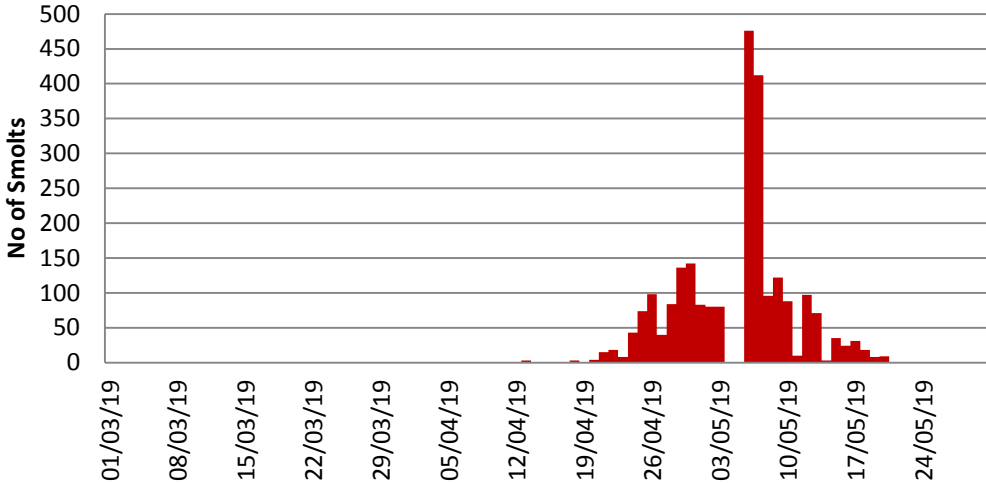


FNLFT Progress Report 02.2019

R. Laughton, 05/08/2019

The following report provides an up-date on activities from 15th March 2019 to 31st July 2019. The report is set out in the form of the Fisheries Management Tables (1 to 7) and activities relating to each “Issue” are documented for each river.

1. The Environment

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie																												
<p>1.1 Marine Environment/ Marine survival</p>	<p>AST Missing Salmon Project: The project reached its funding target and is now underway. For further details/updates on the project click here. Receivers deployed in lower Findhorn and Bay during late March. Smolt trap installed on Findhorn during on 10th April 2019 and operated until 20th May 2019, a period of 40 operating days. Three days were lost, in particular the 4th and 5th May were a significant loss due to high flows and “Duck Race” and seems highly likely that a large majority of the smolts emigrated that weekend. The third lost day was due to the drum jamming in lower flows.</p> <p>In total 2415 salmon smolts, 17 salmon parr, 7 sea trout smolts and 10 brown trout were captured. 3 minnows, 4 eels and one brook lamprey also captured. All 100 smolts captured for tagging by 2nd May. Figure below shows the timing of smolt passage with the majority migrating in early May.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <h3>Findhorn Salmon Smolts 2019</h3>  <table border="1"> <caption>Findhorn Salmon Smolts 2019 Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>No of Smolts</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>01/03/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>08/03/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>15/03/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>22/03/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>29/03/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>05/04/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>12/04/19</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>19/04/19</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>26/04/19</td><td>100</td></tr> <tr><td>03/05/19</td><td>470</td></tr> <tr><td>10/05/19</td><td>100</td></tr> <tr><td>17/05/19</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>24/05/19</td><td>10</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>Receivers have been uplifted and AST are now analysing the data for the tagged smolts and hope to have preliminary results in Sept/Oct. The AST have indicated that they will continue tagging next season although the exact format of the tagging will depend on this seasons results.</p>			Date	No of Smolts	01/03/19	0	08/03/19	0	15/03/19	0	22/03/19	0	29/03/19	0	05/04/19	0	12/04/19	0	19/04/19	10	26/04/19	100	03/05/19	470	10/05/19	100	17/05/19	30	24/05/19	10
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<p>1.2 Freshwater Environment and Land Use</p>	<p>A96 Dualling: <i>Hardmuir – Fochabers Section</i>: Bid to undertake the fish/habitat/invertebrate sampling at each of the 22 river crossing points was prepared and submitted to Mott MacDonald Sweco in early August. A9 Dualling: no further activity.</p> <p>Clunas Hydro Scheme: Hydro scheme proposed from upper tributary of Cawdor Burn and existing Clunas Reservoir. Scheme involve installation of low head dam, to allow</p>																														

	<p>water transfer from upper Cawdor Burn to Clunas Reservoir, on the Muckle Burn/Findhorn catchment. Cross catchment transfer providing potential for transfer of INN species such as Am Signal Crayfish. Plans for the scheme submitted in December 2018. Comments prepared for FNLFT raising issues regarding crayfish, water transfer, design of weir and fish pass. Comments and objection raised on behalf of Findhorn Board. Currently no further progress on the scheme.</p> <p>Tomatin Railway Viaduct Protection: Extensive river works proposed by Network rail to protect foundations of viaduct pillars. Comments and concerns raised with developers. Further revision of proposals received in last 10 days and will be reviewed.</p> <p>Mosset Burn: Plans for burn works at Sanquhar mains approved by SEPA and will include some gravel removal and tree removal. Timing of works agreed as August 2019.</p>
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2. Adult Salmon and Trout Stocks

