

RIVER CREE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

THE REPORT OF THE BOARD TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS AND ALSO AT THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD – 21ST NOVEMBER 2018

This report covers the period from the 1st October 2017 to the 30th September 2018

PART ONE

This part of the report summarises what the Board have done in carrying out their statutory functions during the period and what the Board propose to do in carrying out those functions in the year ahead.

The primary duties of the Board are the protection or improvement of the fisheries within their district, the increase of salmon and the stocking of the waters of the district with salmon – Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003, section 45(1). To assist it in fulfilling those duties the Board has the benefit of the services of two fisheries trusts, Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) and The River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust (RCHHT). There are attached as appendices to this report summaries prepared by those trusts of their activities during the period and their proposals for the coming year.

In addition to the activities of the two trusts mentioned above, the Board has dealt with many other matters during the period. To a large extent, the activities of the Board appear from an examination of the minutes of all its meetings, which can be viewed on the Board's website – rivercreedistrictsalmonfisheryboard.com. The following is a brief summary.

The **Conservation Code** for the District was considered at the meeting of the Board in January 2018. It was further amended, though the Cree retained its “grade 1” status under the **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations**, meaning that salmon again could be taken during the 2018 season. It appears on the Board's website in its present form, but will be re-considered at a future meeting. It is heartening to note that the Cree is proposed to retain its “grade 1” status for the 2019 season. This is no mean achievement – the Cree will be one of only 48 rivers in Scotland (out of 173 in total) to achieve “grade 1” status.

On the 29th March 2018, after some considerable delay, SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot **fish eating birds** as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 29th March to the 30th April 2018 and permitted a maximum of 5 goosander and 4 cormorants to be killed. In the event, and partly because of the restricted licence period, the agents appointed by the Chairman only shot 3 goosander and 3 cormorants. The 2018 smolt run was delayed (as a result of the cold spring). For that reason and because of the delay in issuing the original licence, the Chairman applied for and obtained an extension licence. It was very restricted in allowing shooting into groups of male goosander only, on the main stem of the Cree, up to the 31st May. It

permitted a maximum of 2 male goosanders to be shot. In the event, none were shot. It is nevertheless intended to apply for a further licence for the forthcoming season.

At the meeting of the Board in July 2017 a sub-committee of the Board had been appointed to agree further amendments to the **River Cree Management Plan**. The sub-committee duly agreed further amendments and the current management plan (dated November 2017) can be seen on the Board's website. The management plan sets out how the Board aims to achieve its objective of protecting and enhancing stocks of migratory fish within the District and will be subject to review from time to time.

In February, Andy Johnstone resigned as **water bailiff**, reducing our tally of bailiffs to two. Jock Galloway, our head bailiff, has also intimated that he will not be re-applying to be a bailiff when his term of office expires. It is obviously of some concern to the Board that we may not be able effectively to control poaching and an appeal for "River Watchers" has been posted on the website. The hope is that any river watchers appointed will progress to become bailiffs in due course.

During the period covered by this report, the Board responded to a number of consultations. In January, a sub-committee of the Board was appointed to consider a **consultation on the Carrick Mill Woodland Creation**. Unfortunately, details of the consultation were received with insufficient time for the Board to make a considered response, so a very brief note was sent to Forestry Commission Scotland, mentioning our concerns. It is hoped that in future the Board will receive details of such consultations in sufficient time to permit it to make a considered response.

In March, on behalf of the Board, the Chairman responded to a **consultation on the protection and reintroduction of beavers**. The response indicated that the effects of any such protection and reintroduction had not adequately considered their impact on migratory fisheries and should therefore not be proceeded with.

In April, a sub-committee of the Board was appointed to respond to a **consultation by the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on salmon farming in Scotland**. The submission of the Board, relying in part on the recommendations of the ECCLR Committee of the Scottish Parliament, was to the effect that the present environmental impacts of the industry were not sustainable and further safeguards were required.

In July, a sub-committee of the Board was appointed to make a response to a Scottish Government **consultation on measures for the conservation of pike**. The response disagreed with each of the proposed conservation measures, which, if enacted, would make it impossible for the Board to protect and improve the salmon fisheries in the District.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, **Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)** had taken up an inordinate amount of the Board's time in previous years and it was pleasing to learn that the Scottish Government had abandoned plans to abolish DSFBs and

replace them with FMOs. It is also pleasing to note (despite threats to the contrary) that no **Wild Fisheries Bill** is included in the current legislative programme for the Scottish Parliament.

