

## FNLFT Progress Report 01.2020

R. Laughton, 17/02/2020

The following report provides an update on activities from 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019 to 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020. The report is set out in the form of the Fisheries Management Tables (1 to 7).

**Overall Management:** Memorandums of Understand have been prepared and will be circulated to both Boards after review by FNLFT Board.

Progress on new management plans delayed due to a very busy Jan/Feb. However, part of the delay was due to completing the salmon pressures map (see below) which although fairly time consuming provided a good basis for developing many aspects of the plans. Work will continue and will circulate draft plans prior to Easter (12<sup>th</sup> April) for comment.

**Equipment:** Order for new Mitsubishi L200 confirmed today. I am very grateful to the Findhorn Board for assisting with the purchase. A few details to still sort out but it should be on the road in about 7-10days.

**Computers:** New computers have been purchased and installed.

**FMS-Scottish Government Meeting:** I attended the meeting with Scottish Government at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in early January. The meeting proved very useful with numerous MSPs attending to hear the review of current work underway on salmon. Presentations were made by a wide range of Trusts/Boards, FMS, AST, NASCO and Marine Science Scotland and others. There was a distinct feeling that Scottish Government have recognised the importance of salmon to Scotland and that it requires considerable work and support to maintain healthy numbers.

**SFCC Annual Biologist Meeting:** I attended that annual biologists meeting at Pitlochry in Feb. The second day which focused on upland management and reforestation was particularly useful.

### 1.1 Environment - Marine Environment/ Marine survival

**AST Missing Salmon Project:** Several developments within the AST smolt tagging project over the winter.

2019 Report: Report is going through final edits with AST and should be circulated shortly.

Smolt Tagging: There is a shortage of skilled taggers, so AST have funded the training of Trust/Board staff to carry out the procedures on their respective rivers. To achieve this considerable training is required to meet the Home Office Licence requirements. RL and Mirella Toth (seasonal helper) completed the first part of the course in February and both passed the exams! Next phase is to complete the practical surgery training and assessment during Feb/Mar.

Assuming we both pass our tagging, team will be RL/MT as taggers, with Sean Maclean and Alister Taylor assisting the training required considerable study and was completed at SCENE Loch Lomond and we will be under the supervision of Colin Adams from Glasgow University.

Trap Location: Initial plans were to re-install at Red Craig in early April 2020 to allow a direct comparison with the 2019 data. However, there is considerable value in moving the trap further upstream to gather information on smolt passage through part of the Findhorn gorge. A potential site in Coulmony is being observed but it is not looking very promising due to a split

in the river flows forming at higher flows. Further sites will be looked at over the next 10 days and a final decision on the location will be made.

Receiver Installation: Receiver locations have been identified if the trap is installed further upstream. These will be installed with help from Sean and Alister during March.

For further details/updates on the AST Missing Salmon Project, [click here](#).

## 1.2 Environment Freshwater and Land Use

**Findhorn-Lossie: A96 Dualling: Hardmuir – Fochabers Section:** Two meeting attended to discuss approach and comment on some initial designs for bridge crossings and river habitat survey design. Habitat surveys will start on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb weather permitting.

**Findhorn: Tomatin Railway Viaduct Protection:**

2019 Works: some slippage of soil was reported after the wet winter weather. Repairs are planned.

2020 Works: Works on south pillar planned for June 2020. Sean and I will continue to liaise with the site engineers and encourage Network rail to better inform upper proprietors of the activities.

**Findhorn: Moy Estate Access Track:** Burn crossing visited with Duncan Mackenzie (Corrybrough Estate) and Sean Maclean. Open ford crossing planned with improvement to the banks planned for vehicle access. No threats to fish in the burn.

**RAF Lossiemouth New Outfall Pipe:** Meeting attended to discuss and review plans for a new pipeline and outflow to be installed to take waste water, surface water and aircraft wash water from the RAF base out to sea after treatment and replace the existing disposal method which is drainage through the Covesea Burn. Installation of the new system will improve disposal considerably. Concern raised regarding salmon and sea trout smolts but wastewater will be fully treated and there should be no issues. Installation proposed later in 2020.