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
2.1 Adult Salmon and Trout Escapement, Exploitation And Conservation	<p>Catch Data: 2019 Catch data: Findhorn and Nairn both reported good spring salmon catches.</p> <p>Linkwood Burn: Linkwood weir fish pass in design and installation should progress this year.</p> <p>Cawdor Burn Weir: Plans to install new fish pass completed and provisional date for installation is August this year.</p> <p>Exploring fish counter options with Tritech for both the Findhorn and the Lossie.</p>		

3. Juvenile Salmon and Trout Stocks

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
3.1 Juvenile Salmon and Trout distribution and abundance Data	<p>National EF Survey Scotland (NEPS): Marine Science Scotland (MSS) completed report on 2018 data and all three rivers classed as Grade 1!</p> <p>Further survey confirmed this August and September. FNLFT commissioned to complete Findhorn, Lossie and Beaully sites (Total 60 sites). Nairn DSFB will conduct their own EF surveys all data has been passed on to Ali Skinner (Nairn DSFB). Training of summer EF personnel begins on 8th August and surveys start on 9th August.</p> <p>Lossie: General survey to compliment NEPs planned for autumn 2019.</p> <p>SFCC Electrofishing Training: Two Introductory Courses and one Team Leader course delivered through SFCC/Inverness and Barony. Team Leader cancelled.</p>		

4. Protection of Salmon and Trout Stocks

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
4.1 Predation by sawbill ducks, cormorants, seals, mink and other animals	<p>Sawbills: Further counts were completed during May by bailiffs, keepers and volunteers and good <i>ad hoc</i> data from a number of anglers and from the bailiffs also collected.</p> <p>Licence for 2018-19 received from Roger Knight (Spey) and scaring plus control measures were completed. Data for 2019-20 licence application sent to Roger Knight and submitted as part of Moray Firth Sawbill Control licence application. Awaiting results.</p> <p>Seals: Drone surveys completed in February, data compiled and aiming to review data by end of year.</p> <p>Mink: Mink sightings reported, from the coast between Burghead and Lossiemouth. James Symonds (SISI) installed traps along coast with volunteers and 4 more mink captured. Further sightings also reported from the Nairn but still no captures! Summer is a key period for mink dispersal so additional monitoring rafts have been installed, around Findhorn Bay, Muckle and Mosset Burns, along river Lossie and upper Nairn. James and I have recruited more volunteers to help look after these rafts.</p>		

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
4.4 Control of illegal fishing and maintaining effective bailiffing.	<p>Regular staff meetings and discussions on work programs continued. Monthly reports prepared by Sean and circulated to respective Boards. A distinct upturn in poaching incidents over the last few weeks, mostly anglers without fishing tickets but a range of other incidents also inspected.</p>		

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
4.2 Non Native species	<p>HLF SISI Project: Project bid was finally approved and formally started on 1st November 2017. The project will run from 2018 to 2022.</p> <p><i>Giant Hogweed Control:</i> Repeating treatment across the sections of Findhorn, Nairn, Lossie and Mosset will be a the core of our approach this year but we have also targeted the Lossie from Kellas to Elgin, and the upper Muckle Burn as high priority this year.</p> <p>Nairn: GH treatment completed from Whitebridge to Nairn harbour. Cawdor, Kilravoch and Geddes Estates completed treatments across their estates. Highland Council and Ali Skinner (Nairn DSFB) assisted with treatment from Howford Bridge downstream to Harbour. SISI project, FNLFT and contractors also focused on this area and the Auldearn Burn. Green Hive volunteers also supported the control efforts.</p> <p>In general GH density is dropping sharply along the Nairn although several small but dense pockets still persist on the right bank upstream from Firhall.</p> <p>Muckle Burn: SISI/FNLFT efforts focused on the upper infections at Earlsmill Bridge to Barleymill Bridge. Dense infestations and these were treated with the help of volunteer and a local farmer, George Elder on three occasions. No flowering plant this year but still significant seed load in the soil. Some additional treatment of GH downstream also completed by local farmers, volunteer and contractors. A good start but significant work still to on the Muckle. However, more support has been raised for future seasons.</p> <p>Findhorn: Treatment completed from Daltulich to Waterford Recycling Centre. Some outcrops of flowering plants were discovered this year in heavily treated areas such as Daltulich, which was surprising but may reflect the exceptionally good growth conditions. GH generally declining sharply above A96 and encouraging progress has been made towards the recycling centre at Waterford with a significant input from Wild Things.</p> <p>However, GH along the railway particularly behind Greshop Industrial Estate remains a considerable concern with on limited signs of control. This if left unchecked will continue to re-seed treated areas downstream. Matter has been raised with local MSPs, SISI project manager and local press.</p> <p>Mosset Burn: GH treatment completed along entire length. Very few plants now reaching flowering stage and there is a clear reduction in plants. However, still a few plants present at the upper limits of the infestation so a clear need to continue control across the length of the burn. Control largely completed by “Monday Night is Hogweed Night” volunteers.</p> <p>Lossie: Control completed on Kellas and Brokentore by SISI, volunteers, contractors and Estate staff. Good progress has been made with densities of GH now clearly dropping. Work also attempted between Cloddach and Brokentore but severely hampered by rain preventing spraying. Cloddach to the Quarry/Wester Manbeen also hampered but chopping of flowering plants completed.</p> <p>Significant control started at Wester Manbeen by FNLFT, SISI and contractors funded by Crown Estate. Three treatments were carried out and this proved successful with only a few GH plants reaching the flowering stage this year, a significant reduction in seed load to the river.</p> <p>Sadly now further progress was made downstream to Elgin and GH infestations remain very dense.</p> <p><i>Japanese Knotweed:</i> Plans being developed for Sept 2019 with James Symonds.</p> <p>Additional Staff: Scott Galbraith joined the Trust as part of the SISI team in July as</p>		

