

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 – 6TH NOVEMBER 2019

This report covers the period from the 1st October 2018 to the 30th September 2019

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 February 2019. It was slightly 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 2019 season. The Code appears on the Board's website in its present form, unchanged for the 2020 season. It is heartening to note that the Cree is proposed to retain its "grade 1" status for the 2020 season. This is no mean achievement – the Cree will be the only river on the Solway to achieve "grade 1" status.

On the 8th February 2019 SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot **fish eating birds** as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 8th February to the 30th April 2019 (and up to the 31st May for male goosander only) and permitted a maximum of 5 goosander and 3 cormorants to be killed. In the event the agents appointed by the Chairman shot 5 goosander and 2 cormorants. It is intended to apply for a further licence for the forthcoming season.

The River Cree Management Plan sets out how the Board aims to achieve its objective of protecting and enhancing stocks of migratory fish within the District. The current plan (dated November 2017) can be seen on the Board's website. It was considered at the meeting of the Board on the 25th September and various amendments were agreed. It will shortly appear on the website in its amended form and will be subject to further review from time to time.

Jock Galloway retired as **water bailiff**, on the expiry of his term of office, reducing our tally of bailiffs to one, Murdo Crosbie. It is of some concern to the Board that we may not be able effectively to control poaching on the waters of the District. An appeal for "River Watchers" posted on the website has not produced any response.

In November 2018 various members of the Board attended a meeting arranged by Finlay Carson, MSP, with (inter alia) Mr Doug Howieson, the Forestry Commission Conservator. The meeting touched on future planting plans by the Forestry Commission (now **Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)**). It was depressing to note that increased conifer plantations in the District appeared to be likely, despite the attendant risks to water quality.

Subsequently, a consultation was opened on a new **FLS Draft Corporate Plan**. The Board appointed a sub-committee which agreed a submission to the consultation by the Board in July 2019. Although the draft plan is full of vague and often mutually inconsistent platitudes, the depressing part is that South West Scotland is earmarked for increased conifer planting. It remains to be seen what effect the consultation responses have on the draft plan.

In April 2019 the Board became aware at a very late stage of a Scoping Report concerning the proposed **Claughrie Wind Farm**. Although the proposed development would drain almost wholly into the Cree catchment, the Board had not been made non-statutory consultees concerning the proposal. A brief objection to the development was put in by the Board just before the closure of the consultation period for the Scoping Report.

In June 2019, a new **Marine Scotland Wild Atlantic Stocking Policy** was published. This had the potential to put a stop to the Board's salmon stocking programme, primarily since the policy encourages stocking with ova or unfed fry. Since ova and unfed fry are more susceptible to the effects of acidification than salmon stocked at later life stages, it is doubtful whether stocking at the ova/unfed fry stage would have been successful, given the acidification problems in the Cree catchment. At the Board meeting in June 2019 the Chairman was asked to take up the Board's concerns with Marine Scotland. A meeting was arranged at short notice between four Board members and Simon Dryden of Marine Scotland. The conclusion of the meeting was that the Board had the authority to licence introductions of fed fry as hitherto. The proof of the pudding has been that the Board has been granted a broodstock capture licence by Marine Scotland for the current year, even though the Board's stocking policy is to introduce fed fry as hitherto.

As noted in previous Annual Reports, **Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)** appears to have been abandoned by the Scottish Government and it is pleasing to note that no **Wild Fisheries Bill** is included in the current legislative programme for the Scottish Parliament. However, **Fisheries Management Scotland** (which still represents the majority of river boards) shows **WFR** as one of its "Current Priorities" on its website.

