



North West Fisheries Forum (Salmon Special)

January 21st 2017

Scarthwaite Country House Hotel

Meeting Notes

Meeting opened and Chaired by John Cheyne, Angling Trust National Regions Manager

Salmon 5 Point Approach, Overview and Update – *Judy Proctor, Environment Agency Manager for Salmon Five Point Approach, Ben Bayliss, Environment Agency Program Manager for Salmon in Cumbria and Lancashire*

Environment Agency Presentation – Available to download from:

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=835§ionTitle=North+West+Region>

Post presentation Q&A session with Judy and Ben

Q – Mike Ashwin (River Eden & District FA & NWATFCC), We feel that Stock Assessments need an overview so that we have a more accurate picture of the fish in our rivers? We currently have very little knowledge of smolt numbers which are crucial to our understanding of the decline of adult salmon.

A – The Environment Agency is required to have a reliable assessment. We use modelling and workshops and now have a list of recommendations. We welcome engagement with anglers to decide what the issues are and the best actions to take. Anglers catch return data is very valuable to us. The marine survival of smolts is declining that's why we're improving the fresh water Environment. We are happy to work with anglers to improve our methods of stock assessment.

Q – I think stocking should support all the work of the 5 Point Approach.

A – I know hatchery fish have a higher mortality rate and these fish come with a high cost. Hatcheries have to be run perfectly for them to work, they are fraught with problems. If there's a reservoir and fish can't migrate, then a hatchery would be used. In our guidance to water companies, we say wherever salmon can be protected – they are. Even if a hatchery is run perfectly, they are very expensive and we don't have the funding available.

Q – What is in place to monitor smolt numbers? There are so many predatory birds now! I think an investment in reliable monitoring equipment would be well spent, a commercial organisation would have robust and reliable measures in place!

A - Monitoring is being reviewed along with the money we receive from government. We are always looking for new and better ways to maximise our efforts of measuring. Traps are in situ in the index rivers! Intensely monitoring these index rivers is key to measurement.

Q – Derwent Owners Association – We have been implementing habitat improvements for 10 years now and the Derwent is still At Risk status! When will we see what's happening at sea change?

A- One of our commitments with government is to review the netting. Our work on net exploitation is critical.

Q – What's the timescale for the changes to the netting?

A – We are speaking to the minister, nets men and Angling Trust and will use this consultation to implement changes in 2018.

Mark Lloyd went on to say that the EA is doing everything to make the changes in 2018 and we need to show that anglers are considered and have priority over the nets.

Q – I want to see a detailed review of the 5 Point Plan, a Derwent Action Plan that gets reviewed annually with a summary report made available! I want to know what improvements have been made since the 5PP started?

A – Mark Lloyd - We have seen a change/shift in commitment, the fisheries staff and Chief Exec are giving firm commitment, but I agree, I think we do need regular updates and to see real improvement.

Angling Trust Save Our Salmon Campaign – Mark Lloyd, Angling Trust CEO

Save Our Salmon Presentation – Available to download from:

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=835§ionTitle=North+West+Region>

Post presentation Q&A session with Mark

Q – What assurances can you give against illegal abstractions?

A – The Angling Trust is very active on this and we've spoke to the ministers, there is a plan to take them fishing on an abstracted river. I feel as though the ministers have been stalling on this subject. I know Judy has been working on this.

Judy Proctor – We've been looking at sustainable abstraction, preventing deterioration, looking for areas where we can improve and where the water companies can improve.

Mark Lloyd - We don't know how much trickle irrigation is taking place, the Angling Trust need to make the case politically.

John Witham – If the EA had a register for ALL abstraction we would know what is being abstracted!

Q – Vic Price (Lancaster and District AA) - How do the experts suggest we should reduce the damaging effect of avian predators, such as cormorants and gosanders, on our precious fry, parr and smolts?

A – We are starting cormorant watch again, so please encourage your clubs and other anglers to take part. The cormorant is the most studied bird in the world and even if numbers were impacted, we know their numbers would recover the following year. If the government were to change legislation they could be up for a judicial review from the RSPB. Please get in touch with Richard Bamforth, Angling Trust, Fishery Management Advisor for the North of England. Richard specialises in combating predatory birds and will be only too happy to visit your fishery and recommend actions and measures the fishery can use. Please input your cormorant numbers to cormorant watch.

Q – Robert Davson (Mid Ribble AS) – How do you see Brexit effecting the situation for salmon ?

A – We have a paper available on our website with a detailed response.

To view the paper, use the link below and then click on **Brexit, Fisheries and The Water Environment**, it's about half way down the page!

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/news.asp?section=29&itemid=3486>

It looks like we are likely to keep the majority of good EU environmental law, which will just be written into British law, However we are concerned that it won't function properly without the threat of sanctions from the EU if the Government doesn't reach targets for the Water Framework Directive. On the positive side we could change the way the CAP works to use our subsidy system to our advantage and the money could be better spent. We need to see farmers only getting subsidies if their agricultural methods do not pollute our rivers. There will be more public pressure for the subsidies to be better spent where needed.