As also noted in last year's Annual Report, a change of constitution of **Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)**, had the effect that this umbrella organisation was no longer constitutionally capable of representing the interests of DSFBs *per se*. The Board took the view that **FMS** was no longer capable of representing the interests of the Board and has accordingly terminated its membership. There remains concern that **FMS** is supportive of reviving **WFR** notwithstanding that this would involve the abolition of the majority of its members. The **FMS** website shows **WFR** as one of its "Current Priorities".

Although outwith the period covered by this report, it is worth noting that the **triennial elections** to the Board were held on the 17th October 2018 when thirteen members were elected or co-opted to the Board. The next elections will be due before the 16th October 2021.

Generally, in the year ahead the Board intends to continue to support the two trusts in the work they do for the Board and continue to manage the waters of the district in accordance with the River Management Plan.

PART TWO – COMPLAINTS

During the year the Board received no complaints.

PART THREE – GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Board has complied with the good governance requirements in the 2003 Act, as amended by the 2013 Act, as follows. The Annual Report considered at the Annual Public Meeting on the 25th October 2017 complied with Section 46A and the meeting itself complied with Section 46B. That Report and the audited accounts were published on the Board's website and copies sent to the Scottish Ministers in accordance with Section 44(1A). The notice of the annual meeting of qualified proprietors and the annual public meeting to be held on the 21st November 2018 was publicised on the websites of the Board, GFT and RCHHT as well as on the premises of the Galloway Angling Centre. A copy was sent to the Scottish Ministers to comply with Section 46C. The other requirements of Section 46C in relation to all other meetings of the Board have been complied with by publicising the dates of meetings and publishing the minutes thereof on the Board's website.

The Board's complaints procedure is publicised on the website in accordance with Section 46D.

The Board has established a register of relevant financial interests of members of the Board (available for public inspection) in accordance with Section 46E.

In the following year the Board intends to comply with the good governance requirements by keeping its procedures under review and observing the good governance requirements as hitherto.

PART FOUR – GENERAL

The officially recorded 2017 rod catch for the Cree District was 310 salmon and grilse. The final figures for 2018 are not to hand at the time of writing but estimates point to a total in excess of 270 salmon and grilse for the season. Given the extremes of weather experienced during the season, the eventual total is satisfactory and far in excess of what seemed possible half way through the season. The start of the season coincided with the arrival of the “beast from the east”. A cold, late, spring then developed into a dry, hot summer. Water levels reduced to record lows, as did fishing effort. Some dead fish were seen in the lower river. However, once the odd spate occurred from late July onward, the fish appeared in numbers. September saw more periods of high water and was probably the peak month of the season. This is in stark contrast to the previous three seasons, when the best runs were earlier in the season. Another change from the previous few seasons was an apparent abundance of grilse.

This is the final report mentioned in section 44(1) of the 2003 Act.

Terence Flanagan

Chairman

Dated 21st November 2018

GFT WORK COMPLETED FOR THE CREE DSFB IN 2018

Glenhead Burn (flows into Loch Trool)

GFT continue to work to return a compensation flow to the upper Glenhead Burn which many years ago was diverted into Loch Dee. The Glenhead Burn needs this water returned as the burn now supports a significant juvenile salmon population but nearly dries up during dry periods. GFT have organised site visits with SEPA and provided data to show why some water needs to be returned. It is expected that it will be agreed by SEPA but it is unclear exactly when.

Cree stocking guidance document for 2018/2019

This was produced by GFT for the CDSFB and agreed through a sub-committee. Some regularly stocked sites were not stocked in 2018 (Eldrick Hill Burn / Challoch Burn) to monitor if adult fish were returning to these waters or not. Stocking has resumed as there was little evidence of any natural spawning.

Listed below is the 2018 GFT electrofishing data from the stocking sites. No concerns were raised at any of the sites regarding fish survival.

Site	Grid ref (NX)	Date	Trout fry*	Trout parr*	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*
Eldrick Hill Burn NOT STOCKED IN 2018	358914	30/8/18	8	6	2	8
Challoch Burn NOT STOCKED IN 2018	367653	4/9/18	64	12	0	12
Penkiln Burn (concrete bridge)	450721	21/8/18	14	2	30	31
Green Burn	461722	21/8/18	20	5	19	7
Pulbae Burn	454718	21/8/18	13	6	18	25
Campbells Burn	454705	21/8/18	14	13	41	14
Garlies Burn	423683	21/8/18	31	42	73	26

*fish numbers are all standardised to density per 100 m² of water (minimum densities) and rounded up.

