



Advisory Note:

Salmon Stocking in Forth District

In 2014, the River And Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS) undertook a review of the scientific evidence on stocking as a management tool for Atlantic salmon and sea trout fisheries. The outcome of this review, a document entitled “Stocking of Atlantic salmon in Scotland” concluded that, not only are stocked fish poorly equipped to deal with the natural environment leading to no appreciable increase in adult returns, but that stocking (and ranching) of Atlantic salmon and sea trout presents a risk to the viability of our native fish populations. Through inbreeding between wild and stocked fish, the poor survivability of the introduced (stocked) fish is passed on to the wild fish. This is likely to be one contributing factor in the overall decline of returning adult salmon and sea trout. RAFTS has therefore proposed that there must be a “presumption against stocking practices undertaken to enhance salmon and sea trout fisheries” and that artificial stocking of these species into Scottish rivers should only be used as a last resort, when a population faces extinction.

The River Forth Fishery Trust (FFFT) has reviewed this paper and agrees with the conclusions contained within. It is evident that continued stocking of salmonids to enhance fisheries or mitigate human impacts on those fisheries is likely to lead to long term declines in wild fish numbers, and that stocking should only be used as a last resort.

We would advise therefore that The Forth District Salmon Fishery Board (FDSFB) adopt the RAFTS “Stocking of Atlantic salmon in Scotland” in full with no amendments.

Subsequently we advise that FDSFB recommends all that fishery managers should refrain from stocking waters where there is a connection with natural salmon and trout populations. We would also request that the FDSFB reminds fishery managers that stocking (and removal of adult salmon and trout for the purposes of artificial breeding), regardless of aims, is a regulated activity and should be licensed by the competent authority.

In support of this review, the RFFT is currently undertaking an audit of stocking practices and occurrences in the Forth district. We welcome input from all stakeholders, particularly those who may have, or continue to, stock freshwaters in the district. We ask that if you have any information on stocking programs that you contact Tommy McDermott at t.mcdermott@fishforth.co.uk .

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