

BEAULY DISTRICT
SALMON FISHERY
BOARD
**ANNUAL REPORT 2022 /
2023**

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BEAULIEU DSFB CONSERVATION POLICY 2023

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DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

1.0 Foreword

On behalf the Board, I am pleased to present the 2022/23 Annual Report together with the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022.

First to recap the changes at Board level. Almost immediately after the Annual Meeting last year, Jock Miller resigned as Chairman and stood down as a member of the Board. Jock was a conscientious and hardworking Chairman who had served the Board well during a period of considerable change. We are deeply grateful to him. With the triennial elections of Board Members not due until 2024, the Board decided to bridge the two year period with Frank Spencer-Nairn and Michael Spencer-Nairn agreeing to share the roles of Chairman and Vice Chairman. It has been a privilege for me to have served as your Chairman for the first year. The arrangement has worked well as the workload of the Chairman is not to be underestimated and requires delegation and the sharing of responsibilities.

The Board elected Gavin Haywood to fill the vacancy on the Board, as a Mandatory representing the Rive Beaulieu Syndicate, and welcomed him at the next Board meeting.

A further vacancy has now been created by the resignation in March of George Purdie as he has now sold his estate and boat on the river Glass. We thank George for his valuable contribution over a number of years. We are now seeking nominations to fill this vacancy until the elections next year; ideally it would be good to have a person to represent the Upper Beaulieu, currently unrepresented, or the Glass to replace George.

There have been no changes to the key members of our staff, namely Ruth Watts as our Senior biologist and Ali Skinner as Fisheries Officer/Bailiff. They have continued to develop their roles and work well together as a team. We are indebted to them. They have further nurtured their good relations with fishery proprietors and their staff, SSE staff, the Beaulieu Catchment community, other River Boards and government agencies. Ruth is particularly well connected and skilful at finding volunteers, students and interns to provide that extra workforce to help with the tasks which otherwise could not be done. Much of this is detailed in her report. We thank them all, as we do Bob Smart, who retired as Seasonal Bailiff at the end of last year. This position is currently vacant.

Operational oversight and communications have been achieved by regular meetings between Ruth and Ali and Frank, Mike and Tom Waring from the Board. This is working well. The vitally important liaison meetings with SSE happen twice a year in March and November; good relations and co-operation are more important than ever. Their annual financial contribution to the River Board is an indicator of our value to them but is arguably still modest in relation to their impact on the River and their massive revenue from Hydro generation.

The Board itself has met four times for regular meetings; the availability of zoom/teams means greater participation by remote board members can be achieved. The annual Public Meeting in Beaulieu in December is an opportunity for the staff and members of the Board to meet with the community; the River is by definition their greatest asset. It is important they should know how it is being managed. As an innovation, in April this year, the board organised a pre-season get-together of ghillies and bailiffs to enable them all to meet and better understand each other's responsibilities. There seemed to be a consensus to repeat it. The growing support for the junior section of the Beaulieu Angling Club was good to hear.

As this report will show, the role and responsibilities of River Boards have grown in scope and complexity. The expectations of government and scientific research seem to grow all the time, together with the bureaucracy that goes with it. They do need to be mindful that it is fishery proprietors who are providing the larger part of the financing and the voluntary management.

Challenging times all round both for the salmon and fisheries management!

Frank Spencer-Nairn
Chairman

2022 into 2023 has been a productive year for the fishery board. Apart from the work we have achieved we now have a base to do it from, thanks to the efforts of various board members and the Lower Beaully Fishing Syndicate. We have been working from our office at Lovat bridge since November and this has been an important step in improving relations on the river and making it easier for us to carry out our duties.

Our **Fishery Management Plan** was published at the end of 2022 and sets out our work programme for the next 5 years. I hope you enjoy reading about what we have been up to in relation to protecting fish in the catchment in this annual report. I am especially looking forward to progressing our assessment of fish habitat in relation to the dams this year, as this could help improve the amount of available spawning habitat to fish in the future.

