



This update summarises key work tasks completed since the last update 13 March 2023. The focus of the last three months has been to carry out smolt monitoring, finalising the storyboard version of the Fishery Management plan, and recruiting an intern. Time has been taken navigating George's departure. There was an aim to write up the Cannich and Affric hydro-morphology surveys, however the report is not finished yet due to other work tasks.

### **Beaully Fishery Board**

**Vehicles-** New lease Nissan Townstar van ordered with tow bar (1.8m loading length) £267/ month to replace SK70 XLC truck from August. SK70 XLC panel fixed 17 April-25 May (took a long time!!).

**H & Safety-** PAT testing of office appliances complete (AS). AS hurt back lifting back of smolt trap. RW 4.5 months pregnant (due 2 Nov). Second screen purchased.

**Staffing-** Seasonal Bailiff George Coleman passed his IFM bailiffing exam but unfortunately resigned 5 May. **Need to discuss summer staffing i.e. Riverwatcher recruitment?** Neither graduate that was offered the Working with Rivers Trainee position accepted, therefore we have recruited Victoria Kowalska as a paid intern (2 days a week) to help with fish habitat/ hydro-morphology surveys for June. **Need to discuss summer Efish plans/ staffing.**

**Fishery Management Plan-** Invoiced FMS for Phase 1 (out of 2) for Storyboard FMP work (£2,250). Sent to SEPA for input (20 March).

**Policy docs-**Finalised Grievance and Disciplinary procedure. **Awaiting input to 'DRAFT Staff, Volunteer and Board member manual V1' from board members and Alastair.**

**Training-** Hosted, attended and passed pesticide training for treating invasive plants (PA1, PA6, PA6AW) 3-4 April, assessed 6 April. (See 'Invasives').

**FMS/ SFCC-** Annual subscriptions due but issue with invoicing for BFB and NBFT. In process of resolving. Attended SFCC committee meeting (17 May).

**Bailiff-ghillie meet** occurred 17 March at Lovat Arms. AS and Frank hosted this constructive evening with various ghillies and folk from across the catchment.

**Future:** Sign-off of Staff, Volunteer and Board member manual. Need to agree and pay invoices for FMS and SFCC subscriptions. H+S assessment for RW duties in relation to pregnancy required.

### **People: Community engagement, participation and heritage**

Lots of volunteers have been involved with the smolt monitoring and this has been our main public engagement.

Emailed out proprietors 6 April with a general update (included fish counts, efish report, FMP, smolts, fish catches).

**Facebook-** Requested fish photos from LBFS ghillies but none received so far.

**Oral history Project-** Louise selected excerpts of each interview, all interviewees now happy with content,

**Future:** Louise hoping to draft Oral History report in the summer (as a volunteer). Moy game fair with WSFT and Ness- £200 to help pay for cost of marquee?

### **Monitoring Methods**

**Smolt monitoring-** Smolt RAs and vol form updated, trap (and concrete block) delivered and assembled 21 March. Box traps installed 29 March (lifted 12 May). Monitoring on Beaully (Grant's pool) occurred 27 March- 26 May. See [Appendix](#) for smolt monitoring graphs.

SSE implemented Phase 1 flows for smolts between 1 April-31 May with Phase 2 flows being in place between 24 April-26 May.

Lots of volunteer organising to deliver this monitoring partly due to George leaving us (18 volunteers). Ground anchors worked well.

Many less smolts than expected caught at the 6ft smolt trap so mark-recapture to assess efficiency not possible (efficiency will have been v low <1%). Alternative site identified (between Farrar-Aigas) by Erchless hut where the river is narrower for 2024 (if staffing allows). Although monitoring has assessed run-timing as needed if we are to develop our smolt monitoring for future smolt studies we need to be capturing more smolts.

All smolt photos labelled. Data input by Ali.

**SSE-** SSE continue to check the numbers of smolts at the dam gate slots. Nesting gulls at Kilmorack are preventing access to some of the slots. So far numbers have been low. Most recent figure 22 May: 40 smolts at Aigas. AS due to check numbers with SSE on 2 June (anticipate peak numbers).

**Fish Counts-** Requested, not received yet. Gavin has offered to conduct validation of fish counts at end of season to compare counts from AI counter, Mk12s and Mk14 at Kilmorack (?)

**Electro-fishing-** If NEPs doesn't happen would like to focus on surveys on Farrar and Glass to support statistical comparison (hydro Vs non-hydro), or surveys on Cannich and Affric to support the walkover surveys if H+S assessment allows efishing in July-August. **Discuss.**

**Fish habitat/ substrate walkovers-** Ongoing on R. Beaully and Farrar to assess fish habitat in relation to the dams. Commenced 30 May with intern Victoria. Access, maps and volunteers organised. These walkovers are planned to be complete by the end of June. Report writing due in September- Oct when less mobile.

