could deploy on a spawning tributary such as the Calair Burn. There are ongoing questions regarding the Calair Burn relating to adult accessibility and habitat destruction reducing productivity and survival upstream that a rotary screw trap would help find evidence to enable these issues to be addressed.

Genetic analysis

Our genetic sampling programme has been ongoing for two seasons now. We have been collecting scales from adult salmon on the Forth, Teith, Devon and Allan Water to compare against a juvenile baseline. This is to determine the level of straying between the four river systems, and will lead onto a further project to determine the number of adult spawners involved in producing a juvenile population. This will help us understand the minimum and optimum number of adults required to produce a sustainable population and could also help us track recolonization of areas as we ease passage across barriers. Initially, we asked anglers to collect scale samples from rod caught adults for us, and there was good uptake, especially on the Allan Water. Less scales have been provided by the Forth anglers and on the Devon few fish have been caught and so this Autumn we will be electrofishing pools to obtain adult salmon directly.

Electrofishing Report 2016

The Trust carried out over 100 electrofishing surveys during the 2016 season. The majority of these were project related, but we also included some core monitoring for fisheries management, previously unknown coastal burns together with a small number of commercial contracts involving fish rescues and monitoring renewable energy developments².

On the Allan Water, the focus this year was on spawning tributaries that have their access restricted by the A9. An array of good quality tributaries have their upper sections made inaccessible by culverts associated with this road. The same sites had been surveyed several times in previous years, but during the winter of 2015/16, higher than usual flows were recorded in the Allan Water catchment and this may have made access to the upper tributaries a little easier. The results, however, did not support this idea and indicated that few adult salmon managed to navigate the culverts even with the higher flows. The highest salmon fry density found anywhere in the Forth District this year was recorded on the Muckle Burn with 210 fry/100m². (Part funded by the Allan Water Improvement Project – Scottish Government)

Electrofishing was carried out to support our Loch Ore (Leven) project. We assessed salmonid habitat potential on the spawning tributaries and followed this up with electrofishing to see if brown trout are established here. We found many pressures on the tributaries, but despite this, the tributaries were good enough to support some extensive pockets of trout. We are investigating whether this could help support a self-sustaining loch population of brown trout or contribute to management interventions to promote

² Where electrofishing has been funded or part funded by specific projects or funders this has been acknowledged, otherwise the work was funded through the Trust general funds)



this outcome. (Funded by Loch Ore – Towards a sustainable fishery project - SportScotland & Fife Council)

On the River Devon, electrofishing was carried out to see if the two new/improved fish passes (on the main stem and on the Dollar Burn) had led to greater salmon productivity upstream. As with Fankerton Weir, we found no change upstream as yet (following only one winter season since fish passage was improved) and hope that the expected improvements will come with time. Surveying was also repeated on the River Devon upstream of Fossaway as part of ongoing monitoring of the very slow brown trout recovery following the fish kill event at Castlehill Reservoir in 2011.

The Trust has received confirmation of funding for two EU Funded Environment Cooperation Action Fund projects starting this Autumn has been confirmed, and electrofishing has been being carried out this season to support both of them and establish baseline data for monitoring the anticipated habitat improvements. One of the projects will improve habitat for Freshwater Pearl Mussels in the upper Teith while the other will restore a spawning tributary of the River Tyne (the Bearford Burn). 15 sites were surveyed in these two areas.

Further sites on the River Tyne were surveyed in a repeat of the 2013 survey. The main negative impacts were again highlighted as being the array of partially passable weirs on the main stem. In 2013, salmon were found on the Humbie Water tributary, but this year the uppermost salmon was found a good distance downstream of this on the main stem below Haddington. On the River Esk, the electrofishing results were similarly disappointing with fewer fish (particularly salmon) caught this year than last year.

Discussions with other Trusts have revealed lower than expected densities of salmon fry being found in some areas. Our initial electrofishing results appeared to agree with this, but on further analysis, no significant drop in salmon fry densities could be found in the data. Rivers where we have the best salmonid habitat and a decent level of spawning have densities equivalent to previous years, and it's only on our sub optimal rivers e.g. the Tyne and Esk that the results have been so disappointing this year. Warm temperatures have been mooted as a possible cause of decline in other areas (e.g. the River Usk, Wales), as well higher than usual flow events causing washout of redds (e.g. the River Tweed). If a decline in production caused by these factors is under way in other areas, it is something that we will need to have an awareness of as it will have implications for our future habitat restoration activities. We will need to ensure that we have a strong enough focus on climate change mitigation.

