



This update summarises key work tasks completed since the last update 6 September 2022. September's focus was carrying out fish surveys and invertebrate sampling to fill some data gaps and gather a beaver baseline with help from UHI and Beaver Trust. October-November has involved survey/sampling tidy-up work, transition to office working and grant applications for Invasive plant control and trainee staff. The smolt report should be complete by 8 December board meeting. Monthly team meetings occur between Frank, Mike, Ali and me (Tom also attends). This update has been re-structured to allow better reporting against the FMP.

Beaully Fishery Board (was 'A Better BFB')

Office accom- Renovations and odd-jobs complete- **Thank you Fishery Board**, especially Tom and Jim! Have transitioned to working from the office. Big Dug shelving should be delivered beginning December.

H & Safety- Grey vehicle booked into repair panel in January, due a service by 13 Dec.

Staffing- Our application to host a Working With Rivers trainee to help with smolts, efishing and hydromorph walkovers (for April-September 2023) was successful! 😊 We just have to hope a graduate wants to work with us! Seasonal Bailiff position is being advertised with lesser requirements than last year to see who's out there.

Fishery Management Plan- Just waiting for Foreword before putting FMP on to website. c£4,000 will be available to board for putting into Storyboard format.

NBFT- Updated contact details on the website for the 2 separate boards. Attended meeting 2 Nov.

Policy docs- It is stipulated in the '[A Code of Good Practice for Scotland's District Salmon Fishery Boards](#)' and is also a requirement of various grant funding applications that we have must have an Equal opportunities policy, with other policies being recommended. We do have a H+S policy which touches on a few good governance topics.

Future: Safety light at Corff store to be re-activated. PAT testing and audit required. FMP and latest Annual report need putting on to website once complete. Storyboard FMP format to be completed in 2 stages (Stage one before end of March, stage 2 from April 2023). Attend Working with Rivers info session Dec 13, recruit and purchase laptop for Trainee. Write various policy documents over the winter for the board to comment on/ approve in the spring.

People: Community engagement, participation and heritage

Engagement with the community has mainly been through TFL's Beaver consultation and through liaising with landowners and BAC about getting funding to eradicate Japanese knotweed on the Lower Beaully (See '**Invasives**').

Oral history Project- Oral History interviews have been archived with Am Baile. Just waiting for confirmation they are publicly accessible.

Beaully Angling Club- Myself and AS attended and talked about the board's work (24 Nov).

Video and photos of efishing received from Beaver Trust- could be useful for future engagement.

Future: One Oral history interview still outstanding (Firth). Oral history project launch in due course. Annual Public meeting 8 Dec followed by Xmas socialising.

Monitoring Methods (was 'Furthering our understanding')

Fish counts/ SSE- Liaison meeting was productive with confirmation that the new AI counters would be installed over winter at Aigas and Kilmorack and operational for the 2023 season (Beannacharan to be installed 2024). Informally the raw unvalidated fish counts were reported as Beannacharan:228, Kilmorack 3985, Aigas 3350 (which would appear up from last year). Some fish counts have been received to 10 Oct but will be reported as a total ahead of the board meeting. When asked if it would be possible to provide the kelt numbers observed during kelt releases

SSE responded that it would be very difficult to quantify. SSE also confirmed that there was no data to pass on regarding fish counts when fish passes were trialled in the past in Dec-March, it is thought there is a thermal barrier to migration in this period.

Rod catch- historic LBFS rod-catch data submitted to SAL-MOVE project (14 Oct).

Electro-fishing- Efishing (invertebrate and eDNA sampling) for Beaver baseline occurred in September with help from UHI, Beaver Trust and TFL. 21 sites (5 fully quantitative, 16 semi-quantitative) completed. Low densities of trout fry found at Affric, confirmation of impassable waterfall adjacent to Plodda. Kennel and Home burn (Tomich) had good densities of both juvenile trout and salmon. Sampling trout for isotope analysis to see if fry are progeny of sea or brown trout origin should be done as soon as fry emerge (i.e. May). Data check and entry is currently being carried out by myself and Ali. Coastal burn fish surveys were completed in August.