Consultations

- GFT responded to the Scottish Government 'Regulation of felling and restocking Consultation' raising issues on riparian zone management and replanting on peatland.
- GFT responded to the 'Pike Conservation Regulations Consultation' stating rivers should have pike management options to allow control.
- GFT objected to a conifer tree planting scheme on the High Cree at Carrick Mill due to acidification concerns.
- Concerns raised by GFT to government agencies regarding plans to plant up to 15,000 ha of new trees annually in Scotland with a strong focus on SW Scotland.

High Cree

The High Cree Game Fishers have caught 5 adult salmon this season from below Barjarg in the vicinity of the limestone gravel beds. This is very encouraging and suggests the present High Cree strategy to improve water quality and return salmon is working.

Electrofishing to monitor wild fish stocks

Sites surveyed in 2018 focused on the lower River Cree and Water of Minnoch. Figures in brackets were densities found at the same site previously (in 2014 or 2015). Highlighted pink shows a drop in numbers since the previous survey and green shows fish numbers have increased. A further 4 sites were surveyed as part of the SG National Electrofishing programme, for more info see: www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Monitoring/ElectrofishingProgramme

In summary:

- On the Minnoch, stocks have remained healthy and numbers of juvenile salmon have increased at most sites between the surveys. The only concern is the lack of natural spawning at the upper two sites which could be linked to poor water quality.
- On the lower river, salmon fry have dropped significantly at two sites (Whitehills / Penninghame House), remained similar at two and more than doubled at the weir by the Suspension Bridge. Parr densities increased or remained the same at all sites.
- Four national sites fell on the Cree catchment in 2018. Only one contained salmon and this was on the lower Kirriemore Burn where extensive wild spawning occurs.

Site	Grid ref NX	Date	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*
Minnoch (upstream of Rowan Burn confluence)	358903	27/7/18	6 (14)	35 (14)
Shalloch Burn (lower)	365895	27/7/18	0 (21)	74 (16)
Minnoch (at Tarfessock)	359880	27/7/18	170 (60)	10 (4)
Minnoch (at Kirrieroch Bridge)	358866	27/7/18	106 (68)	9 (19)
Cree (by Penninghame Ho.)	385694	19/7/18	23 (45)	27 (28)
Cree (near Challoch)	387674)	19/7/18	175 (155)	10 (7)
Cree (d/s hut at Whitehills)	405668	19/7/18	33 (82)	26 (20)
Cree (u/s Suspension Bridge)	409665	20/7/18	171 (72)	49 (14)
Cree (d/s Creebridge Weir)	412656	20/7/18	50 (57)	91 (33)
Fardin Burn tributary (High Cree) – NATIONAL SITE	321871	10/9/18	0	0
Carrick Burn tributary (High Cree) – NATIONAL SITE	312766	18/9/18	0	0
Lower Kirriemore Burn (Minnoch) – NATIONAL SITE	366860	10/9/18	170	12
Thorny Burn (Minnoch) – NATIONAL SITE	367742	18/9/18	0	0

*fish numbers are all standardised to density per 100 m² of water (minimum densities) and rounded up.

American skunk cabbage

GFT undertook control work aimed at the eradication of this non-native plant species in a small burn near Glentroof. A few hundred plants were sprayed.

Water pollution incidents

GFT provided comment to SEPA regarding two pollution incidents; silt runoff from a building site into a tributary of the Challoch Burn and prolonged silt input into the upper Calgow Burn from drainage works.

Conservation Limits update

GFT continue to input to and consider implications for local fisheries regarding the setting of Conservation Limits (CL) for Salmon and categorising of salmon rivers by the Scottish Government. The model has changed again for the 2019 season with new variable egg requirements for habitats and a new methods to calculate overall stock abundance. GFT have concerns regarding some of the new changes and have made representation to Marine Scotland. GFT sit on the 'Salmon Liaison Group' which considers possible changes to the CL model and what implications it might have.

**THE RIVER CREE HATCHERY AND HABITAT TRUST
CHARITY SC042355**

During the period from the 1st October 2017 to the 30th September 2018 RCHHT carried out the following works on the catchment of the District.

HATCHERY WORKS

We started the broodstock collection on the Water of Minnoch on the 29th October and caught the last fish from the Cree on the 14th November. The Minnoch once again had a good number of fish in all the pools we electro-fished.

Minnoch 18 Hens 9 Cocks Approx 80,000 eggs

Penkiln 13 Hens 6 Cocks Approx 57,000 eggs

The River Cree brood stock collection proved difficult once again. The recent high waters delayed proceedings and again we eventually had to fish for brood fish by rod & line.