Commercial surveys

Following on from three previous surveys at Blacklaw Wind Farm site, we repeated the surveys this summer at six sites on the upper River Almond and Clyde. The purpose of this was to assess the impact of the ongoing work on the burn downstream, especially riverbed siltation, which was evident at several sites. There was also a fish rescue carried out on the Thornton Burn where Scottish and Southern Energy required to dry out 100m of riverbed to build a new crossing for power lines to Torness power station. As part of an ongoing monitoring programme commissioned by TLS Hydro, we also surveyed 12 sites on the River Carron, three of which were upstream of the new fish pass at Fankerton Weir. We did not find any juvenile salmon upstream this year. It may take time for enough salmon to reach the newly accessible section to allow juveniles to be picked up by the survey. (Funded via commercial contracts).

Coastal Burns

In the past, we have only surveyed a small number of coastal burns, and generally our knowledge of the character of such burns in the District is limited. We need to increase our knowledge of these so we can respond more decisively to consultations on developments impacting upon them, so this season, we surveyed 17 sites on nine of small coastal rivers. Trusts in other areas report highly productive coastal burns, particularly for sea trout, but these surveys really highlighted the heavy impact of human activities on small burns in our District. Many instances of siltation, morphological alteration, poor water quality

and restricted access were evident. We found brown trout in low densities, eel, flounder and stone loach, but no juvenile salmon were caught.

Easing Obstructions to Fish Migration

This continues to be a priority across the District. Opportunities for repairs and improvements are considered and where funding can be raised, then works are proposed. In some cases, the Trust will pursue via the CAR licensing review route. CAR licensing issues have been raised formally with SEPA for the following: Ashfield Weir (Allan), the Tyne Barriers (including Knowes), Belhaven Weir (Biel). Freedom of Information requests have been made for the Tyne on abstractions as well as impoundments as well as for Ashfield Weir. Meetings have been had with SEPA in respect of the Tyne issues and Ashfield Weir.

The SEPA WEF programme has unfortunately slowed down and at the time of writing this we await SEPA's confirmation of their funding priorities. The following barriers are still within the River Basin Management Plan 2016-2021 (RBMP2) for easement by 2021 including Midlothian Esks (13), Almond (7), Tyne (10), Avon (1), Leven (8), Bannockburn (2), Allan (6), other coastal burns (7). We are also working with the Crown Estates on the opening up of the salmon fishing rights and will be working with local anglers and others to provide support to new clubs etc. where possible.

Dialogue is progressing with SEPA and Transport Scotland for works to the A9 culverts as part of the requirements for the licensing of barriers in public ownership, this will hopefully lead onto works being undertaken in other parts of the District.

In the meantime, commitments have been made for funding for the easement of the 7 barriers on the Almond which will be delivered via the RiverLife: Almond & Avon Project. This funding will come from Scottish Government via City of Edinburgh and West Lothian Councils. This work would open up approximately 407 km of new habitat.

The success of the installation of the fish counter at Fankerton and the knowledge gained will hopefully lead to the consideration of counters in other parts of the District to monitor returning fish. Further work is required on the possible funding streams available.

Pollution and other water quality issues

Freedom of information request have been made in relation to water quality issues on the Almond and Avon. A number of pollution events have been reported in during the year both by Trust staff and by local stakeholders. As part of the Bailiff training being developed, they will receive training on how to identify a pollution event and how to report it. This way we should be able get events reported more efficiently, get better results and see action taken.

Unfortunately, there was a diesel spill at Deanston Distillery and due to the nature of the spill some seepage may continue for some time. This is still being monitored.

The Trust continues to work with FishLegal in respect of the pollution of the River Devon in 2011 by Scottish Water releasing a solution containing 96% Sulphuric Acid into the river at Castlehill Reservoir. Although Scottish Water have admitted releasing the acid they are fighting the local angling club Devon Angling Association on a number of legal and technical matters. The Trust Biologist continues to support FishLegal and the Association however it is somewhat unbelievable that the continued 'fight' by Scottish Water can be in the interest of the public as the amount being recovered must have been spent in legal fees alone many times. It is likely that this will end up in court sometime in 2017.