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 21st November 2018 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 6th November 2019 was publicised on the Board's website as well as on the premises of the Galloway Angling Centre and another site in Newton Stewart. 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 2018 rod catch for the Cree District was 278 salmon and grilse. The final figures for 2019 are not to hand at the time of writing but estimates point to a total in excess of 320 salmon and grilse for the season. Given the weather patterns experienced during the season, the eventual total is satisfactory and far in excess of what seemed possible at the end of May. The spring was once again cold and dry, making for difficult fishing conditions. However, once rainfall increased from June onwards, catches started to pick up. In contrast to the previous season, there were lengthy periods of high water, with many days lost to angling. There was an apparent abundance of grilse, but very few summer salmon.

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

Terence Flanagan
Chairman
Dated 6th November 2019



THE RIVER CREE HATCHERY AND HABITAT TRUST CHARITY SC042355

During the period from the 1st October 2018 to the 30th September 2019 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 28th October and stripped the first fish on the 7th November and stripped the last Cree fish on the 10th December. The Minnoch had fewer fish than previous years .

Minnoch 20 Hens 7 Cocks Approx 78,500 eggs

Penkiln 13 Hens 7 Cocks Approx 65,000 eggs

The River Cree brood stock collection proved difficult once again and all fish were caught by rod and line.

Cree 7 Hens 3 Cocks Approx 30,250 eggs

The first of the Minnoch eggs started eyeing up on the 18th December and started to hatch on the 26th of January. Fertility rate once again looks to be up around 98-99%. Water temperature had been averaging about 6c up until the end of January then falling to a 2 year low of 0.2c.

Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2019

The first fry were stocked out on the 3rd May and this was completed by the middle of October. The stocking sites and approximate numbers of fry stocked were as follows:-

<u>Penkiln</u>	<u>Approx No Eggs</u>
Pulbae Burn	15,000
Green Burn	5,000
Campbells Burn	3,000
Garlies Burn	7,000
Upper Penkiln Burn	20,000
Upper Penkiln Autumn Fry	10,500
	<u>Total 60,500</u>

<u>Minnoch</u>	
Eldrick Burn	13,000
Kirriemore Burn	20,000
Pulniskie Burn	Nil
Pilnyark Burn	13,000
	<u>Total 46,000</u>

<u>Cree</u>	
Fardin Burn	20,000
Claughrie Burn	10,000
Challoch Burn	4,000
Castle Burn	7,000
Millburn	10,000
Linloskin Autumn Fry	10,000
	<u>Total 67,000</u>

The Penkiln Autumn fry were stocked out at the end of September and into October with 10,500 fin clipped fry being stocked from a couple of hundred metres above the concrete bridge all the way up to the upper concrete bridge.

Linloskin Autumn fry were released at the end of August with the last stocked out on the 21st September. We stocked just shy of 10,000 into this location. All autumn fry were in good condition and all were fin clipped.

Electro- Fishing

We surveyed one of the Upper Penkiln sites to see how the fin clipped fish were doing. We surveyed the site approx 200 metres above the concrete bridge and also the upper stream at Linloskin . Both sites showed very good survival rates with both producing fry from 54mm up to 132mm



We also electro-fished a good number of stocked and three non stocked sites. Results Attached.

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. 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 completed by the middle of September. Not all plants were sprayed this year as I would like to see plants gaining some height and also flowering if possible. The area that has not shown any decline is the Machermore section above the A75 bridge, this area seems to be getting worse. Himalayan Balsam has been picked on several occasions this year even with the help of the Guides. Unfortunately it has gained in numbers this year. I am hoping to encourage some work parties next season in the hope we can once again get on top of the problem.

Bankside and instream works

We have cut four trees in total from the Ghyll pool which had slipped down the banking. Trees were from both banks and were cut into small sections that a flood would carry away.

Forestry Project

We started work on the upper Minnoch in December and cut approx 2.3 miles of Sitka Spruce regeneration trees on both banks. These trees are cut then brashed, dragged and stacked above the high water mark or at least 10 metres from the burn. This year has proven to be very demanding with large stands of regen.

