

RIVER CREE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

THE REPORT OF THE BOARD TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS AND ALSO ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD ON THE 23rd NOVEMBER 2023

This report covers the period from the 1st October 2022 to the 30th September 2023

PART ONE

This part of the report summarises what the Board have done in carrying out their statutory functions during the period and 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 and the stocking of the waters of the district with salmon – Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1997 section 45(1). To assist it in fulfilling those duties the Board has the benefit of the services of two fisheries trusts, Gallop Fisheries Trust (GFT) and The River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust (RCHHT). There are attached as appendices to this report reports 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 other matters during the period. To some extent, the activities of the Board appear from an examination of the minutes of all its meetings, which can be found on the Board's website – rivercreedistrictsalmonfisheryboard.com. The following is a brief summary.

During the period covered by this report the Board held four ordinary meetings (23rd November 2022, 18th January 2023, 18th April 2023, 19th July 2023). The minutes from these meetings are available on the Board's website

The **Conservation Code** for the District remained largely unchanged for the 2023 season, as the Cree retained its "Grade 1" status under the **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations**, meaning that salmon again could be taken from the Cree during the 2023 season. The Code appears on the Board's website. All river proprietors on the Cree have agreed to abide by the Conservation Code. The only changes made were to include the open season for fishing and the requirement for all anglers to use a gaff or a similar unhooking tool to aid in the quick release of salmon and sea trout.

The Cree will again retain its "Grade 1" status for the 2024 season. The Cree will be the only river on the Solway and the Scottish coast to achieve "Grade 1" status.

This achievement is recognition of all the hard work that Murdo Crosbie and his team of volunteers put into the Cree. We would like to publicly thank Murdo for all his efforts.

On the 21st Decemebr 2022 SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot **fish eating birds** as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 10th January 2023 to the 30th April 2020 (and up to the 31st May for male goosander only) and permitted a maximum of 7 goosander and 3 cormorants to be killed. The agents appointed by the Chairman shot 7 goosander and 3 cormorants under licence, scaring was also used to deter birds from settling in known smolt “pinch spots”.

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 June 2022) can be seen on the Board’s website. It will be subject to further review from time to time.

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.

The Board believes that the current rod catch figures (especially when compared to other rivers locally) Prove the current River Management Plan is working

Privacy Policy

The Board have completed a Privacy and Data Protection Policy. This document can be viewed on the Boards website

Marine Scotland

Marine Scotland published the “Wild Salmon Strategy: Implementation Plan 2023-2028” on 1st January 2022. They also published a document titled “Marine Scotland Wild Atlantic Salmon Stocking Policy”.

The Board consider that neither of these documents will impact on the current Board Policy

Bailiffing

Murdo Crosbie continued in office as the Board’s only water bailiff. 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” continues to be posted on the website has not produced any response.

Forest and land Scotland have now erected permanent “No Fishing” signage at Kirriereoch and access points above this

Wind Farms

There are currently two wind farm developments proposed for the Cree catchment. One wind farm of 18 turbines at Glenvernoch (in the river Cree catchment) and a 22 turbine development for Blair Hill, which sits above Knockman wood and Drannandow – this wind farm is within the Penkiln Burn catchment and also the river Cree. Importantly, the Blair Hill wind farm development will require significant engineering works upstream of the hatchery intake on the Penkiln Burn. Any pollution or siltation could have a devastating impact on any fish in the hatchery.

Both wind farm proposals are at the “scoping” stage only. No formal planning application has yet been submitted. At the board meeting of 4th October, the Board

held a discussion on the wind farm proposals and voted unanimously to object to any planning application. This has been minuted. The Board see no positives to either wind farm development

Newton Stewart Flood Prevention Scheme

The proposed NSFPS is still very much live and appears to be proceeding. The local Council have “approved the scheme without modification”.

The Board and a number of individuals, including anglers and fishery owners submitted formal objections to the scheme. A total of 58 objections were received, of which half are angling/fishing related. I attended a meeting of the council and scheme designers at McMillan Hall on 14th November.

The environmental report published by the designers made no mention of migratory fish or angling. The meeting on 14th November sought to address this and is the start of an improved engagement process with the angling community.

The FPS has the potential to cause significant damage to the river environment - both short and long term. The exiting pool and riffle structures and angling pools could be significantly altered or destroyed by the scheme.

The Board is committed to ensuring that migratory fish are wholly protected and also in supporting Newton Stewart Angling Association in their efforts to ensure their angling waters and pools are not degraded by the scheme.

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 23rd November 2022 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 23rd November 2022 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 the 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 so far as possible.

