

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 – 25TH OCTOBER 2017

This report covers the period from the 1st October 2016 to the 30th September 2017

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 **triennial elections** to the Board were held on the 21st October 2015 when seventeen members were elected or co-opted to the Board. The next elections will be due before the 20th October 2018.

The **Conservation Code** for the District was considered at the meeting of the Board in November 2016. It was amended in the light of the re-classification of the Cree to “grade 1” status, under the **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations**, meaning that salmon could be taken during the 2017 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 2018 season. This is no mean achievement – the Cree will be one of only 21 rivers in Scotland (out of 171 in total) to achieve “grade 1” status.

In December 2016 SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot **fish eating birds** as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 1st February to the 30th April 2016 and permitted a maximum of 5 goosanders and 4 cormorants to be killed. The agents appointed by the Chairman duly shot the maximum number of birds licensed. It is intended to apply for a further licence for the forthcoming season.

At the meeting of the Board in May 2017 the **River Management Plan** for the District was considered and slightly amended. The Plan succinctly sets out how the Board aims to achieve its objective of protecting and enhancing stocks of migratory fish within the district and is available for inspection on the Board's website. At the meeting of the Board in July 2017 a

sub-committee of the Board was appointed to agree further amendments to the plan in light of the altered work loads as between GFT and RCHHT, mentioned below. An amended version of the plan will shortly be posted on the Board's website.

Also at the May meeting of the Board there was extensive discussion of the financial position of the Board in light of the general reductions in rateable values following the **rating re-valuation**. It was clear that expenditure by the Board could not be maintained at the previous level without an increase in the poundage. However, there was no appetite for such an increase by Board members. It then fell to be considered how expenditure might be reduced. In the event, it was agreed that donations to GFT should be reduced to the same level as those made to RCHHT.

In May, Jim Nichol resigned as **water bailiff**, reducing our tally of bailiffs to three.

For the last four years, **Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)** has taken up an inordinate amount of the Board's time. It was accordingly pleasing to learn via a press release in February 2017 that the Scottish Government had abandoned plans to abolish DSFBs and replace them with FMOs. It can only be concluded that **WFR** has been the most colossal waste of time and effort. Though there was mention in the press release of a possible **Wild Fisheries Bill** no such bill is included in the current legislative programme. Our local MSP is of the opinion that none will be proposed within this Parliament.

Prior to the abandonment of **WFR**, RAFTS and ASFB (the representative bodies of fisheries trusts and DSFBs respectively) had called special meetings of their memberships in November 2016 to approve a merger of the two organisations. The merger was in part predicated on the assumption that DSFBs were to be abolished and their functions subsumed into FMOs. River Cree DSFB was the only member of ASFB to vote against the proposed merger, your Chairman pointing out that DSFBs had not yet been abolished and that it was accordingly premature to effect a merger at that stage. The merger nevertheless took place and the resulting body, **Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)**, is constitutionally incapable of representing the interests of DSFBs *per se*. There is some concern that **FMS** seems supportive of reviving **WFR** notwithstanding that this would involve the abolition of DSFBs. Equally concerning was the consultation promulgated by **FMS** in May 2017 regarding a template for a River Management Plan. It had been, apparently, asked to carry out the consultation by the Scottish Government. The template circulated, however, was a thinly-disguised re-hash of a template which had been designed for FMOs, prior to the abandonment of **WFR**. The template would have required a wholly disproportionate level of detail to be provided by DSFBs and this Board would not have had the financial resources to comply with it. Needless to say, our response to the consultation was to the effect that it was completely inappropriate. It remains to be seen whether the template is revived or allowed to die the death.

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 26th October 2016 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 25th October 2017 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 2016 rod catch for the Cree district was 246 salmon and grilse. Given the “grade 3” classification of the river and the resulting reduction in angling effort, this may be regarded as not too disappointing. The final figures for 2017 are not to hand at the time of writing but estimates point to a total of some 305 salmon and grilse for the season. Some beats experienced exceptionally good fishing, particularly in the earlier months of the season. Despite high water conditions continuing to the close of the season, catches seem to have dropped off from August onwards. It seems that the peak period for rod catches is occurring earlier in the season, continuing a trend noticed in the previous two seasons.

