

**Salmon Interactions Working Group  
(Meeting 4/2019)**

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD  
10:00 – 15:00

**In Attendance**

John Goodlad (JG), Chair

John Armstrong (JA), Scottish  
Government

Roger Brook (RB), Argyll District  
Salmon Fishery Board

Sam Collin (SC), SE LINK

Jeff Gibbons (JGB), Scottish  
Government

Gilpin Bradley (GB), Scottish Salmon  
Producers Association

Julie Hesketh-Laird (JHL), Scottish  
Salmon Producers Association

Peter Pollard (PP), SEPA

Cathy Tilbrook (CT), SNH

Alan Wells (AW), Fisheries  
Management Scotland

Robin MacLean (RM), Secretary,  
Scottish Government

**Apologies**

Ben Hadfield (BH), Mowi

Roddy Mackay (RMY), Orkney Islands Council/Heads of Planning Scotland

Alasdair Mitchell (AM), Scottish Government

**Agenda**

1. Welcome & apologies
2. Minutes & actions from previous meeting
3. Updates from Group members
4. Hazards:
  - Sea lice
  - Escapes
  - Disease transfer
5. Additional areas:
  - Spatial planning
  - Transparency of information
  - Wild salmon and the regulatory environment
6. Draft recommendations
7. AOB
8. Date of next meeting

## **1. Welcome & apologies**

1.1 JG welcomed members and apologies were taken. It was noted that Jeff Gibbons and Gilpin Bradley were standing-in for Alastair Mitchell and Ben Hadfield respectfully.

## **2. Minutes & actions from previous meeting**

2.1. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed and there was an update on previous actions.

2.2. JHL acknowledged that contributing to the interactions working group is a top priority for the sector but explained that the SSPO board has yet to meet and this has resulted in a delay to completing her actions.

*Action 1 – JHL to review the various FMS papers and offer industry comments.*

2.3. The revised Terms of Reference were discussed and agreed by the group. As a result of farmed trout being included, members requested the British Trout Association be invited to join the Salmon Interactions Working Group.

*Action 2 – RM to invite the BTA onto the Working Group.*

2.4. The comparisons on sea lice regulation table was discussed and members were keen to learn about the sea lice controls in other salmon producing jurisdictions. Members agreed to send RM details of requests.

*Action 3 – Members to send requests to RM (procedures in other jurisdictions).*

## **3. Updates from Group members**

3.1 JGB gave an update on the Parliamentary Inquiry and the recent debate on salmon farming that took place on 6 February 2019. He also explained that the technical working group will present to the interactions group at the next meeting, with a view having material to go out to public consultation in June 2019.

3.2. PP updated the group on the SEPA sector plan. SEPA is modifying the sector plan in response to consultation and hope to have a more detailed update for the group at the next meeting.

3.3. AW gave an update on FMS which included a note of concern around the current status quo regarding issues with the finfish consenting regime. FMS are currently engaged with the industry on EMPs.

3.4. JHL gave an update on the sector's sustainability fund. She commented that much work is happening in the background to address interactions but until farms can move into new places, using tools available to tackle issues like sea lice, the challenges will persist. JHL confirmed that the sector is keen to be innovative and move forward but is being held back by a regulatory regime not fit for purpose.

## **4. Hazards**

### **4.1. Sea Lice**

4.1.1. CT suggested that the FMS paper helpfully raises the issues of risk and asked whether the technical working group will be setting out thoughts on thresholds within water bodies. JA agreed to bring an update on this to the next meeting.

*Action 4 - JA to bring update on the technical working group's thoughts on thresholds to the next meeting.*

4.1.2. AW enquired as to an outstanding action on smolt thresholds. RM agreed to go over previous actions to ensure all were either completed or in train.

*Action 5 – RM to review previous actions.*

### **4.2. Escapes**

4.2.1. There was a discussion on JA's paper and the potential to genetically sample all farms in order to establish origin of escaped fish. SSPO agreed to work with the Scottish Government on developing a method for identifying farm origin.

*Action 6 – SSPO & SG to explore methodology for identifying farm origin.*

4.2.2. Members agreed that escapes in freshwater represent more of an issue as smolts are imprinted on rivers which increases the chances of return. This is a problem from an introgression and an ecological perspective.

4.2.3. The Group agreed the following recommendation:

- *The group recommends that the SSPO work in partnership with stakeholders to develop a monitoring programme to identify the number and origin of farmed fish in the wild environment.*

*Action 7 – SSPO to consider how it will take forward a monitoring programme with stakeholders.*

4.2.4. JGB discussed the current exercise around updating the Scottish Technical Standard for Finfish aquaculture. Members heard that this is a live document with options for ensuring its compliance. The Scottish Government is also working with sector on developing a training programme for staff.

### **4.3. Disease Transfer**

4.3.1. GB gave a quick overview on the diseases which the sector currently vaccinates against and noted that unlike farmed, wild salmon can be adaptable to disease.

4.3.2. The Group agreed the following recommendation:

- *The Group recommends that work be undertaken to look at screening of wild and escaped fish for diseases in order to establish whether there is a significant risk from, and indeed to, salmon and trout farms.*

## **5.1. Spatial Planning**

5.1.1. It was agreed by the group to change the wording of this additional area from “Spatial Planning” to “Site Location”.

5.1.2. There was consensus that getting the right operation in the right location should be paramount and members agreed the following:

- *The Group recommends that established farm sites with an evidence based record of limiting impact on the environment should remain but where farm sites are poorly located, based on evidence, these should move to areas where impact will be significantly reduced.*

5.1.3. Members agreed to consider the evidence which should be used to decide whether a farm location is poorly sited or well sited.

Action 8– *All to consider what evidence should be considered to determine if a farm location is poorly sited or well sited.*

5.1.4. The group considered the following wording with regards to water body frameworks:

- *The Group recommends that Scotland’s area management regime should be reviewed to take account of the latest science on salmon farm sea lice connectivity.*
- *An area-based (waterbody) capacity model should be agreed to help advise on proposals for new fish farm developments or significant extensions. The model would take fish numbers x acceptable average female sea lice load (which may vary for locations with heightened sensitivity for wild salmon interactions e.g. SACs) to arrive at a maximum area limit/burden against which scope for sustainable further growth can be judged.*

5.1.5. JHL agreed to consider the above with a view to offering comments at the next meeting.

Action 9– *JHL to consider area management wording ahead of the next meeting.*

## **5.2. Transparency of information**

5.2.1. There were no actions taken under this item.

## **5.3. Wild salmon and the regulatory environment**

5.3.1. There were no actions taken under this item.

## **6. Draft Recommendations**

*Action 10 – RM to update the Group's recommendations.*

## **7. AOB**

7.1. There was no other business.

## **8. Date of next meeting**

8.1. The group will next meet on 23 April 2019 at Saughton House.

The meeting closed at 14:30.

## **List of Actions**

*Action 1 – JHL to review FMS papers and offer industry comments.*

*Action 2 – RM to invite the BTA onto the Working Group.*

*Action 3 – Members to send requests to RM (procedures in other jurisdictions).*

*Action 4 - JA to bring update on the technical working group's thoughts on thresholds to the next meeting.*

*Action 5 – RM to review previous actions.*

*Action 6 – SSPO & SG to explore methodology for identifying farm origin.*

*Action 7 – SSPO to consider how it will take forward a monitoring programme with stakeholders.*

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