PART FOUR – GENERAL

Catches - The Marine Scotland officially recorded 2022 rod catch for the Cree District was 347 (14 fin clipped) salmon and grilse (193 in 2021). This compares very favourably with neighbouring rivers (Bladnoch 50, Luce 139, Urr 42, Stinchar 176, Nith 309, Annan 191, Girvan 68, Doon 304). The 2022 fishing season was impacted by drought conditions in early spring and early summer. However, good numbers of Salmon ran the river. Grilse numbers were lower, with a large number of Salmon in the catches. Seatrout numbers were again worryingly low

The Board's estimate of the rod catch for 2023 season is 250 salmon and grilse. Salmon catches all over Scotland have been poor this year, and there has been a poor run of salmon throughout the UK. Two adipose fin clipped fish have been reported by anglers this season – however many anglers are still not checking their fish.

Hatchery Operations – Permission was obtained from all the required fishery owners and landowners. Sufficient broodstock were captured to fulfil the Stocking Policy Document. The Stocking Policy Document was received from GFT within the deadline and was agreed by the Board

Broodstock capture this season has proven to be relatively straightforward. Permissions were again received for all the relevant waters. Despite what anglers thought was a poor run of Salmon this season – the numbers found during broodstock capture were very encouraging. Good numbers of Salmon were found in the Minnoch and Penkiln, whilst rod angling was very effective on the main stem of the Cree.

On the Penkiln Burn 21.2% of the fish handled were adipose fin clipped. In one pool alone, 10 fish were captured and 5 of them were fin clipped.

On the main stem of the Cree nearly 30 salmon were captured on rod and line from one pool alone.

In all instances, only a small percentage of the fish captured from any one location are retained for broodstock. This ensures sufficient salmon remain to spawn naturally.

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

Jamie Hyslop

Chairman

Dated: 23rd November 2023

RIVER CREE HATCHERY & HABITAT TRUST SCIO

During the period from the 1st October 2022 to the 30th September 2023 RCHHT carried out the following works on the catchment of the District

HATCHERY WORKS

Broodstock collection started on the Water of Minnoch above Kirrieoch Bridge on the 23rd October, the water levels were on the high side which made holding fish very difficult, although we did see a good number of fish. The lower sites we electro fish were once again delayed due to Glentroll Estates not responding to the request to catch broodfish in a timely manner. Once permission was granted we electro fished around Kings Ford and Palgowan, again, reasonable numbers of fish were seen. I stripped the first Minnoch fish on 31st October and stripped the last Cree fish on the 24th December.

Broodstock & Egg numbers

Minnoch 21 Hens 8 Cocks Approx 92,000 eggs

Penkiln 12 Hens 8 Cocks Approx 60,000 eggs

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

Cree 10 Hens 5 Cocks Approx 33,000 eggs

The Hatchery ran smoothly with very mild conditions throughout the winter months. This meant that the eggs developed quickly again this year with the first of the Minnoch eggs starting to eye up on the 22nd of December. Conditions remained mild, and as a result, the first of the eggs started to hatch on the

7th Feb-

ruary.



Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2023

The first fry were stocked out on the 17th May and this was completed by the 16th 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	5,000
Upper Penkiln Burn	20,000
Upper Penkiln Autumn Fry	10,900

Total 58,900

<u>Minnoch</u>	
Eldrick Burn	15,000
Kirriemore Burn	20,000
Pilnyark Burn	15,000
Rowantree	10,000

Total 60,000

<u>Cree</u>	
Fardin Burn	30,000
Clauchrie Burn	500
Challoch Burn	4,000
Castle Burn	7,000
Millburn	10,000
Linloskin Autumn Fry	10,500

Total 61,500

The Penkiln autumn fry were stocked out at the beginning of July through to the 16th of October with 10,900 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 from July through to the 8th October. We stocked approx 10,500 into this location. All autumn fry were in good condition and all were fin clipped. All autumn fry were graded throughout the summer and the larger fish clipped and released as we were grading them.

Electro- Fishing

We surveyed 12 stocked sites and 3 non stocked sites. We made a start on the electro-fishing surveys in the week commencing the 13th of July. The fin clipped sites on the upper Penkiln, which totalled 3 sites, once again proved to be very successful with good results. The fin clipped fry seem to spread themselves out by both migrating upstream and down.