Cree 7 Hens 3 Cocks Approx 24,000 eggs

The first seven fish ready from the Minnoch were stripped on the 3rd November and the first of the eggs were eyed by the 19th of December. Hatching began on the 18th of February, nearly 2 months later than last year. This was due to a colder and prolonged winter.

Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2018

The first fry were stocked out in May and this was completed by the beginning of October. The stocking sites and approximate numbers of fry stocked were as follows:-

<u>Penkiln</u>	<u>Approx No Eggs</u>
Pulbae Burn	15000
Green Burn	5000
Campbells Burn	3000
Garlies Burn	7000
Upper Penkiln Burn	20000

Total 50000

Minnoch

Eldrick Burn	nil
Kirriemore Burn	20000
Pulniskie Burn	3000
Pilnyark Burn	15000
<u>Total</u>	<u>38000</u>

Cree

Fardin Burn	30000
Claughrie Burn	10000
Challoch Burn	nil
Castle Burn	7000
Millburn	10000

Total 57000

The Penkiln Autumn fry were stocked out at the beginning of September with 10,700 fin clipped fry being stocked from a couple of hundred metres above the concrete bridge all the way up to the upper concrete bridge. The ones destined for Linloskin were released at the beginning of October, we stocked just shy of 10,000 into this location. All autumn fry were in good condition and all were fin clipped.

Electro- Fishing

After receiving our permission from the Forestry Commission Scotland we surveyed the Upper Penkiln sites. This was to see how the fin clipped fish were doing and to get an idea of how many were smolting. We surveyed two sites one approx 200 metres above the concrete bridge and one site about a mile further upstream. Both sites showed very good survival rates with both producing 7 salmon smolts and good densities of smaller fin clipped ranging from 54mm up to 119mm.



We also electro-fished a good number of stocked and non stocked.
Results Below.

RCHHT Electro fishing results stocked sites 2018

Site	Grid Ref	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Upper Penkiln Burn Autumn Fry	4430 0 7344 8	13/04/ 18	3	3	18	4	6.6
Upper Penkiln Burn (Lower) Autumn Fry	4502 2 7251 4	13/04/ 18	3	4	13	4	6.9
Pilnyark Burn	3705 4 9191 4	09/08/ 18	8	0	53	16	6.7
Kirriemore Burn	3254 7 8673 7	09/08/ 18	11	4	37	21	6.8
Pulniskie Burn	3714 6 7529 4	10/08/ 18	16	3	135	21	7.4
Fardin Burn	3254 7 8673 6	09/08/ 18	2	0	97	23	7.2
Clauchrie Burn	2874 9 8445 0	10/08/ 18	26	18	52	2	6.3
Castle Burn	3759 4 6913 5	10/08/ 18	0	0	69	4	6.4

Clauchrie Burn Lower	2968 0 8395 6	14/08/ 18	34	21	1	0	6.6
Clachaneasy Bridge	3557 8 7516 0	19/07/ 18	5	0	2	21	7.9
Bargrenan layby	3518 1 7600 3	19/07/ 18	1	0	2	21	8.2
High Cree Garchie Upper	4073 2 6656 2	19/07/ 18	3	0	70	7	8.1
High Cree Garchie lower	3363 9 7716 8	19/07/ 18	7	2	18	18	7.6
High Cree Below falls	3423 9 7714 4	20/07/ 18	1	5	27	21	7.6
Penkilm Above Junction with Cree	4104 7 6613 7	17/07/ 18	16	7	55	54	8
Penkilm Below ladies Pool	4157 9 6730 7	17/07/ 18	11	6	82	55	7.9
Penkilm Burn Top Ford	4305 4 6875 2	17/07/ 18	5	4	127	23	8
Penkilm Above Mattie Whites bridge		17/07/ 18	10	4	208	42	8.1

Penkiln Auchinleck Bridge	4482 3 7045 6	20/07/ 18	23	16	50	27	7.4
Penkiln Glenshalloch Burn		18/07/ 18	37	26	104	23	7.9
Kirkennan Burn	3757 5 8497 8	14/08/ 18	21	5	15	4	8
Palgowan Burn	3708 4 8275 1	14/08/ 18	5	0	107	5	7.4

All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m²

SFCC classification

Salmon fry

0	absent	White
<4.7	E very poor	red
4.7-<10.3	D poor	orange
10.3-<20.3	C moderate	yellow
20.3-<42.1	B Good	Light green
>42.1	A excellent	Dark green

Salmon Parr

0		absent	White
<2.6	E	very poor	red
2.6-<5.1	D	poor	orange
5.1-<9.1	C	moderate	yellow
9.1-<15.8	B	Good	Light green
>15.8	A	excellent	Dark green

