

Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland

West Coast Aquaculture Project

14th April 2011 at The Highland Volunteering Centre,

Inverness

1030 am

MINUTES

Present : Brian Dornan, Louise Donnelly, Stuart Middlemas

REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED
REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED

Appologies:

REDACTED REDACTED REDACTED

1. Introductions and Welcome from Chairman

2. Notes of last meeting.

Notes from last meeting are accurate with no matters to raise.

Brian Dornan gave a very positive and informative presentation about interactions and current progress.

- Most controversial area is the industry collection and publishing of data. The SSPO sea lice database is going live on Good Friday.
- Meeting in May to discuss treatment strategies and host/pathogen interactions.
- Containment working group and the genetics work currently being carried out by MSS could be fed into this project.
- Escapes, traceability etc. Is it feasible that we replicate work done elsewhere in Scotland?

REDACTED commented on what a marvellous starting point this was and appreciate the acknowledgements made by BD about importance of continuing best practice in sea lice control and escapes procedures.

REDACTED concerned that we are closing the stable door after the horse has bolted due to the high rate of planning applications already being received.

BD stated that relative risk study could feed information before next year but we can only do what we can at present. REDACTED looking at what help is available at present

Briefly discussed catch figures for Scotland in the RAFTS/ ASFB annual report and how they have improved. Still very low catch figures in Lochaber and Argyll.

Need to consider the migration route for post smolts. Is the number of farms they pass an issue to be considered also? JA said that this can be put in context after SM work is complete but at present information is limited.

REDACTED interested in tidal generation in sounds such as Islay in terms of fish migration and how fish could potentially come to harm in the sounds from these tidal projects.

REDACTED explained a bit to us about the large flume studies being carried out at CEFAS to look at sounds. Migration route studies to date are on website. PC also told us about the Scottish Hydro Electric funding available to look at narrow channels

3. Update on grant award.

REDACTED has received the offer of the grant for the project and has accepted, signed and returned it. The project can now officially commence.

4. Update on staff arrangements.

REDACTED and REDACTED are now officially employed by RAFTS and also have a local host Trust. They are a shared resource between all the Trusts. Project is funded by Scottish Government which will direct how this work will progress.

5. Consideration and approval of job description.

REDACTED asked for any issues to be raised.

REDACTED asked that any involvement with AMAs needs clarification ASAP. BD asked for clarification from REDACTED and REDACTED regarding confidentiality agreements. REDACTED wondering in absence of TWG should REDACTED encourage this to enable continued data sharing from aquaculture? **ACTION BD to contact REDACTED and REDACTED .**

REDACTED feels that the emphasis in the job description is not on locational guidelines.

BD was nervous about the publicity and liaison section of the job description.

RAFTS and SG should have responsibility for publicity for this project through cooperation and liaison. These channels should not be used to attack SG as in the past.

REDACTED is going to issue final job description and close it.

REDACTED reminded us that we need to be inclusive with our work plans for this project within the current time frame because we need answers now but projects ensures that there is scope for refinement for future proposals.

6. Development of Work Plans

REDACTED told the group that how time is to be split between Trusts will be decided at a meeting very soon between REDACTED, REDACTED and REDACTED.

REDACTED emphasised again that time lines are required.

7. Practical implementation:

a. Confirmation of sweep netting sites

REDACTED checked to see if everyone was happy with their core sites.

REDACTED to discuss with REDACTED to see if Lagan Bay site in Islay can be included.

ACTION REDACTED and REDACTED to complete list and send out with amendments.

b. Genetics (REDACTED)

REDACTED gave a presentation which is available to the group.

REDACTED has a meeting with industry to discuss supply of genetic samples. REDACTED said it is imperative that industry should supply genetic samples and have an open door policy on this.

Should a 'Scottish' strain be developed and should an escape occur successful breeding is very likely but less likely to detect them genetically!!

More research is required. Data is available from the Polla.

REDACTED said he is more concerned about the trickle escapes of smolts. MC said that in a three loch system that was investigated genetics from aquaculture sources were found in all three.