Photo of some of the Autumn Fry from the Upper Penkiln burn



RCHHT Electro fishing results stocked sites 2023**All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m²**

Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Upper Penkiln Burn Autumn Fry	13/07/23	0	2	11	7	6.0
Upper Penkiln Burn (Middle)Autumn Fry	13/07/23	0	4	0	10	6.4
Upper Penkiln Burn Lower Autumn Fry	13/07/23	1	3	9	10	6.4
Upper Penkiln Concrete bridge	11/08/23	7	4	26	14	6.2
Pulbae Burn	11/08/23	4	1	19	16	6.4
Green Burn	13/07/23	9	4	11	14	6.5
Campbells Burn	13/07/23	8	15	36	39	6.6
Garlies Burn	11/08/23	28	25	115	33	6.3
Challoch Burn	20/07/23	41	4	126	15	6.8
Castle Burn	20/07/23	0	2	61	5	6.6
Claghrie Burn	20/07/23	24	3	50	0	5.2
Millburn (Cree)	11/08/23	3	0	46	15	6.3

RCHHT Electro fishing results Non stocked sites

All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m²

Penninghamme Tail Of Barclay	38631 68639	08/09/23			43.8	2	6.4
Penninghamme Below garden pool	38652 68944	08/09/23			18	7	6.4
Penninghamme Below house pool	38511 69767	08/09/23			39	13	6.4

0

0 Red

0 Orange

0 Yellow

0 Light Green

0 Dark Green

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

A walk over survey has shown some new growth and some re-growth. These are now at a size where spraying will be effective

Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam

Spraying took place from the start of September, only plants that had flowers or were of a considerable size were sprayed. Area covered was from the weir at the Ghyll pool down to the A75 Bridge. Again plants that had not matured and flowered were left to hopefully mature and flower next year. Plants are left until the autumn and to flower as this is the best time to hit them with Glyphosphate. Michael Todd and Irene Coupland have been picking Himalayan Balsam all summer from the Brewery pool down to the Saughs pool. Plants sprayed last year have shown a very good kill rate.



Bankside and instream works

Early in the year we removed one large Scots pine that was stuck at the tail of the Linloskin pool. This was removed once we were happy that all fry will have emerged from the gravel. The tree itself proved to be very difficult due to the size of the butt plate that was still attached and full of rock. It was hand winched in to the shallower water where I could cut sections of at a time to reduce the weight. Eventually the tree was cut up and the stump was removed and placed in the banks. One other tree was removed from the NSAA part of the Ghyll pool, this was also pulled in by a hand winch and cut into small sections and left to disperse in the next rise in water.

Linloskin Before



Linloskin After



Ghyll Pool Before



Ghyll Pool After



Forestry Project

With the help of our volunteers, we managed to finish clearing Sitka Spruce regeneration trees from 2.9 kilometres of bank sides on the Shalloch and Knocklach burns. Both banks were cleared of Sitka regen and have been planted with 1000 broadleaved trees which have been staked and tubed. The benefits of this work is to help create a buffer zone from the commercial crop of Sitka Spruce and hopefully reduce the acidity that leaches into the water courses. It also lets more light reach the water which helps to increase invertebrate numbers. The broadleaved trees that have been planted will, in time, create bank stability, dappled shade, add nutrients and attract a greater number of insects.

Shalloch Burn before



Shalloch Burn after



In the spring of 2023 we also planted, staked and tubed a further 500 broadleaved trees on the upper Penkiln burn.



School Visits

The school visits started in November. The first visit is all about the life cycle of the salmon, the problems that they face and the reasoning behind the hatchery. We then strip a hen salmon of her eggs and they also get to see and find out the fertilization process with the milt from the cock salmon before laying down the eggs.

The second visit consists of the children releasing a small amount of fry, they have a bucket each with approx 5 fry in each bucket, once released we then discuss what the fry are likely to be feeding on and also do a kick test to enable the children to see what invertebrates are within the system.

The third visit is to Glenamour loch to fish for rainbow trout, The loch is stocked to hopefully give them a better chance at catching a fish. It is also discussed that these fish can be killed for eating and the biggest majority of the children take their fish home. The Schools involved include Penninghame, Creetown, Minnigaff and St Ninians

Minnigaff Primary 5s



Fish Eating Birds

In November we do a walk over survey of the Penkiln, Minnoch and the main stem of the Cree, recording any sightings of Goosanders and Cormorants, This survey is carried out normally one hour after sunrise and is only possible due to the amount of volunteers. The information is then submitted to Natural Scotland by Jamie Hyslop on behalf of the river Board

A licence was then granted early January which permitted 7 Goosanders and 3 Cormorants to be culled. This was achieved by the end of May. During this period we were continually patrolling parts of the lower river using scaring tactics.

Fin Clipped Salmon

During the 2023 angling season I had reports of 2 fin clipped hatchery fish being caught. Unfortunately, I feel that fish are been missed by anglers not checking for a clipped adipose fin. One angler fishing Linloskin sent the below photo not realising it was a hatchery fish.



Although after the 30th September, I thought this should be brought into this years report.

A very interesting last day (12/11/2023) of catching broodstock for our hatchery programme, Today we handled 33 salmon of which 9 were fin clipped giving approx 27% of the catch to be guaranteed hatchery reared fish.