Q – Can the Angling Trust guarantee if a legacy is left for a specific project, that the money will be spent on that project?

A – We have a legacy scheme and pack available as guidance. Legacies can be specified on how they are spent. All legacies are very welcome.

Details of Angling Trust/Fish Legal legacy scheme can be found here:

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Q – Can you demonstrate evidence that catch and release helps stocks, because we’ve had catch and release on the Lune for 20 years?

A – I don’t think catch and release is the main problem. The implementation of catch and release schemes on their own will not have a substantial effect on salmon numbers. This is quite simply because angling is not the problem ! However if we are to get government action on netting, salmon farming, pollution and abstraction, then we need to be seen to be doing everything we can to help. So in that context high rates of catch and release are a very powerful tool for change.

Q – The Esk is managed by the EA and we’re struggling to find common ground with SEPA!

A – We can’t be active in Scotland but in Wales we have a lot of members and will do limited campaigns. We don’t have the resources to work in Scotland but I’m talking to the AST to do more there. We have tried to get the Scottish Associations to group together with us but there are problems.

To go online and see all the details RE Save Our Salmon Campaign visit:

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=1180>

After the buffet lunch, there was a first showing of a film “The Gift” which looked at Best Methods for Catch and Release of Salmon This film can be viewed online by clicking here:

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Salmon Issues at Sea – Fish Farming issues, including an update on the work of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Mark Lloyd, Angling Trust CEO

Issues at sea Presentation – Available to download from:

<http://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=835§ionTitle=North+West+Region>

Post presentation Q&A session with Mark

Q – David Hinks (Ribble Fisheries CA & NWATFCC) –{David Hinks was not able to attend the meeting, but the question was asked on his behalf by the Chair} What is the Angling Trust doing about tidal lagoon developments and recent announcements?

A – We are working on the Swansea Lagoon; our wider concern is that Swansea doesn't make sense i.e. no economic energy created. It is being used as a pilot project for much larger schemes. Projects carried out on tidal lagoons have shown the detrimental effect of mincing up fish and causing delays to migration. We also think these lagoons will silt up within 30 years, we're fighting them tooth and nail. There will be a lot of battles, the Wye and Usk are areas of special conservation. Unfortunately, other environmental NGO's have been quite supportive of tidal lagoons and it is only us fighting the schemes.

Q – What is the view from the RSPB in Swansea?

A – They show lukewarm support for the lagoons and the AT think that fish shouldn't be sacrificed!

Q – What about all these new houses to be built?

A – They should be built in a responsible way and not on the flood plain. –
<http://blueprintforwater.org.uk>

Q – David Cooke – What are the EA and AT doing to prevent the manifestation of sea lice during farming and the build-up of sludge below the cages salmon are kept in while being farmed?

A – These farms are located in very small communities and people are afraid to take legal action against their neighbours. There have been some improvements made in salmon farming. Enclosed farming was put to Scottish Aquaculture and they said they didn't have the money to make the improvements now. A million metric tonnes of krill were taken to feed farmed salmon. We led the call for changes tabled by the NWFCC to the way West Coast Salmon Farming is run at the recent England Fisheries Group meeting and had support from AST, IFM, S&TUK, Rivers Trust etc

Q – Does the AT lobby supermarkets that sell farmed salmon?

A – We are up against a multimillion pound marketing campaign and we don't have the resources to do more.

Open Questions

Q – The Ribble Rivers Trust has carried out 17 years of work but we still have a thousand obstructions in the system - after 250 years of industrialisation. We need £40,000,000! We need the foundation of a government pot of money to do this work so that it can act as seed funding.

A – A couple of years ago, catchment restoration funds were available, the AT would love to see this repeated. Funds may become available through natural flood management projects and money from enforcement and pollution incidents – there is a way for polluters to pay rivers trusts instead. A strategy needs formulating for many years into the future so RT's can plan for future restorations.

Q – Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidies are not checked to ensure the funds are being spent correctly!

A – The EU have been struggling to make CAP payments to landowners on time. The main targets they are measured against is how quickly they get the money out so there seems to be very little checking done to ensure Farmers are compliant. This situation is an outrage and is one of the key areas we will be pushing for change post-Brexit

Q – What is being done to get youngsters in to the sport?

A – There is a lot of work going on with funding from the EA and Sport England to get people back into fishing and to get older people fishing. National Fishing Month is run through the summer that focuses on taster days for all. The AT wants to help clubs and fisheries with resources and cash to get more people fishing with funds from rod licence and AT members.

Q – When Fracking starts in Lancashire where is the water going to be taken from for their operations, surely not from our rivers?

A – We've looked at the impact and the reassuring thing is the fracking is very deep and doesn't take as much water as first thought.

At the end of the forum Andy Hurst (Lune and Wyre Fisheries Association) wanted to say thanks to the speakers for doing such a good job and to the AT for organising the forum.