Trout fry

0		absent	White
<2.5	E	very poor	red
2.5-<5.3	D	poor	orange
5.3-<12.4	C	moderate	yellow
12.4-<30.3	B	Good	Light green
>30.3	A	excellent	Dark green

Trout Parr

0		absent	White
<1.6	E	very poor	red
1.6-<3.1	D	poor	orange
3.1-<5.6	C	moderate	yellow
5.6-<10.4	B	Good	Light green
>10.4	A	excellent	Dark green

HABITAT WORKS

Rhododendron Clearing

We have sprayed Rhododendron regrowth along the banks of the Penkiln Burn. Again we have only sprayed them once in the year as bigger plants take on more Round Up and have a better kill rate. This project is ongoing with monitoring and appropriate actions, such as spraying or cutting, taken where necessary.

Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam

The spraying of the Japanese Knotweed took place at the beginning of September and was done over a few days. Most plants were sprayed this year with a good percentage of plants flowering. While I was spraying KW, Rory and Louis were hand picking Himalayan Balsam from the island below the Cree Bridge. From this area we picked over 20 bags, the most we have ever seen. Himalayan balsam seems to be getting a hold on the tidal stretch of the river starting from the wood at the Slaughterhouse pool and also large areas on the Council cycle path.

Bankside and instream works

We have removed trees from the lower part of the river one of which was a concern to the council and contractors who are carrying out repairs on the Suspension bridge. The tree was successfully removed.

Forestry Project

Work was carried out on the Eldrick, Pilnyark and Fardin burns . On the Pilnyark we cut , brashed and stacked Sitka Spruce regeneration trees over 1.88 miles of double banks of burnside and planted, staked and tubed approx 900 broadleaf trees.

Pilnyark Burn



Eldrick burn also had approx 1000 broadleaf trees planted, staked and tubed. with all Sitka regen being cut brashed and stacked over 1.48 miles of double bank.

Eldrick Burn
Before



After



Finally, we planted over 1100 broadleaf trees on the Fardin burn over 2.25 miles of double bank. Unfortunately we had run out of time to cut the regeneration Sitka spruce due to the amount of time lost because of snow and freezing conditions. We will make a start on this at the end of 2018.

Fardin Burn



School Visits

On the 5th, 6th and 9th June Minnigaff, Creetown, St Ninians and Penninghame primary 5 pupils were out fishing for Rainbow trout at Glenamour Loch with the RCHHT. This event was sponsored by Jewsons and the NSAA. In total we had 61 pupils who between them caught 30 + fish. This was the last of three visits to the Hatchery. During the first two visits the pupils witnessed the process of stripping fish in the hatchery, eggs being laid down, eyed ova, alevins and stocking out of fry. We also looked at the insect life in the burn which was stocked. Jewson's sponsored an annual membership ticket to all children in the hope some of these might take up the sport of angling. The RCHHT and NSAA sponsored 175 rainbow trout for the events.

Fish Eating Birds

We organised a bird count in November and assisted with the Board's application to SNH for a licence to shoot/scare. The Board received the SNH licence in late March. We made a start straight away with walking

parts of the river from Penninghame down to Roadfoot. Again due to the colder weather, the smolts seemed to be late so an extension licence was applied for and quickly granted, although with restrictive conditions. We therefore continued to patrol the main stem of the Cree until the end of May. In view of the scaring continuing to the end of May, SNH advised a spring count would not be worthwhile.

PROPOSALS FOR NEXT YEAR

It is intended to operate the hatchery and stock salmon fry into the catchment as set out in the Board's stocking policy document agreed on the 8th September.

Work will continue to monitor INNS along the banks of the Cree and Penkiln Burn and eradication measures will be taken as necessary.

It is intended to net the Cree once again with a view to removing pike and perch.

It is intended to remove any trees or obstructions that are causing any problems i.e. bank erosion or the potential to cause flooding.

We have now got the go ahead to work on the Upper Minnoch removing and clearing Sitka Spruce regeneration trees. This project will also involve the planting, staking and putting deer guards on 2000 + trees of indigenous species (alder, downy birch, rowan and aspen) along the banks of the burn. We also intend to replace approx 200 dead trees on the Upper Penkiln burn. This work will commence in November 2018 through to April 2019

It is intended to continue and expand with our school programme and to promote angling for all.

It is intended to continue with the shepherding of the smolts by scaring and at times shooting fish eating birds under licence.

It is intended to continue with surveying by means of electro-fishing stocked and non stocked sites.

Murdo Crosbie
Hatchery co-ordinator