Farrar genetics efishing invoice sent 6 Oct.

Smolt monitoring- Data from SSE received 6 Nov regarding number of smolts at dam gate slots in spring (approximate 307 smolts total). See Appendix. Smolt report to be provided ahead of Dec board meeting.

Fish habitat/ substrate walkovers- Have discovered the '[National Collection of Arial Photography](#)' website which contains arial photos from the 1950s of the catchment. These will be good to review when writing the Cannich/Affric and future reports (comparing the substrate/ fish habitat then [pre-dam] to now).

Adult Sampling- The second sampling period mid Aug-end Sep yielded just 4 fish (making a total of 65 fish records for the summer). Invoice submitted.

Temperature monitoring- Temperature logger downloaded with AS 11 Nov and sent to MS 21 Nov.

Adult spawning- Sea trout spawning was reported in Tomich burn, and up at Kinerras. Salmon spawning has been recorded at Cruives and Farrar opposite lodge. Redds were also spotted at Redcastle by AS.

Future: Need to purchase (or borrow) a PIT tag decoder, procure smolt trap materials, and get RST anchors made. Quotes for invertebrate analysis need to be gotten as NatureScot may fund analysis under 'code of Translocations' policy. 3 more efish sites would be ideal next time these sites are surveyed. Trout fry sampling for isotope analysis May 2023 if funding can be found to get Edinburgh Napier uni to analyse. Efish report due to be written Dec-Jan. Will get a few ball-park quotes from hydro-morph consultants for recommendations. Drone work to be done by AS and Jim to look at Japanese knotweed and redds.

[Work plan Progress to address the Pressures](#) (was 'Improving ecosystem processes')

Climate Change (Riparian Trees)- Updated Braulen tree maps sent to estate, Paul (TFL) and Scottish Forestry. A meeting with Paul and Scottish Forestry is due to take place on 5 December. A site visit with Braulen estate will take place after that to see if they will give over more land for trees to make the FGS scheme more viable.

-Assessment of priority areas for trees completed 22 Nov. There may be funding from Riverwoods for training from Hugh Chalmers for myself and Paul (a couple of days). Hugh would be able to carry out initial assessment of sites and Paul could then take them forward. **Discuss with board.**

Estuarine Netting- Communications between TW and ness board ongoing.

Illegal exploitation- conducted bailiffing review with AS to get recommendations for 2023 (included in Annual Fisheries Officer report).

Smolt passage- We noted at the SSE liaison meeting that a speedier response regarding moving to phase 2 of the smolt protocol would have been better, and requested a prompt response for 2023 based on the smolt monitoring data we now have. SSE mentioned they are considering the use of 'smolt pumps' at the dams in an emergency situation if a significant number of smolts get trapped at the dam gate slots.

Invasives (INNS)/Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI)- All invasive control work in the catchment is funded through SISI and we will hear soon whether the application to extend the project has been successful. A total of 112

volunteer hours were given to us by the local community to tackle invasives this year! Freezer received from SISI. AS attended a Mental Health first aid course 23-24 Nov funded by SISI. July-September hours submitted (26 Oct).

-Himalayan Balsam Volunteers (The Beauly Balsam Bashers) gave us 69hrs of their time.

- Japanese Knotweed Volunteers (Steve, Cat and Beauly Balsam Bashers) gave us 43hrs of their time. After a successful EOI, an application to the Highland Nature Restoration Fund was submitted requesting £9,000 to employ a contractor to deal with the JK on the lower Beauly in Autumn 2023. We await the council's decision. Follow-up spraying of the JK site at Struy was done by AS and volunteer Steve on 12 Oct. Other sites were visited too. The stem injectors will be sent off for a service shortly (paid for by SISI).