We also planted, staked and tubed 2,000 broadleaf trees from the meetings of the Eldrick Burn and Pilnyark down to the Kirriereoch bridge. The species of trees planted were Aspen, Alder, Downy Birch and some Rowan.



After



School Visits

On the 3rd and, 6th 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 C & C Properties, Moira Crosbie and the NSAA. In total we had 63 pupils who between them caught 12 + fish. This was the last of three visits to the Hatchery. On the first visit we discussed the life cycle of the salmon and also the threats against their survival. We then stripped eggs from some ripe hen fish and added the milt from the cock fish whilst discussing the fertilization process. The second visit they stocked out the first of the fry into the Campbells burn then we did some kick testing. The kick testing for aquatic insects lets them see what the young fish will be feeding on while in the fresh water phase of their life cycle.

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 early February. We made a start straight away with walking parts of the river from Penninghame down to Roadfoot .

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 and Shalloch burn removing and clearing Sitka Spruce regeneration trees. This project will also involve the planting, staking and putting deer guards on 1000 + trees of indigenous species (alder, downy birch, rowan and aspen) along the banks of the burn. We also intend to replace dead trees on the Upper Penkiln burn, Kirriemore burn, Eldrick burn, Fardin burn and the Pilnyark burn. This work will commence in November 2019 through to May 2020

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 license.

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

**Murdo Crosbie
Hatchery co-ordinator**

Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Upper Penkiln Burn Autumn Fry	16/09/19	0	6	0	7	6.0
Upper Penkiln Burn (Middle)Autumn Fry	16/09/19	1	4	0	27	6.4
Upper Penkiln Concrete bridge	16/09/19	0	3	29	13 6 of the above were fin clipped	6.2
Pulbae Burn	28/08/19	15	10	32	32	6.4
Green Burn	28/08/19	6	10	12	3	6.5
Campbells Burn	28/08/19	0	10	60	18	6.6
Pulbae Burn	28/08/19	15	10	32	32	6.4
Garlies Burn	28/08/19	50	16	95	25	6.3

Eldrick Burn	16/08/19	4	5	32	8	
Pilnyark Burn	09/08/19	0	6	23	21	6.7
Kirriemore Burn	09/08/19	5	2	22	12	6.3
Fardin Burn	26/08/19	0	1	13.	17	5.4
Challoch Burn	16/09/19	23	8	194	11	6.5

RCHHT Electro fishing results stocked sites 2019
All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m²

RCHHT Electro fishing results Non stocked sites 2019
All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m²

- 0
- 0 Red
- 0 Orange
- 0 Yellow
- 0 Light Green
- 0 Dark Green

Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
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Penkilm Above Junction with Cree	18/09/19	2	1	12	14	6.5
Penkilm Below ladies Pool	18/09/19	3	0	20	34	6.6
Penkilm Above Mattie White bridge	17/07/18	1	1	29	16	6.5

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

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Summary of Galloway Fisheries Trust work for the Cree DSFB in 2019

Sparling Bridge construction

GFT input to the planning stage to reduce pollution risks and we undertook a fish rescue in early June removing over 100 juvenile fish from the work site.

Electrofishing to monitor wild salmon stocks:

In 2019 GFT completed a survey across the High Cree catchment. The High Cree continues to suffer from acidification and this electrofishing data is important to guide the restructuring of conifer plantations and control new planting. Juvenile wild salmon were found in the lower sites up to Dalnaw Farm, with wild salmon spawning in the limestone gravel beds created a few years ago. Further upstream some juvenile salmon (parr) are present which will have dropped down from upstream stocking sites. Only a single salmon fry was found upstream of Dalnaw. The data shows the on-going recovery of the High Cree, with anglers catching adult salmon here in 2018 /19, but it must be considered sensitive and further new conifer planting in the catchment could reverse this recovery. Healthy trout populations exist in many of the tributaries now, e.g. Cairnfore Burn.