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

**Terence Flanagan
Chairman
Dated 25th October 2017**



THE RIVER CREE HATCHERY AND HABITAT TRUST CHARITY SC042355

During the period from the 1st October 2016 to the 30th September 2017 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 25th October and caught the last fish from the Cree on the 14th November. Again the Minnoch had a good number of fish in all the pools we electro-fished. This enabled us to skip more pools than usual. While checking areas of the Minnoch for the potential to take broodstock we did see a good few fish on the Glentrool Estate Water. Unfortunately we did not manage to take any fish as by the time they had come to decision that we could take some fish it was already too late as the fish had already spawned. We are still in talks for this year.

<u>Minnoch</u>	<u>22 Hens</u>	<u>9 Cocks</u>	<u>Approx 84,000 eggs</u>
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The Penkiln Burn again showed good numbers of fish and of good quality.

<u>Penkiln</u>	<u>14 Hens</u>	<u>8Cocks</u>	<u>Approx 58,000 eggs</u>
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The River Cree brood stock collection proved difficult once again. High waters delayed proceedings and again we eventually had to fish for brood fish by rod and line which gave us the nine hen fish and three cock fish. We released a couple of good hen fish of approx 13lbs while trying to collect some more cocks.

<u>Cree</u>	<u>9 Hens</u>	<u>3 Cocks</u>	<u>Approx 32,000 eggs</u>
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Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2017

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

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

Total 45000

Minnoch

Eldrick Burn	15000
Kirriemore Burn	20000
Pulniskie Burn	3000
Pilnyark Burn	15000

Total 53000

Cree

Fardin Burn	40000
Claughrie Burn	10000
Challoch Burn	4000
Castle Burn	7000
Millburn	10000

Total 69000

This year we have also stocked 10,700 fin-clipped autumn fry into the upper Penkiln Burn. These have been stocked from the top concrete bridge down to a few hundred metres above the bottom concrete bridge. We have also stocked out over 8,500 fin-clipped autumn fry into the upper part of Linloskin. All these fish have done well and measure up to approx 90mm.

I and RCHHT volunteers were out with the Galloway Fisheries Trust, surveying the stocking sites on the Minnoch and the Fardin burn. The results of these were once again very pleasing with good numbers although some did seem to be on the small side. The Pilnyark burn once again produced very good sized fry and reasonable numbers.

RCHHT Electro Fishing of Stocked Sites 2017 All figures converted to give densities per 100m²

<u>Location</u>	<u>Salmon</u>	<u>Salmon</u>	<u>Trout</u>	<u>Trout</u>	<u>pH</u>
	<u>Fry</u>	<u>Par</u>	<u>Fry</u>	<u>Par</u>	
Penkiln Concrete Bridge	14	9	6	1	6.6

Penkiln Top Site	20	0	6.6	0	6.1
Penkiln Middle Site1	40.4	8	1.3	4	6.5
Penkiln Campbells Burn	37.8	4.3	13.1	11.6	6.7
Penkiln Green Burn	24.5	9.5	6.8	19	6.5
Penkiln Garlies Burn	92.3	25	52	2	6.3
Pulbae Burn	28.8	14.9	3.4	5.7	7
Cree Claughrie Burn	14.2	1.7	10.7	5.3	5.1
Cree Castle Burn	132.2	2.9	1.4	0	6.3
Cree Challoch Burn	200	10.6	136.7	8.5	7.1

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
		light
5.6-<10.4	B Good	green
>10.4	A excellent	dark green

HABITAT WORKS

Rhododendron Clearing

We have been spraying 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 was carried out in September. We have been picking Himalayan Balsam over the last few months whilst doing river bank maintenance. This will also be a long term project with monitoring and spraying where necessary

Bankside and instream works

We removed a couple of trees from the lower river in the early part of the season.

Kirriemore Burn Project

Work on the Kirriemore burn finished at the end of March with approx 9 kilometres of bankside cleared of Sitka Spruce regeneration trees. We have cut, brashed and stacked well in excess of 4000 trees. These trees are dragged and stacked at least 10 metres away from the burn or stacked above the high water mark. The work also involved planting hardwoods along the banksides. In total 1900 trees were planted, staked and tubed all the way down to the meetings with the Minnoch. The tree species are indigenous and include alder, downy birch and aspen. We will revisit over the next year or two to replant any trees that have not taken or have been knocked over by sheep or floods. We also planted 150 trees on the Pulbae Burn but unfortunately ran out of time to cut the regen.

