

RIVER CREE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

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River Cree Management Plan October 2024

Objective

The aim of the River Cree management plan is to protect and enhance the stocks of salmon and sea trout within the River Cree catchment. The plan details the works the Board wish to have carried out on the catchment in order to achieve this objective.

1. Protection

(a) Bailiffing

The Board currently have one bailiff namely Mr Murdo Crosbie. He is authorised to protect the Cree catchment and costs are subsidised by the Board. The Cree catchment encompasses both the Dumfries & Galloway and Ayrshire districts. Scotland has moved to a single Police Force and the Board should be aware of how this may affect Bailiffing.

Action: All beat owners or their representatives should ensure the contact details of the Bailiff are printed on Permits (RCDSFB Bailiffs)

(b) Conservation measures and code of practice

The Board currently has a defined Conservation Code which has been in place since 2012. This code will be reviewed each year.

Some beats enforce a more strict code than that of the Board – this is at the discretion of the beat owner. The Board Conservation Code should be the *minimum* standard to which every fishery within the catchment must adhere to.

Action: Review the Board Conservation Code annually (RCDSFB)

(c) Predator control

Avian: The Board has carried out counts of fish-eating birds which identified potential serious damage to fish stocks within the catchment. Following applications to SNH for licences to control cormorants and goosanders, licences to scare/shoot these birds were granted in each of the years 2016 to 2024. The Board intends to apply for licences in the future if surveys continue to show similar problems.

Action: Continue surveys of fish eating birds (RCHHT and volunteers)

Mammal: Mink – beat owners should remain vigilant for the presence of mink on the river. Mink traps are available from the Board for the specific purpose of trapping mink.

Seals – the Board do not regard the seal population within the immediate vicinity of the Cree estuary to pose a significant threat to the salmon and sea trout population. However the status and size of the seal population should be monitored and frequent users of the estuary have been asked to keep a diary of seal sightings.

Action: Remain vigilant for mink. Monitor status of seal population

Fish: Pike have always been present within the Cree catchment. It is considered that pike are having a significant detrimental impact on the juvenile salmon and sea trout population. There are two main pike zones in the catchment. One zone is on the river and is known locally as “the Loch of Cree”, the second is on Loch Trool. Netting has taken place in Loch Trool and in the Loch of Cree. If the necessary permissions can be obtained, then these areas will be netted in the future. The Board note that perch have been caught in recent seasons within the Cree catchment. Perch are not native to the Cree system and should **not** be returned to the river. The Board do not know of any method effectively to control the spread of the perch, however netting in the Loch of Cree has removed some. Perch have been caught from the meetings of the Cree & Minnoch, down to the A75 road bridge. The size and spread of the perch population should be monitored and perch should be removed from the river whenever possible.

Action: Conduct netting of pike and perch. Remove perch whenever possible. Monitor size and spread of perch population (RCHHT).

North American Signal Crayfish: The presence of invasive, non native North American Signal Crayfish has been recorded on the Balloch Burn behind Creetown. This burn joins the River Cree in a tidal area of the river at Creetown. These Crayfish are slowly spreading from strongholds in the east of the area – such as Skyreburn and Loch Ken. The Crayfish are highly

invasive and detrimental to juvenile salmon and trout populations and to the river ecology. They predate on fish eggs and juvenile fish, take over fish habitat and destabilise banksides by burrowing into the banks.

The Board will investigate appropriate control methods and undertake to prevent the further spread of this species.

Action: Identify areas where NASC are present. Identify and undertake suitable control methods (RCHHT).

(d) Environmental protection

The Board should support the local SEPA office in dealing with any pollution incidents. The Board has made representation to SEPA to provide local staff with the equipment to effectively police the catchment.

Fishery owners are encouraged to report any pollution incidents direct to the local SEPA office or the SEPA 24hr pollution hotline if it is outwith normal working hours.

(e) Forest design plans

The Board requests that GFT notify the Board with regard to all forest replanting design plans which affect the Cree catchment. The Board will submit an appropriate response to any such plans on a case-by-case basis.

2. Enhancement

(a) Habitat works

(i) Barriers to migration: There are no natural barriers within the Cree catchment which impede the migration of salmon or sea trout to potentially significant spawning areas. There are impassable waterfalls on some Minnoch and Penkiln sub-tributaries – but there are limited potential spawning areas above these. There are poorly designed culverts on Black Clauchrie Burn; there are no salmon at present accessing this area but the Board will support their removal or redesign. The Board requests all proprietors to check for and report to the Board any barriers to migration and tasks RCHHT with their removal.

There is a dam at the outfall of Loch Trool – the Board do not consider this dam to impede the migration of fish to Loch Trool.

Action: Support the removal of poorly designed road culverts (RCDSFB)
Check for and report any barriers to migration (Proprietors)
Remove barriers to migration (RCHHT).

(ii) Invasive Non-Native Species: The Board is aware of the following species of INNS within the catchment – Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Rhododendron and American Skunk Cabbage. RCHHT has

for many years been involved in the removal and control of INNS within the catchment and accordingly the Board requests RCHHT to monitor the presence of INNS close to any watercourses. It is recognized that the responsibility for controlling and removing INNS rest with the relevant proprietor. However, in default of such proprietor carrying out the control/removal the Board tasks RCHHT with such control and removal.

