SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 1 October 2017, at 10.30am, Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross

1 PRESENT:- Messrs Balfour, Campbell, Picken, Pirie, Walker & Wight.

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs Duncan, McLennan and Stephen.

3 CHAIRMAN:- CC detailed several changes in personnel at MS and MSS. Graham Black is now head of MS with five positions on the level below him. Mike Palmer heads the division of recreational fishing, aquaculture and Crown Estate interests. Prof Cotton is thought to be the senior person at or in an overseeing role at MSS.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:- JP declared a financial interest in item 14, revaluation.

5 MINUTES OF 25 JUNE 2017:- All agreed their adoption and posting on the webite.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 25 JUNE 2017:- None.

7 A CONSTITUTION OR VISION FOR THE MFC

Most recently, December 1987, the MFC agreed on a policy for migratory fish. It has clearly been overtaken by events. It was agreed that the articles etc of SANA Ltd covered the MFC which acts under the delegated authority of the Board. Also agreed was there being no need for a vision statement. The above will not change when Angling Scotland Ltd is in place.

8 WILD FISHERIES REFORM

The SRG has not met since 20 April. Since the first six weekly update released in June the second has been posted on the Scotgov website and the third is overdue but is in preparation.

From postings on the Scotgov website, the MSS tagging project at Armadale finished on 25 August with 70 fish tagged although the target was 750 fish. The biggest day was 1 August with 17 fish tagged. No fish were tagged over the final 12 days. This project started relatively late in the season and during contacts with MS CC has suggested that unused tags be allocated to a project including early running fish.

9 CROWN ESTATE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

SANA is not alone in advocating support for migratory fish from the Crown Estate’s income from salmon farming sites, at the very least in aquaculture affected areas. CC’s paper was well received at the recent meeting of the group. There was no criticism from the SSPO although their usual representative was not present. With the same companies operating in Scotland and Norway it may be that conditions imposed in Norway but not in Scotland are beginning to be accepted as part of the way forward in Scotland. After the meeting, Crown Estate Scotland representatives introduced CC to another official, a former employee in the aquaculture sector, to arrange a meeting to discuss issues raised in his paper. This meeting, reported to MFC members, was very productive and CC is increasingly optimistic for the impact of aquaculture on wild fish being mitigated.

Closed containment, even at all life stages, is increasingly being seen as the future. There is however an uncertain aspect to this, namely where the closed containment sites would be and what type of containment. Politicians, and anglers, might not be pleased to see salmon farming move away from the West and the Isles.

The Scottish parliamentary inquiry into the aquaculture industry is getting underway. Should we be considering an input to the inquiry? It was agreed to wait and see if the civil servants ask SANA to take part.

In the devolution of the Crown Estate, which has control over granting sea bed leases whereas Town and County planning grants permissions, should the whole process be moved to Marine Planning at MS and controlled at a national level? One consequence would be the removal of the defence of consent granted should site problems arise. More monitoring of sites might also result.

The statistical report on aquaculture for 2016 has been published. Among extensive data on all aspects of the industry is that 311K salmon escaped after five incidents at salt water sites.

10 CONSERVATION REGULATIONS

The grades for rivers for 2018 were recently published. Comments have to be received by 13 October. The process for allocating grades has become increasingly elaborate and detailed. The Liaison Group is now more comfortable with how the strength of a salmon stock is estimated. Over the three years of the process some grades have remained the same while others have moved, some up others down. A few grades did cause a degree of surprise. It was decided that a note would be submitted including appreciation of the extensive work involved in producing the grades.

Included in the conservation considerations was that of permitted baits and lures. A group of five looking at this reported in June. It recommended that no new legislation was needed. The present enabling of local rules is working well.

11 STANCE ON PINK SALMON

Many uncertainties surround the numbers and distribution of the large spike in the numbers of pink salmon which arrived in UK seas and rivers this year. Spawning has been observed in Scottish rivers. If or when these eggs will hatch is not known at present. Whether this influx is an indicator of the future remains to be seen. Interactions with native fish are unpredictable but are unlikely to be positive. It was agreed that CC would write to MS and include the recommendation that pinks be designated ‘invasive non-native species’. The UK group for assessing events such as the present arrival of pinks has issued a preliminary assessment. More information will become available including via genetics where the fish originated.

Another aspect of the presence of these fish is that nothing in present legislation in Scotland covers fishing for onchorhynchus species which have come in from the sea. CC will also raise this matter in his letter to MS.

12 NASCO

Peter Hutchinson has now retired. AW will write thanking him for the assistance that he has given members of the MFC over the years and for taking time to come and speak to the MFC.

There is nothing at present to react to. Numerous reports are on the NASCO website.

13 FMS

Via their website and circulations FMS keeps its members well informed on fishery matters. The AGM and members’ meeting takes place on 10 November.

14 VALUATION OF SALMON FISHERIES

After the extended period of seven year, salmon fisheries, where a DSFB has asked for it to be done, have been valued. The indicating year for the new values is 2015. Current values relate to 2007. As far as looked at, all net fisheries outside estuary limits and inactive net and coble ones have been valued at £0. Although many of these had only nominal values they did, unless owned by the DSFB or were excluded by a local agreement, contribute to funding the DSFB via the DSFB levy.

The total sum being paid by the government over 2016 to 2018 to net fisheries is known approximately. Details of its distribution on an annual basis were expected to have been released by now but apparently not yet. Nevertheless these net fisheries have an ‘income’ which would seem to be the basis for a value and a contribution to the DSFB. Beyond 2018 and the review circumstances may well change. CC will write to Alan Wells who may know more on the background to this.

15 CATCHES 2016 AND 2017

In September the 2016 salmon and sea trout catches for England and Wales were published. The NE of England net catch of salmon was 18,824 (as was gleaned from NASCO papers in June) with the sea trout catch at 38,863 ( av wt 3.8lb ).

This year in Scotland the pattern and scale of catches of salmon and of grilse are thought to have been much as in the past two years with some rivers up and others disappointing despite the generally wet summer. Grilse numbers remained low in most rivers compared to even relatively recent years.

While sea trout catches remain well below those of the early years of Scottish data they are holding up in the East and larger fish were not uncommon. In places finnock have appeared in good numbers. On a North West river the beneficial effect on finnock of fallowing nearby salmon cages was marked.

16 NMFC MINUTES

The minutes refer to an emphasis on salmon in the WFR. When representing SANA, CC tries to present a balanced view on migratory and non-migratory issues.

17 SANA LTD

The SANA Ltd board meets next week. Ian Robertson, chairman of Angling Scotland Ltd, will be present. The articles for ASL are almost finalised as is the plan for the launch of ASL.

There has been a turnover of office bearers of the Coaching Committee.

18 AOCB:- None

19 The next meeting of the MFC was set for 10.30am in Kinross on Sunday 3 December.

The meeting concluded at 2pm