Before



After



School Visits

On the 18th and 31st May Minnigaff, Creetown and Penninghame primary 5 pupils were out fishing for Rainbow trout at Glenamour Loch with the RCHHT and sponsored by Jamie

Hyslop and the NSAA. In total we had 54 pupils who between them caught 33 fish. During the first three 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. The burn showed healthy numbers of Caddis, Stonefly and Mayfly.

Fish Eating Birds

During the months of March and April we spent a good bit of our time walking parts of the lower river scaring and shooting cormorants and goosanders under the terms of the SNH licence. Doing this kept them on the move and away from parts of the lower river where we were getting a build up of smolts.

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 by the sub-committee of the Board appointed on the 6th 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 Pilnyark, Eldrick and Fardin burns removing and clearing Sitka Spruce regeneration trees. This project will also involve the planting, staking and putting deer guards on 3000 + trees of indigenous species (alder, downy birch, rowan and aspen) along the banks of the burn. This work will commence in November 2017 through to April 2018

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 still hoped we will start a project on the lower Cree, funding dependant.

**Murdo Crosbie
Hatchery co-ordinator**

Summary of 2017 Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) work on the Cree catchment



1. Conservation Limits (CL) / River Categories

Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) continue to work to ensure that the River Cree, and other Galloway rivers, are designated with the correct river category. Marine Scotland continue to adapt the CL model to improve its accuracy and have made changes for the 2018 season regarding egg rates required and how to estimate out of season salmon numbers entering the river. GFT continue to liaise with Marine Scotland (through the Salmon Liaison Group) over changes they propose to the model to consider impacts on local river categories. This year GFT checked salmon distribution mapping used in the model. The River Cree remains a category 1 river for the 2018 season.

2. Forestry Related Works

Most of the work of GFT is focussed on forestry related problems due to the impact this sector has had on the water quality and fish populations in the headwaters of Galloway rivers. GFT work to ensure that future replanting moves away from sensitive water courses / peatland areas and this is showing positive results in many areas. Specific forestry related works this year include:

- Inputting to Loch Trool Land Management Plan Forest Plan consultation

This plan covers waters around Loch Trool including Glenhead Burn. Future conifer areas will be located away from the key water courses here. Pines will be replaced by broadleaves species around the Glenhead Burn. Conifers will be removed from the south of Loch Trool which will reduce the risk of acidification. GFT strongly support the plan and are confident that the proposals will result in improvements to the water quality and habitats here.

- Inputting to Dornal Forest Forest Plan Forest Plan consultation

This plan covers some forestry in the High Cree. Initially this plan suggested reducing open space from 25% down to only 10% and increasing conifer cover up to 75%. This area is at risk of acidification so these suggestions were unacceptable. GFT and SEPA objected (and some upper riparian owners) and the plan has been amended to now to help protect open space around water courses and to increase deciduous tree cover. This plan is still being developed.

- Rowantree Burn (Minnoch tributary) Water Quality Concerns

Work last year by GFT highlighted acidification and high Aluminium levels as limiting fish populations here. Future forestry restructuring will now move the forestry plantations back 50 m from the burn on both banks which is good although disappointingly some high altitude (>300 m altitude) conifer replanting will still take place in the headwaters which exacerbates acidification.

3. Cree Annual Stocking Guidance Document

GFT electrofishing was undertaken, with Murdo Crosbie, at 5 stocked sites to continue the monitoring of the hatchery programme. All stocked sites had good numbers of healthy fish. GFT have compiled the Stocking document for this year which has been agreed with the Cree DSFB. This document is used to support the CDSFBs annual application for brood stock collection.

4. Newton Stewart Flooding Scheme

GFT has input to the various options for the planned Newton Stewart Flood Protection Scheme to help ensure fish will be considered and protected when future works are undertaken.

5. Fishgalloway web site

GFT continue to run this website which is used by various Cree fisheries to advertise their fishing and record catches.