AS continues to support the mink volunteers, and we will shortly acquire 5 remoti units to increase our effectiveness for mink control (provided by SISI).

Development- Moniack wetland ditch re-profiling ok'ed.

Barriers (Burn clearing)- AS contacted proprietors and visited catchment burns (17,18 and 24, 25 Oct) to check for clear passage.

Beavers-Our response to the Trees for Life Beaver translocation proposal is [here](#).

Future: We will continue to support the Beauly Balsam Bashers. Control records will be submitted to SISI shortly. Site visit required with local Forestry Officer and Paul Greaves. Cost of pod planting to be estimated to seek other funding from SSEN. I am on the SISI herbicide training list.

No Incidents

Written outputs: Beaver Briefing V2 (29 Sep), Beaver consultation response (3 Oct), Updated Braulen tree maps (31 Oct), Japanese knotweed HNRF funding application submitted (9 Nov), Tree planting prioritisation areas (22 Nov), Draft budget (23 Nov).

Meetings/ phone calls: Ground truthing beaver burn walkover with Rob Needham Beaver Trust (16 Sep), UHI genetics lab intro (7 Oct), Operational meeting (14 Oct), SALMOVE meeting with Samantha Beck, UHI (14 Oct), SISI steering group meet (27 Oct), Ross Glover (SSE) chat (1 Nov), NBFT meet (2 Nov), Vodafone (2 Nov), FMS AGM (3 Nov), WSFT and Skye (4 Nov), SSE liaison meeting (8 Nov), Braulen estate (11 Nov). Beauly Angling club AGM (24 Nov).

16 Sep Rainbow over Farrar whilst ground truthing beaver baseline sites



APPENDIX 1

Smolt info from SSE (Screenshot of main info taken from 'Beaully smolts season 2022' summary):

Numbers observed in intake gate slots

The numbers of smolts in the intake gate slots at Aigas and Kilmorack was also monitored during the smolt season. For 2022, at Aigas, smolts were observed between 7 April and 8 June, with an average of 18 smolts and maximum of 207 smolts on 30 May (Fig. 1a). At Kilmorack, smolts were observed between 26 April and 3 June, with an average of 7 smolts and maximum of 100 smolts on 20 May (Fig. 1b).

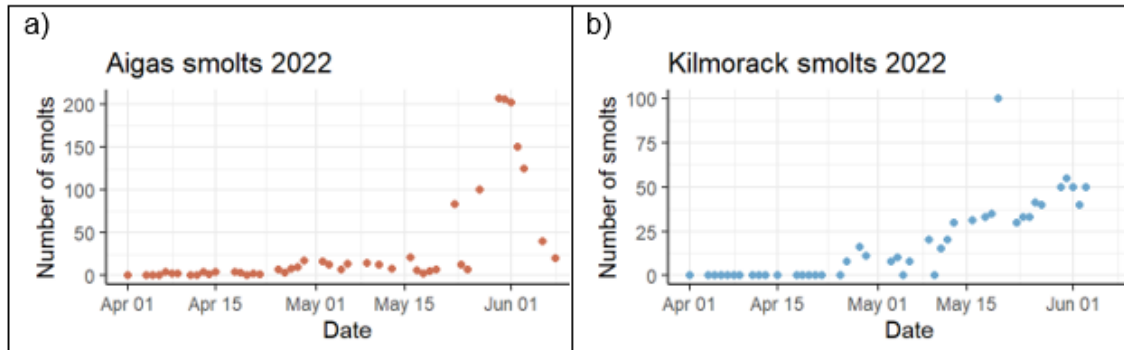


Figure 1. Daily numbers of smolts observed in intake gate slots at (a) Aigas and (b) Kilmorack for 2022

This compares to a maximum of 120 at Aigas (26-27 May) and 32 at Kilmorack (26 May) in 2021. Full smolt report to be completed in due course.