REDACTED said that a history of unofficial stocking using unknown donors had occurred in the Western Isles so interesting what would be found there.

REDACTED asks us to think about what river systems we are to look at for collecting genetic samples. We need to confirm them ASAP and sample over the summer. Two of the six rivers should include sites where there have been confirmed escapes nearby.

REDACTED said that MSS are looking at genetics projects but was unsure which one. Reckons it may be to do with offshore energy and therefore any sites funded by this project will be limited to the projects criteria.

ACTION REDACTED and REDACTED will circulate the results of this when known by REDACTED.

c. Locational guidance

BD suggested that we should identify areas that are important for wild fisheries and go from there. These areas should incorporate environmental and economical factors.

REDACTED said that areas identified need to be identified using a scientific driver as Trusts and Boards need robust justification for all aquaculture planning responses and need to be able to justify any approval of new sites. How will lines be drawn to identify sensitive areas?

REDACTED asked what the process is for scoring, ranking and weighting of sites. Is sea trout separate from salmon in the criteria and weightings? He also stated that we have to remember that Boards are important in this project and that Trusts are here to inform the Boards.

REDACTED asks that we have separate sensitive areas for both sea trout and salmon.

We need buy in from MSS and SG and we may need to be able to stand up to some criticism. REDACTED asked at what stage we need to involve planners as this work is to inform them and we need their buy in also.

REDACTED said that we need to include a time line for this project to incorporate aquaculture as all places are not equal in aquaculture pressure for sites and expansion. Local government in WI had not refused a planning application there until last month.

REDACTED said the ultimate goal was to develop a model that everyone agrees with.

8. Policy development (REDACTED)

Need to inform policy in regards to Aquaculture.

What do we want to achieve and what would we like?

We want specifics to be achieved within a realistic timeframe. NASCO items applicable and useful starting point and keen to highlight examples of where things are going well. Also if you have problematic sites and numerous planning applications, need to work out taking policy forward to incorporate these issues.

REDACTED is concerned that REDACTED C is getting a lot of planning applications that could potentially affect Lochaber.

ASFB could put in overall comment to deal with this potential but timings are unknown.

BD agreed that it is important to identify fire breaks and buffer zones early on. REDACTED to come up with a protocol to deal with good (designated low risk sites) and bad (within sensitive/firebreak areas) applications as they come in.

REDACTED is concerned there is no guidance in terms of what to consider when responding to a planning application. REDACTED to feed information in.

REDACTED said to remember that this is an aquaculture and as such not sure general problem are appropriate. Everyone feels consideration should be given in meetings for all issues.

REDACTED does not feel there should be any issues arising if SG is involved in ALL discussions however sensitive.

BD said that NASCO would be way to improve things at a national level. What will drive things at a local level is our work on containment etc. BD said not moving away from NASCO goals but actually continually assessing as they go along. NASCO secretariat still signed up to original goals. NASCO trying to share data in a consistent format.

9. AOCB

Nothing else to discuss.

10. Date of next meeting

Scheduled for three meetings a year so need to have two more in the diary. Need one very shortly was suggested in about three months time when sweep netting would be complete, so middle of July.

Dates will be offered and look at availability.

Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland

West Coast Aquaculture Project

10.30am

Summary Note and Action Points

1. Welcome and Introductions

Present:

REDACTED (RAFTS), REDACTED (WRFT), REDACTED Argyll FT), REDACTED (RAFTS/Argyll FT), Stuart Middlemiss (Marine Scotland Science), Arthur Griffiths (Marine Scotland Policy), REDACTED (RDO), REDACTED (WSFT), REDACTED (Lochaber FT), REDACTED ((Lochaber FT), REDACTED (RDO), REDACTED (RDO)

2. Current status of application and funding decision

Changes:

Since the original application in October 2010 the submission had been revised following comments from Marine Scotland and the redrafted version distributed to trusts for review and comment.

Major changes from the application included:

- Removal of support to hatchery activities;
- Removal of individual new projects not within the core programme; and
- Removal of support for liaison between wild fish and aquaculture groups.