Assistant Project Officer. The post will last for three months and also include work on the Spey and up in the Cromarty area. Scott is a graduate from UHI and completed a number of projects with the Trust during his studies and also worked with the Trust on INNs control and electrofishing surveys. We are delighted to welcome him for this new post.

INNs Surveys: Walk over surveys across all three rivers, the Mosset, Muckle and other burns have also been completed during July by James and Scott and volunteer help. The data will be compared with previous surveys to provide an indication of progress.

In addition a drone survey of the hogweed and knotweed was completed in July at selected locations with the help of drone pilot - Mark Laing. An example of GH control progress at Mundole on the Findhorn is shown below.

Giant Hogweed at Mundole, River Findhorn July 2015.



Giant Hogweed at Mundole, River Findhorn July 2019.



My thanks to James and Vicky for all their efforts to ensure the SISI project progress rapidly this year and to all the proprietors, farmers, contractors, staff and volunteers who have helped with INNs control. Keep up to date on SISI project at www.invasivespecies.scot

5. Habitat Management

Factor	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
5.1 Habitat Management and Enhancement	<p>Mosset Burn: Tommy McDermott (Trex Ecology) completed walk over survey of lower Mosset in July. He is currently contacting farmers and other stakeholders to discuss habitat management issues and concerns and will complete report shortly.</p> <p>Black Burn, Lossie: Valerie and I are still considering developing habitat improvement ideas and looking into potential funders.</p>		

6. Management of Other Fish Species

Factor/Issues	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
6.1 Other Fish Species/ Better data required	<p>Pink Salmon: If the pink salmon spawning successfully in 2017 we can reasonably expect to see some return this summer. FMS have raised awareness of this issue already and we have also done the same. To date no sightings on any of the three rivers but there have been reports from seven other Scottish rivers including the Deveron and Dee. Any sighting should be reported to the FNLFT office.</p>		

7. Education and Publicity

Factor	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
7.1 To educate and publicise fisheries management	<p>Schools Go To Fish:</p> <p><i>Farr and Daviot Primary Schools:</i> Both completed their “Schools GoTo Fish” trip to the Dunlichity Trout Fishery during May. The pupils were assisted by expert angler, David Mateer, and James Symonds (SISI) and despite cold and wet conditions nearly all the pupils managed to catch a trout! Pupils also enjoyed a bigs and beastie hunt in the Dunlichity Burn. My thanks to Dave, James, Mike at the Dunlichity Fishery for hosting the project and Hugh Carter (UHI) for helping with the bug hunt. This project was supported by the Strathnairn Community Fund (£1875).</p> <p><i>Andersons, Pilmuir and Kinloss Primaries:</i> Three classes completed their “Schools Go To Fish” trip to the Kellas Trout Fishery during June. The pupils were assisted by anglers from the Forres Angling Association and all were successful in landing a trout! Pupils also enjoyed a bugs and beastie hunt on a nearby burn and river walk to look at habitat and INNs plant control using pigs!</p> <p>My thanks to Tony Watts, Steve Pannell, Donnie McBean all from Forres AA, Donnie Mackenzie (Findhorn Fishery Board) and Hugh Carter (UHI) for helping with trip. Also thanks to Eddie Gormanley (Kellas Estate) for hosting the event. This project is funded by Tesco Bags of Help (£2000).</p> <p>2020 Schools Funding Bids: Three funding bids were completed during January to Strathdearn Community Fund (£743.00), Rothes Wind Farm Community Fund (£4125.00) and Woodward Charitable Trust (£1875.00). The Strathdearn and the Rothes WF application have both been approved.</p> <p>Publicity- See www.fnlft.org.uk Facebook for INNS control see www.invasivespecies.scot</p>		