Action: Monitor presence of INNS. Remove and control INNS (RCHHT and Proprietors)

(iii) Sitka regeneration and re-planting with broadleaf trees: The Board recognise that the natural regeneration of Sitka within the Minnoch, Penkiln and High Cree catchments is a significant problem. Where regeneration has been identified and is, or will in the future, degrade the riparian habitat, the Board will seek to have this controlled at the earliest stage possible. RCHHT has carried out significant Sitka removal on burns in the Minnoch, Penkiln and High Cree catchments together with re-planting with broadleaf trees. The Board will therefore task RCHHT with Sitka regeneration removal, re-planting with broadleaf trees and maintenance of previous plantings.

Action: Sitka regeneration removal, re-planting with broadleaf trees and maintenance of previous plantings. (RCHHT)

(iv) Riparian zone and instream management: A number of tributaries/burns require bankside zone and instream management/improvement. The Board will ask RCHHT to produce a riparian zone and instream management plan for any tributary requiring maintenance or improvement. The work will be completed by RCHHT unless the works are of a more specialist nature when the Board will seek the appropriate advice.

Action: RCHHT implement or specialist

(v) Compacted spawning gravels: There may be localised areas of compacted spawning gravels within the catchment – although in general the Board believes it is not significantly impacting on salmon and sea trout reproduction. The Board will ask RCHHT to provide detail on any areas with potentially compacted gravels and will task the RCHHT and volunteers with gravel decompaction

Action: RCHHT implement

(vi) Erosion: There are areas of erosion within the upper catchment, and in particular on the Minnoch. Some areas of erosion may be beneficial to the river (ie addition of spawning gravel) while others areas may have a negative impact (ie sediment, safety). The Board would task RCHHT with

identifying these areas. The repair of 'bad' erosion will be examined on a case-by-case basis and may require specialist assistance

Action: RCHHT identify

(b) Salmon Stocking Programme

(i) Stocking Plan: The Board will request a Stocking Plan from GFT each season. This document will detail the location and number of fish to be stocked each year. The draft Stocking Plan will be presented to the Board NO LATER than 14th August each year. The Plan will be discussed at a Board meeting and the final Stocking Policy for that year agreed by the Board or a sub- committee of the Board unless the sub-committee is authorized to agree the Stocking Policy without further reference to the Board.

Action: GFT prepare draft Stocking Plan, RCDSFB agree Stocking Plan.

(ii) Broodstock Capture and care of eggs and fry: Following agreement by the Board of the Stocking Plan, the Board will apply for a licence to collect broodstock to meet the Stocking Plan.

The act of broodstock capture will be undertaken by RCHHT. Broodstock will be retained, stripped and the eggs laid down in the RCHHT hatchery facility on the Penkiln. The eggs and resulting fry will be cared for/fed as required until ready to be stocked out.

Action: Capture broodstock, care of eggs/fry (RCHHT)

(iii) Planting-out hatchery fish: The hatchery reared juvenile fish will be planted out by RCHHT and volunteers. The young fish will be planted out in accordance with the agreed Stocking Plan.

Action: Planting-out of hatchery fish (RCHHT)

Note: A record of the Stocking Plan, captured broodstock and the number & location of hatchery-origin fish planted out each year will be passed to the Clerk of the board for lodgement in a central register.

Note: The Board will keep under review the possibility of rearing sea trout fry.

(c) Electro-fishing

(i) Stocking sites: The Board consider it essential that every stocking site is electro-fished every year. There are some 22 stocking sites in the catchment, though the number will vary according to the Stocking Plan. The stocking sites will be electro-fished by RCHHT and GFT.

All electro-fishing data/analysis of the stocking sites should be completed and

submitted to the Board in sufficient time to permit the Stocking Plan to be presented to the Board NO LATER THAN the 14th August each season.

(ii) Survey/monitoring sites: Additional electro-fishing requires to be carried out for monitoring the health of fish stocks in the entire catchment. The Board request that this electro-fishing be carried out by RCHHT.

Note: A record of all electro-fishing carried out each season on the Cree catchment will be passed to the Clerk of the board for lodgement in a central register.

(d) Water Quality

The Board have a continuing concern regarding water quality within the Cree catchment. There are three issues: (1) acidification (2) pollution from forest operations (3) sewage pollution.

The Board intend to build a database of water quality measurements within the catchment. The board will encourage ad-hoc sampling of water quality (pH) and turbidity (secchi disk). These measurements will be collated each year and held by the Clerk to the board for lodgement in a central register.

The Board will encourage all incidents of water pollution to be reported direct to SEPA.

Note: A record of all water quality measurements carried out each season on the Cree catchment will be passed to the Clerk of the board for lodgement in a central register.

(e) Palnure Burn

The Board recognizes the sensitive nature of this burn but would wish to explore with NatureScot the possibility of carrying out habitat improvements and/or stocking salmon fry in this burn.

Division of Works

GFT

- Stocking Policy Document
- Electro-fishing to support the Stocking Policy Document

RCHHT

- Broodstock capture
- Hatchery operations
- Planting-out of hatchery fish
- Sitka regeneration removal

- Riparian zone and instream works
- Netting of pike and perch
- INNS
- Fish-eating birds – counts etc
- Electro-fishing for monitoring purposes and also to support the Stocking Policy document