The intention now was that a total funding allocation of £225k would be allocated to the programme to deliver against the activities proposed. There would be some flexibility within these programmes and work streams and the Steering Group would determine and agree changes as required. Since submission the Lochaber DSFB and the North and West DSFB have withdrawn as active partners in the project due to:

- i. The removal of the hatchery programme (Lochaber DSFB); and
- ii. The view of the clerk to the Board that they had not been formally consulted on the contents of the proposal (North and West DSFB).

3. Summary of clarifications now required:

- Sweep netting sites, frequency etc
- Genetic sampling
- Staff and employment

The group agreed that the issues above were the most important matters to progress at this stage and during the meeting.

4. Developing an effective sweep netting programme:

- What sites
- What methods
- What frequency
- Matching programme to funds available

What is the question?

The group agreed that before any sampling programme could be developed that the question being asked of the sampling should be clarified.

They agreed that the project and sampling was:

- Concerned with sea trout post smolt sampling and not salmon;
- Seeking to fulfil and balance both local and national needs for information;
- Seeking to investigate the relationship between location of fish farms and post smolt lice loads;
- In investigating the relationship above local data needs would not be prioritised above the need to gather data informing the national / west coast situation as a whole;
- Trusts can prioritise their time to gather data from / sample sweep netting sites not included or directly funded by this project; and
- That in developing the sampling network the group had a choice as to whether to sample within a specified distance of a number of farms or sample at river mouth locations at a range of distances from farm sites. The group agreed that the latter option was preferred.

Methods:

For sampling in the funded project sweep netting was the only method to be applied as this would provide the best links to existing sampling coverage and time sequences and allow the most robust data comparisons and analyses. The SFCC sweep netting protocol would be used. After some debate regarding the relative merits of counting lice underwater or above the water surface (both approaches were applied by biologists present) it was agreed that:

- Lice records and the mechanics of sweep netting would follow the SFCC method and standard lice count recording protocols; and
- That in the first sampling round each trust would count lice using both underwater and above surface counts. These paired counts would be reported to the project staff and allow the demonstration of either;
 - The need to require a single protocol for lice counts to all sites; OR
 - That either count protocol could be applied without impact to the counting efficiency.

Actions:

- 4.1 All trusts to follow standard SFCC protocol for mechanics of sweep netting and lice recording sheets;

- 4.2 All trusts to count lice using both underwater and above surface protocols during first sampling round to allow conclusion to be made on either the application of a single protocol to all sites or that either protocol can be used.

Frequency of sampling and numbers of fish required:

The group agreed that it was more beneficial to have a greater number of sites in the sampling network which would each have, potentially, a lower frequency of sampling and fewer fish samples per site than including a reduced number of sites with multiple surveys and, potentially, more fish samples from each location. Within this context agreed that:

- A minimum of 30 fish from each site was the target sample size; and
- That this sample should be collected from netting taking place on **at least 2** separate occasions.

The group agreed that sampling should take place over the course of May, June and the first half of July. This would accommodate smolt migrations at a range of times over the period and accommodate in river migration differences over the project area.

Action:

- 4.3 All trusts to plan note sampling frequency requirements and fish numbers required from each site.

Sampling Network:

The group agreed the need to include sites from across a range of distances from farms. As a result of this and the need to include sites from longer distances from farms this may mean that fewer sites close to farms are sampled. The need for a general geographic spread of survey sites was recognised and that sample sites from long and short distances from farms would, ideally, be needed across the area and not all located in individual trust areas.

Key to the sampling network was the need to sample sites where there is some confidence that the required fish numbers can be captured. When, and if, new sites are included there is an accepted risk that it may not be possible to catch the required fish numbers from these sites. Within these constraints the group agreed that a total of 25 sites should be sought in the project area. These would be in sought in distance (km) bands of 0-10, 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50 from fish farm sites meaning that around 5 sites from each distance band would be ideally be selected.

A range of sites were then identified as “probable” and “possible” for inclusion in the sampling network based on these criteria of:

- Past success in gathering viable fish samples; and
- Seeking sites located at a range of distances from farms

The sites selected are set out in **Table 1** and the distribution of these sites by distance from farms summarised in **Table 2**.