Bailiff Duties and Protection

(Report by FDSFB Superintendent, Lee Fisher)

During the last year work has been going on to set up an area-by-area taskforce to assist the Superintendent coordinate the works across the District. In 2016 the Tyne/Esk Bailiffing Group has been established and is working with local clubs, owners and small local businesses. They have been undertaking day/night patrols, surveillance and intelligence gathering as well as visiting local outlets to raise awareness of the law in regards to the buying and selling of illegal salmon and sea trout. The group has worked well and we are very grateful for the time and effort these bailiffs spend on the river to protect the Esk/Tyne. Thank you.

In the rest of the District, other initiatives have been started with a real effort to outreach to local landowners, farmers and anglers to increase the intelligence picture and database of what's happening within the district. This could be anything from fish movement to angler movement, land access (very important from a surveillance point of view) and of course any illegal activities have been observed. This has proved difficult to start with due to previous relationships with the board but when it's explained that we are an extra set of eyes on the land and we are there to help we have found that everyone we spoke to was willing to help and for that we are very grateful. We would particularly like to thank Bailiff David Graham at this point without his contacts in the farming community and his consistent work throughout the year a lot of these contacts would have been out of reach.

This year an effort was made to contact Marine Scotland Enforcement to deliver a more coordinated approach to the estuary with intelligence sharing and shared use of resources. During the past year various equipment has been confiscated from around the coastal and estuary area to prevent illegal netting and any other illegal fishing activities. With fish numbers pulsing into the system this year, this area of the Forth district needs constant monitoring and intensive bailiffing to protect the running fish. Other enforcement agencies which we are working with throughout the District are SSPCA investigations branch, Police Scotland and Coast Guard which all enhance the protection of the District.

There are still difficulties with enforcing the legislation across a District the size of the Forth and this has been raised again with Scottish Government. This is particularly in respect of new regulations and working towards Wild Fisheries Reform.

Continual work to set up more dedicated groups of bailiffs as well as other initiatives in training and bailiff development continues. We are consistently on the lookout for anyone who would like to join our bailiff team and if interested please speak to a member of the board staff. The board is looking to train 10 new honorary (voluntary) bailiffs this year to enhance the protection Team.

I would like to thank all the anglers, clubs, ghillies, beat owners and agencies who without constant communication within the Forth District the superintendent's job would be a lot harder to administer.



Governance

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner. As part of this the Forth DSFB voluntarily adheres to the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) Code of Good Practice. A copy of the code can be found at the ASFB website (www.asfb.org.uk/publications).

This section of the report details how the Forth DSFB meets the terms of the reporting requirements:

Meetings

The Forth DSFB holds meetings on an approximately quarterly basis at various locations throughout the District. All meetings are open to the public and are advertised on the Boards website (www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb). The subsequent minutes of these meetings are also published on the website.

Complaints

The 2013 Act requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to establish a formal complaints procedure. A copy of the complaints procedure is available on the Boards website. There have been 0 complaints received to date during 2016.

Declaration of Interests

All members of the Forth DSFB are asked to complete and keep up to date a declaration of interests relevant to their position on the Board. The most up to date register is available by request to the Clerk of the Board.

The Forth DSFB registered as a data controller with the Information Commissioner on 15th July 2014.

Equal Opportunities and Disclosure

The Board produced their Equal Opportunities and Disclosure statements, which again are available on the Boards website.

It is a requirement that the Forth DSFB submits its accounts and annual report to Scottish Government. For 2015 this was completed in December 2015

Annual Accounts

Income & Expenditure For the Year End 31 March 2016

	Period to 31/03/2016		Period 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015	
Income				
Fishery assessment	136,404		145,400	
Donation	600			
Interest received	14		23	
		137,018		145,423
Expenditure				
Salaries incl NI and PAYE	11,211		21,912	
Subcontractors	15,600			
Property rent	2,854		6,256	
Vehicle/boats upkeep & travel	6,191		11,950	
Training & subsistence	450			
Other operating leases	5,067		225	
Insurance	2,728		2,467	
Taxation on interest received	3		5	
Clerk's contract costs	17,579		20,285	
Office expenses & telephone	873		772	
Donations	66,269		71,588	
Subscriptions	3,606		4,005	
General expenses	3,337		2,362	
Accountancy	1,848		1,758	
Bank charges	34		32	
Legal & professional fees			1,140	
Bad debts	160		80	
Loss on sale of tangible fixed asset	1,214			
		139,024		144,837
		(2,006)		586
Depreciation				
Plant & machinery	310		413	
Motor vehicles	140		951	
Computer equipment	154		204	
		604		1,568
NET LOSS		(2,610)		(982)

The complete statutory financial statements will be available to interested parties from the registered office of the Board, or from Managed Estates, 1 Springkerse Road, Stirling FK7 7SN.