Received Cruives hydro-morphology assessment from Hamish Moir (CBEC).

**Predation-** Second catchment bird survey done 17 April (9 Goosanders, 11 Mergansers) co-ordinated by Ali. RW surveyed R. Farrar with volunteer Barbara. Ali currently collating information for bird licence application.

**Future:** Need to arrange collection of trap for storage at SSE Muir of Ord depot. Purchase and install tiny tag temperature logger downstream of Kilmorack dam to support extended fish pass operation into December. Resolve SFCC data exporting issues with SFCC. Still need to determine if NatureScot will pay for invertebrate sample analysis (APEM quote of £4850-7307ex VAT) under 'code of translocations'. AS+ JB to replicate aerial photos via drone to support fish habitat reports.

### **Work Plan Progress to address the Pressures**

**Bailiffing (Ali)-** A few reports of possible poaching since last update; 18 March Balmore beat 6, 21 March Kilmorack, 23 March Aigas, 7-9 April (Home beat, Wayne Gilbert, youths at Green bridge), 19 April Fasnakyle, 24-25 April Kilmorack and Teanassie, lures found at Teanassie and Home (?), 2 May pike anglers Aigas, 6-7 May(youths BAC, persons at Aigas/ Kilmorack), 18 May Kilmorack, 23 May BAC, 25 May Home beat... **Discuss staffing.**

**Climate Change (Riparian Trees)-** Braulen riparian tree plans still sat with estate Factor (Clive Meikle), waiting to see if will incorporate into Long Term Forest Plan.

**Estuarine Netting-** Brian Shaw reported Ness DSFB were navigating a few technical hitches when it comes to deeds but should be fine. **Fundraising update required from TW/ FSN.**

**Smolt passage-** see smolt monitoring.

**Invasives (INNS)/ Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI)-** All invasive control work in the catchment is funded through SISI. Trudi our project officer (shared with Ness and Conon) interviewed 14 March, started 10 April, came out with me for catchment familiarisation 13-14 April. I am now qualified to treat invasive plants along with Barbara and Craig (two of our volunteers).

Japanese Knotweed -prepared the paperwork/ maps required to enable the JK contractor (to treat Lower Beaully JK Aug-Oct 2023).

Skunk cabbage- Alice's 4 May. Alice's Trudi and Steve 24 May. 1 June Trudi treated Skunk cabbage at Ferry field, Ferry point, Yellowbrook and Carnoch layby.

Mink- 7 Remoti units installed where signal allows in catchment (AS).

**Barriers**- Enquired (18 April) to see if funding would be available to remove Cannich weir. Water Environment Fund responded they would not fund remediation.

**Peatland restoration**- Attended peatland restoration training day 24 April. Discussed with Linzi Seivwright (Deer Management Group) who is intending to update the Deer Management Plan in the autumn with our input.

**Fish habitat in relation to the dams**- Have requested a chat with NatureScot Nature Restoration Fund to discuss exactly what they will and will not fund. Idea to see if we could host a shared Project Officer with Ness and Conon to further our hydro-morphology work/ projects as progress is slow and we share this hydro pressure.

**Development** [Balnallick Forestry consult](#) (22 May). We are anticipating a lot of consultation work coming our way this autumn due to the expansion of **SSEN's transmission** network. Having spoken to the Nith Fishery Board this could be a big opportunity for us to increase our income if we take on the associated monitoring work. We would need to increase/ re-hash our staffing capacity if we are to take advantage of this.

**SSE Misge outage**- Visited site 4 May to assess possible impact. Work planned 4 June for a month. Awaiting confirmation of start date so can assess if any potential impact.

**Pink salmon**- FMS have co-ordinated a joint licence to remove Pink salmon from the river if found this year.

**Beavers**- Attended Trees for Life monitoring meeting 25 April- very much focussed on the beavers themselves, not wider ecological monitoring. Proactive approach planned in approaching/ advising landowners and encouraging riparian restoration (i.e. tree planting) ahead of beavers arriving on landowner's land.

**Future:** AS due to attend Kirkton burn skunk cabbage treatment with Trudi 9 June. Permission required from NatureScot to carry out JK control on Lower Beaully. AS to label Remoti units. We need to keep an eye out for Pink Salmon.

**Incidents:** Knockfin burn visit 18 May ahead of abstraction permit request. Intake is poorly designed so compensation flow does not flow resulting in drying out of trout habitat below.

**Written outputs:** SSEN consult Spittal-Beaully 400kV (14 April). SSE/ SEPA Misgeach liaison. LBFS smolt flows response (19 May). Annual report contribution.

**Meetings/ phone calls:** FMS AGM Aviemore, Riverwoods seminar 18 April, Nith (19 April), Peatland restoration (24 April), Linzi Seivwright DMG. SFCC committee meeting (17 May). Several George meetings.

**9 May, Karla and Lisa helping with smolt trapping.**



APPENDIX