This was the second day in the Penkiln burn, between both days 66 salmon were handled and overall 21.2% originated from our hatchery as fin clipped fish.

Just to clarify, the percentages are of fish handled and not a percentage of returning fish.

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.

It is intended to continue with our habitat work on FLS land to include the removal of sitka spruce trees, plant Broadleaved trees and to perform maintenance works to include replacing dead trees and removing tubes from trees that are large enough.

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



Summary of relevant GFT work on the Cree catchment in 2023 (for CDSFB AGM Meeting 23/11/23)

- GFT (working with the Cree DSFB chairman) started creating the online **Cree DSFB Salmon Fishery Management Plan** in the spring, which uses a general template created for use by all DSFB areas across Scotland. The 'actions' from the Boards existing plan have all been incorporated and some more general ones added too. Additional data / maps can now be added to finalise the plan such as overall catch records, peatland / forestry / water quality gradings etc – this will be discussed in detail with the CDSFB chairman to ensure he is happy with the proposed contents of the plan before it is finalised.
- GFT submitted a response to the consultation on the **Newton Stewart Flood Prevention Scheme** raising various concerns regarding lack of natural flood management, fish, habitat and water quality. GFT also attended a meeting with the Flooding Team and their consultants recently to discuss our concerns (CDSFB & NSAA also attended).
- **Stop the replanting of conifers on deep peats** – GFT has been lobbying hard for this using the Galloway rivers (particularly the Bladnoch) as a case study at the following meetings: Scottish Government 'Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan Group'; with MSPs (Emma Harper / Finlay Carson); FMS Regional meeting; to Scottish Forestry Land Use and Environment Policy Advisor Linsey Mason-McLean; Galloway & South Ayrshire Biosphere; SEPA Local Advisory Group; in forestry plan consultations; through a GFT talk at FMS Conference, to Scottish Land Commission Board, FLS; NatureScot; and on GFT social media and on the GFT website. Meeting agreed with SEPA and Scottish Forestry to discuss GFT concerns that 'forestry restructuring' is not adequately addressing acidification pressure in Solway and Tweed River Basin Management Plan.
- Updated the '**GFT Cree Stocking Guidance**' report to cover 2023 / 2024. The report was agreed with the Board sub-committee.
- With regard to the **two windfarm proposals** near Newton Stewart – GFT collected baseline fish data for the Blair Hill site for inclusion in the EIA to ensure fish impacts can be considered properly. GFT have attended Cree Valley Community Council meetings to provide comment to members on the proposals. GFT raised concerns with Energiekontor regarding their lack of consideration of relevant fish data for their developments. GFT will review any future EIA/consultation documentation and submit consultation responses if these two proposals do proceed.
- Although not on the Cree, GFT collected filtered water samples for eDNA analysis on the Annan and Bladnoch to check for the presence of **pink salmon** (results still not back). In recent years there has only been a single confirmed report from the Solway which was a dead adult on the Annan.
- Tracy (GFT INNS Officer) has been involved in some **American skunk cabbage** control near Glentroll with FLS this year. She plans in the future to include Skunk cabbage control at Challoch / Bargrennan in her work programme.
- GFT continue to **monitor water temperatures** at 2 sites on the High Cree on behalf of the High Cree Game Fishers.
- The **riparian hardwood trees** planted by GFT on the upper Minnoch a couple of years ago have been checked and any dead trees will be replaced this winter.
- GFT completed various **electrofishing** on the Cree catchment. Eight sites were surveyed and fed into the NEPS programme (the outputs can be viewed via the NEPS Shiny App), which is a useful management tool.

Electrofishing was also undertaken at some stocked sites for inclusion in the stocking guidance report. The Water of Trool catchment sites relevant to the River Cree rolling three year programme this season are detailed below (GFT will survey the Palnure Burn next summer).

Site	Grid reference (NX)	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*	Trout fry*	Trout parr*
Glenhead Burn – u/s of bridge to Loch Dee	432798	6	3	12	2
Glenhead Burn – by Gairland Burn outflow	425803	11	2	0	0
Pulnabrick Burn – d/s road bridge	403798	0	0	7	8
Pulharrow Burn – near Caldons	401790	0	0	9	11
Water of Trool (u/s road bridge)	397790	27	2	5	0
Caldons Burn	399789	8	10	10	5
Jenny’s Burn	396784	0	0	17	23
Water of Trool (u/s of old foot bridge)	379782	17	5	2	0

- GFT sit on the recently formed Scottish Government **‘Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan Delivery Group’**. We are using this to highlight the unacceptable on-going situation where Sitka spruce continues to be replanted on some deep peats even though it is known this causes acidification.