Table 1: “Probable” and “Possible” Sampling Sites and Distance from Nearest Farm

Probables	Possibles
Loch Fyne (Cairn Dhu) (24km)	Flowerdale (26km)
Laxford (5km)	Kerry Bay (26km)
Loch Eil (20km)	Loch Ainort (<10km);
Kannaird (3km) (may be FoI Issue)	Loch Harport (<10km):
Carradale (Mull of Kintyre) (35km) (new farm very close to site so distance from farm may be incorrect)	Feochan (15km)
Duinard (24km) (access for sampling may need to be renegotiated by RAFTS or Marine Scotland)	Kyles (29km)
Tongue (38km)	
Ardroyal (22km)	
Dunstaffnage (3km)	
Camas na Gaul (6km)	
Borve (10km)	
Boor Bay (8km)	
Tiorsdahm (13km)	
West Tarbet (24km) (distance to be checked)	
West Riddon (13km)	
Polla (10km)	
Suinart (10km)	
TOTAL SITES: 17	TOTAL SITES: 6
TOTAL SITES: 23	

Table 2: Distribution of Distances from Farm Sites

Site Type	Distance from farms (km)				
	0-10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50
“Probables”	111111111	111	1111	11*	
“Possibles”	11	1	111		

*: Includes Carradale site which may now be very close to farm operation.

From the sites identified at the meeting there is an overabundance of sites at the closer distances from farms. Therefore, all trusts to consider and bring forward potential sites in 30-40 and 40-50km distances from farm sites. When / if identified then some sites closer to farm operations may need to be removed from the current listing. Potential sites may include locations around Thurso, Kyle of Tongue (Naver), Small Isles (Rhum, Eigg, Canna) or Argyll (Mull of Kintyre).

Actions:

- 4.4 All trust to consider and propose additional sites for inclusion in sampling network located in 30-40 and 40-50km distances from farms. A final site listing should be

agreed at the initial meeting of the Steering Group before the sampling season commences.

4.5 Proposed sites are requested to be notified to RAFTS **by Monday 04 April**.

Matching funds to sampling requirements:

The group agreed that a simple approach to making payments to trust for sampling work should be sought. It was agreed that payments should be outcome based and that the key outcome from each sample site was the provision of a sample of at least 30 fish from at least 2 sampling visits over the period May to mid July. To achieve this, trusts would need to visit each site on at least 2 but, potentially on more than 2 occasions to gather the necessary data.

A total of £75k is allocated to sweep net sampling and 25 sample sites are agreed as the target site number. Therefore, it was agreed that £3k per site would be paid to trusts and that this would be to deliver the necessary fish samples from each site. It was noted that some sample locations in the Western Isles may require overnight stay, ferry travel and significant journey times to reach the sample sites. This may require the payment of additional sums to cover survey costs.

Action:

4.6 All trusts to note payment level of £3k per site to undertake sampling as required to gather necessary fish numbers.

5. Principles of employment (general):

- Employment by whom
- A shared resource

RAFTS was proposed and agreed as employer of project staff. Management would be provided by RAFTS, the Steering Group and local and all trust partners. All agreed that staff would be an equal and shared resource which would be visible and work across all trust areas equally regardless of working location.

Action:

5.1 RAFTS to progress with preparation of job description with project staff which when agreed would be distributed to partners for final review and approval. Contracts would be prepared at that stage.

6. Project Steering Group:

- Membership and Numbers

It was agreed that the Steering Group should be made up of representatives from RAFTS, participating trusts and Marine Scotland (Policy and Science). In order to keep the Steering

Group to a manageable size proposed that each trust should nominate a single representative to attend each meeting although, of course, alternative attendees could attend as required.

Action:

6.1 Trusts to consider representation and advise when Steering Group meeting is convened.

- Frequency and date of next meeting

The group agreed that approximately x3 Steering Group meetings would be required and that more intensive effort might be necessary to progress the programme initially. Inverness was agreed as the preferred meeting location.

Action:

6.2 RAFTS to arrange first Steering Group meeting for April 2011.

7. AOB

There was no other business.

REDACTED

RAFTS

17 March 2011