6. 2017 Electrofishing Survey (non-stocked sites)

This summer electrofishing was undertaken on the Palnure Burn and Water of Trool catchments. None of these areas are stocked so all fish present were from wild fish spawning. The data is presented in the tables below. The wet summer has resulted in good growing conditions for young salmon with some excellent growth rates recorded at many sites. These are repeat sites allowing comparison between years.

Overall, salmon densities remain healthy within the Palnure Burn. At site 1 fry sizes continue to be small (this has been identified before here). Increased fish densities at sites 2 and 3 were encouraging. Site 4 results were similar between the years. Site 5 continues to support lower densities of juvenile salmon which may be related to water quality and heavy grazing of some nearby banksides. At site 6, densities of salmon had fallen between the years but continuing good fry densities shows that salmon are spawning naturally here in good numbers.

Overall, on the Water of Trool catchment salmon stocks are also healthy. Increased spawning was found on the mid Glenhead Burn although parr numbers had reduced further upstream. The small tributaries, Pulnabrick Burn and Pulharro Burns contained less fish but the main Water of Trool continues to support good numbers of juvenile salmon. Jenny's Burn is important for Brown trout but is inaccessible to salmon.

Image 1: good growth rates in all three ages of salmon on a Palnure Burn site



Table 1: Palnure Burn Electrofishing data; 2011 and 2017

Water course	Site description	Grid reference	Year	Fish density per 100 m ² water			
				Salmon fry	Salmon parr	Trout fry	Trout parr
1. Palnure Burn	Downstream of Corwar Bridge	NX475696	2011	101	2	2	0
			2017	33	2	4	0
2. Palnure Burn	~2 km downstream of site 1	NX464682	2011	40	6	1	1
			2017	71	17	4	1
3. Palnure Burn	Upstream of Jacks Home Pool	NX461677	2011	45	11	0	0
			2017	91	6	6	2
4. Palnure Burn	Upstream of Bargaly Farm	NX462672	2011	66	17	2	0
			2017	59	14	3	0
5. Palnure Burn	Upstream of Craignine Bridge	NX460663	2011	32	9	1	1
			2017	16	3	3	0
6. Palnure Burn	Downstream of Bargaly House	NX460660	2011	144	10	1	0
			2017	78	2	11	0

Table 2: Water of Trool Catchment Electrofishing data; 2012/2013 and 2017

Water course	Site description	Grid reference	Year	Fish density per 100 m ² water			
				Salmon fry	Salmon parr	Trout fry	Trout parr
Glenhead	Upstream of forest	NX432798	2013	0	20.5	0	6.83

Burn	track to Loch Dee							
			2017	0	11.48	0	11.48	
Glenhead Burn	Near Gairland Burn inflow	NX426803	2013	24.04	2.73	52.08	0	
			2017	29.83	2.84	2.84	0	
Pulnabrick Burn	Downstream of road to Glentrool Lodge	NX402799	2013	0	9.09	18.18	1.8	
			2017	0	0	3.24	1.62	
Pulharrow Burn	Neat Caldons	NX401790	2013	0	8.09	16.19	10.12	
			2017	0	0	7.54	3.77	
Water of Trool	Upstream of bridge to old campsite	NX398791	2012	25	0	2	1	
			2017	56.76	1.03	0	0	
Caldons Burn	By old campsite	NX400789	2012	6.4	17.5	3	0	
			2017	23.44	6.7	1.67	0	
Jenny's Burn	Downstream of forestry bridge	NX396784	2013	0	0	15.22	5.07	
			2017	0	0	27.88	10.42	
Water of Trool	Upstream of old foot bridge	NX379782	2013	14.85	10.28	0	0	
			2017	30.76	5.13	0	0	

Proposed GFT works for the next 12 months on the Cree catchment:

The work which GFT will deliver to the Cree DSFB is now agreed each spring. It is envisaged it will focus on:

- Improve the accuracy of the Cree Conservation Limits calculations.
- Monitor, advise on best practice and produce stocking guidance regarding the Cree stocking programme.
- Undertake the rolling electrofishing survey of wild fish stocks across the catchment.
- Input to the forestry planning process to improve existing Sitka spruce plantations and object to any new conifer plantings which could further degrade water quality.

To follow the work of GFT check the 'news section' on www.gallowayfisheriestrust.org or like the GFT Facebook page. GFT are also on twitter.