**Fish Stocking – Mossend Farm:** Provided advice on stocking a small trout pond.

Riverworks Consultations	Received and Reviewed	Ongoing	Completed
Findhorn	3	2	1
Lossie	1	0	1
Coastal	1	1	0

## 2. Adult Salmon and Trout Escapement, Exploitation and Conservation

**Salmon Pressures Map:** Through FMS and Scottish Government funds were made available to complete maps identifying the main pressures on salmon within Scottish rivers. Pressures included, obstruction, diffuse pollution, lack of forest cover, temperature etc. The project had a tight time scale but both maps and comments were submitted for the Findhorn and Lossie by early February. The project took quite a bit of time but was very useful and the outcomes will be used to develop the new management plans.

**Catch Data:** 10lb Salmon caught on the opening day on the Findhorn!

**Linkwood Burn:** Attended meeting to review progress during December 2019. Linkwood weir fish pass installed during 2019. A walk over upstream indicated large spawning redds were present from either sea trout or salmon. Good sign that fish were using the pass some electrofishing will be carried out in 2020 to deterring the juvenile fish present. Focus not moving to the next two barriers at Longmorn and Glen Elgin distilleries.

**Cawdor Burn Weir:** Planning permission granted works likely to progress in 2020.

### 3. Juvenile Salmon and Trout Distribution and Abundance Data

**National EF Survey Scotland (NEPS):** FNLFT commissioned to complete Findhorn, Lossie and Beaully sites (Total 54 sites).

Data all submitted to MSS who are currently analysing the data and report should be available during April.

### 4. Protection of Fish Stocks

**Sawbills:** Further count were completed on December 17<sup>th</sup> with goosander and merganser numbers low and limited to the Bay and lower river. Very icy conditions hampered counts in the upper river due to safety. Next count will take place in February.

Licence for 2019-20 was received from SNH via Roger Knight (Spey). Sean is organising control measures. As always volunteers are welcome to help with counts and any ad hoc sightings are very useful data in support of our licence application. Text/email any data to Sean or I.

**Seals:** Still intending to review data in early 2020. We remain part of the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan.

**Mink:** James Symonds (SISI) has continued mink control and expanded the raft and trap network further. A few sightings and prints on the monitoring rafts reported but no further captures.

**Control of illegal fishing:** New full-time bailiff Alister Taylor appointed on the Findhorn. Regular meetings with Sean and Alister will continue throughout the year.

### Control of Non Native species

**HLF SISI Project:** Excellent progress across all three rivers was made in 2019. James and I have been reviewing targets for 2020 which will build on last year's efforts, Lossie and Muckle Burn are identified as key targets along with maintaining control in previous areas. New seasonal project officer will also be employed this summer. Training courses (x2) will be offered, and I will be attending the steering group meeting in March. Keep up to date on SISI project at [www.invasivespecies.scot](http://www.invasivespecies.scot)

**Wester Manbeen Project:** Report on 2019 activities and invoice submitted to Crown Estate and I will be discussing plans to continue the project with the Crown in the next few days.

**New Funding for Lossie INNs Control:** Valerie submitted and successfully secured addition funding to continue our INNs control programme on the River Lossie in 2020. The £20k funding is from EB Scotland and will be used to continue the control of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed from Kellas to Elgin.

## 5. Habitat Management

**Mosset Burn Survey:** Tommy McDermott (Trex Ecology) and I presented a summary of the lower Mosset survey to the Forres Community Council (FCC) in January. The meeting was well attended, and the report very well received. The FCC are considering the findings and may opt to form a management group to take some of the recommendations forward. Articles on the report and meeting also appeared in the Forres Gazette.

## 6. Management of Other Species

No reports.

## 7. Education and Publicity

**Schools Go To Fish 2020:** The Strathdearn Community Fund (£743.00) and the Rothes WF (£4125.00) funding applications were approved for 2020. Mosstowie and Alves Primary schools have received their classroom talk and Dallas is due on the 6<sup>th</sup> March. Date still to be confirmed with Strathdearn School.

The SISI project has visited Mosstowie to create a range of films and other material based on control non-native species. James and Vicky visited the school to start the project in February and it prompted great excitement, I look forward to the outcomes!

**Events: "Findhorn Bay Arts Festival 21<sup>st</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020.** Attended initial meeting in Findhorn and developing project funding bid with Kresanna Aigner And James Chitty to highlighting salmon and rivers as part of the September festival.

**Auction 2020:** Auction went live on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 and is currently at £6180. Valerie and I are promoting it as much as possible and any further assistance, ideas and contacts would be very welcome. Link to Auction click on logo below.



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