Table 1: 2019 electrofishing results from High Cree (from most downstream site):

Site No.	Site (sites start in the lower reaches of the High Cree and move upstream. The final sites are near Loch Moan)	Grid reference (NX)	Expected source of the salmon	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*
HC1	High Cree, riffle u/s of Clachaneasy	355751	Wild	5.0	5.9

HC2	High Cree, d/s of Bargrennan Bridge	349763	Wild	6.9	10.8
HC4	High Cree, over hill from Dalnaw Farm (limestone riffle)	320765	Wild	23.9	4.4
HC5	High Cree, riffle above 3 Counties Pool	318762	Wild	17.2	2.3
HC6	High Cree, Carrick Burn (lower)	318761	Wild	18.6	8.6
HC7	High Cree, by Balnahoin (limestone riffle)	319770	Wild	13.6	2.27
HC8	High Cree, d/s Dalnaw Farm bridge	321771	Wild	2.1	4.2
HC9	High Cree, Cairnderry Burn	323789		0	0
HC10	High Cree, u/s of Cairnderry Burn outflow	322789	Unclear	0	0.7
HC11	High Cree, Arnimean Bridge	302804	Hatchery	0	2.9
HC12	High Cree, riffle area	304825	Hatchery	0	4.76
HC13	High Cree	307839	Hatchery	0	6
HC14	High Cree	327856	Hatchery	1.3	11.3
HC15	High Cree, Loch Moan outflow	334862		0	0
HC16	High Cree, Cairnfore Burn	341864		0	0
HC17	High Cree, Cairnfore Burn	345869		0	0

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

A further 5 sites were surveyed as part of the National Electrofishing Programme Scotland (NEPS) – for more information see <https://data.marine.gov.scot/dataset/assessing-status-atlantic-salmon-salmo-salar-juvenile-electrofishing-data-collected-under>

Site	Grid Ref	Trout fry*	Trout parr*	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*
Minnoch (near Kirriemore)	359876	1	0	25	5
Penkiln Burn (by Cumloden)	421680	1	13	32	28
Kirriemore Burn (lower)	366860	5	1	78	28
Kirriemore Burn (mid)	383868	7	8	32	19
Glenhead Burn (u/s Loch Trool)	433798	3	1	5	1

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

Cree Stocking Policy Guidance Report

Recently produced by GFT for the CDSFB, this report advises where to stock salmon in the Cree catchment after consideration of stocking best practice and on-going monitoring data.

Wind farms

GFT also undertook a baseline survey (electrofishing and pearl mussels) for the proposed Clauchrie Windfarm (upper High Cree catchment). 16 sites were surveyed, many were very small watercourses, and six were found to be fish less. Ten sites contained brown trout. This data is important to ensure if the development proceeds that fish, water quality and habitats are considered at the planning stage and protected during construction and operational phases.

Consultations

GFT continue to respond to various consultations (including planning permissions and forestry plans). The most important ones have been associated with Forestry including regulation by SEPA and Scottish Government plans to expand conifer planting across Scotland.

Palnure Burn

Sadly perch have been caught in the Palnure Burn in 2019 – it has to be assumed someone has illegally introduced them and any caught should be dispatched.

New forestry plantings

GFT objected to a new conifer planting scheme near Dalnaw – although small in size we felt there was a risk of causing further High Cree acidification. Sadly it was approved. With the strong political pressure for a lot more tree planting (Sitka dominated) in SW Scotland we are concerned that planting in sensitive areas will continue to take place.

GFT Prioritised Salmon Habitat Restoration Project

This project started in 2019, with a project officer employed. The project is looking at exactly where on local rivers (including the Cree) habitat works would have the greatest benefit for salmon populations and what is required. The project is involved in actual improvement works too. Most of the work areas identified so far are associated with forestry land use.

To keep up to date with the work of GFT you can follow on twitter, like the GFT facebook page or check the news story section on www.gallowayfisheriestrust.org