**Balance Sheet
31st March 2016**

	Period to 31/03/2016		Period 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2015	
FIXED ASSETS				
Plant and machinery	929		1,239	
Motor vehicles			2,855	
Computer equipment	465		619	
		1,394		4,713
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors & Prepayments	3,596		4,244	
Cash at bank & in hand	97,315		95,347	
	100,911		99,591	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Creditors	3,135		2,413	
Corporation Taxation	2.80		114	
	3,138		2,527	
		97,773		97,064
NET ASSETS		99,167		101,777
FINANCED BY				
Development Reserves				32,000
CAPITAL ACCOUNT				
Brought forward			70,759	
Less				
Net loss			982	
				69,777
				101,777

Due to changes in the Accountants reporting this information is no longer contained within the accounts.

The complete statutory financial statements will be available to interested parties from the registered office of the Board or from Managed Estates, 1 Springkerse Road, Stirling FK7 7SN.

Looking forward

The Board will continue to build on the good governance and strategies now in place for continuing to strengthen the enforcement and data collection for the management for the District. The Clerk and Superintendent (together with staff from the Trust) will engage positively with Scottish Government and Marine Scotland to ensure that the Forth is supported throughout the changes ahead and the particular requirements of the District are represented.

Resourcing is always a challenge but the growth of the Trust has allowed for the Board's donation to be multiplied many times and this means that more work is being undertaken across more rivers. This includes the full range of fisheries management requirements from data collection, management plans, project delivery and regulatory issues.

Although it is disappointing that the Wild Fisheries legislation is not scheduled within this parliamentary period, the Forth must work towards the aims of the reform and ensure that it is properly represented at appropriate levels to influence the outcomes. The process will require further development of existing relationships with the Trust and other stakeholders and groups to form the new Fisheries Management Organisation and ensure it reflects both the District and the requirements of the fishery owners (proprietors).

Core funding is always an issue for the Board (and the Trust) and we must continue to ensure that it is used to make the most from the limited resource. Flexibility and ensuring that the Board and Trust take advantage of opportunities through wider engagement will continue to take place. Funding of major projects directly by the Trust is likely to reduce (excepting the delivery of the Riverlife: Almond & Avon project) due to changes in funding and the fallout from Brexit, which if nothing else has stultified the decision making process in most of the funding agencies. The Board with its partners may have to be more creative to deliver the demand of fisheries management across the District.

The development of fisheries remains an aim for the next few years, there are opportunities for the creation of new fisheries with areas being opened up to migratory species as well as working with the Crown Estate to develop those part of the District which currently are not managed. The Board and staff are developing a number of initiatives to promote both individual rivers and the District as a whole.

The enforcement team will continue to be developed, opportunities will be pursued towards the development of river networks, similar to those piloted on the Tyne & Esks, where there is local support. Training and coordination for all bailiffs will continue to develop the existing team and to support growth and development of bailiffing across the District.

The Board will continue to meet on a quarterly basis, with an Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and also public meetings, when required. Good governance is a key aim and the Board and staff will continue to work within the ASFB Code of Good Practice.

The work of the Board and the Trust within the Forth District will be promoted to raise awareness of the improvements being made. The Board will continue to work with proprietors, fishery managers and clubs and associations to assist them to promote their fisheries and ensure that the quality and quantity of the Forth District Fishery is recognized.



Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

thanks the following for their support in its work:

All Forth District Salmon Proprietors (195 Fisheries)
Fishery Managers, Ghillies, Club and Association Committee Members
The many landowners who allow access and work to be undertaken

Funders:

Scottish Government
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Natural Heritage
Heritage Lottery Fund
Falkirk Environment Trust
LandTrust
Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
Forestry Commission Scotland
Clacks & Stirling Environment Trust
Falkirk Council
Larbert & Stenhousemuir Angling Club
Communities Along the Carron Association
Falkirk Communities Trust
East Lothian Angling Association
River Avon Federation
Westquater Wildlife Group
SportScotland/Fife Council
Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership
Friends of the River Tyne
Williamston Primary School
Linlithgow Primary School

And our many volunteers who give up their time.

Clerk to the Board: Alison Baker

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board
The Clubhouse
106 Biggar Road
Edinburgh
EH10 7DU

Website – www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ForthDistrictSalmonFisheryBoard/>

Twitter - @ForthDSFB