Please get in touch if you have any queries.

Ruth Watts
Senior Biologist

2.0 Role of the District Salmon Fishery Board

The Beaully District Fishery Board is a statutory body responsible for the protection and enhancement of salmon and sea trout fisheries in the Beaully district, including the Rivers Beaully, Glass and Farrar. The Catchment extends from Glen Affric in the south-west to the mouth of the River Beaully at the Beaully Firth and includes Glen Cannich, Glen Strathfarrar and Strathglass. There is extensive hydro-electric development on the system, including principal dams at Loch Monar and Loch Mullardoch, Aigas and Kilmorack.

Salmon fishing rights in Scotland are private heritable titles that are registered separately from land. As such these titles can be bought and sold like any other property. In Scotland, the cost of the local administration, protection and improvement of the fisheries is privately financed by the proprietors. The District Boards finance their work by levying a rate on the salmon fishery owners in the district. Elected representatives of those owners provide the core of the membership of the Board. However, since 1986, the Boards are required also to include representatives of salmon anglers and salmon netmen in the District. A further revision to the constitution of the Boards was made in 1999 to allow for even wider representation on the Boards by other parties who may have an interest or stake in salmon stocks or fisheries.

Powers and duties

The powers and duties of a DSFB are summarised below:

Powers

- to act, undertake works and incur expenses for the protection and improvement of the fisheries within their districts, for the increase of salmon and sea trout and the stocking of the district with these fish.
- to impose financial assessments on each salmon fishery in the district, and to charge interest on arrears.
- to borrow funds, and to incur a wide range of expenditure in furtherance of their powers and duties.
- to appoint bailiffs to enforce the salmon fisheries legislation.
- exempt persons from certain provisions of the law for scientific or other purposes.
- to sue in the name of the clerk.

Duties

- to appoint a clerk
- to maintain a list of proprietors within the DSFBs district
- to produce an annual report and audited accounts and to consider these at an AGM
- to call a triennial electoral meeting

The Board meets four times per annum. Minutes are published on the Board's website <http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk/>

3.0 Board Members and Staff

Board Members

Board members are elected triennially. The last elections took place in June 2022. Board members are all volunteers and are non-remunerated for their time and effort. The elected Board members subsequently elect one of the members to be their chairman. The current Board members are as follows:

Representatives of Upper Proprietors: Frank Spencer-Nairn, Chairman, (Mandatory Beaully Fishing Syndicate)
Michael Spencer Nairn (Struy, Rivers Farrar and Glass)
Victoria Rotheroe (Mandatory, Balmore, River Glass)
Tom Waring (Mandatory, Lovat Highland Estates)

Representatives of Lower Proprietors: Vacant

Co-optee of salmon anglers: Jim Braithwaite (Beaully Angling Club)

Nick Jackson (Beaully Fishing Syndicate)

Invited Attendees: Neil Cameron (Ness DSFB)

Clerk to the Board Alastair Campbell (Bidwells)

Although not a legal requirement, the Board invites further representation onto the Board in a non-voting capacity. Non-voting attendees are currently Lord Lovat (Lovat Highland Estates); Nick Jackson (Beaully Fishing Syndicate) and Neil Cameron (immediate past Chair Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust).

Board Staff

The Board currently directly employs a full-time fisheries biologist and a full-time fisheries officer / bailiff. In addition, a seasonal bailiff has also been employed for the 2022 season. Current staff are: -

Senior Biologist	Ruth Watts
Fisheries Officer / Bailiff	Ali Skinner
Invasive species Officer (hosted by the Conon)	Trudi Clarke

4.0 Fish Catches 2021

Catch returns are an important indicator of adult run size available for the system. Catch statistics are collected annually by Marine Scotland Science (MSS) for all fishery districts in Scotland. In addition to this, District Salmon Fishery Boards can collect data directly from proprietors twice per year. The size of the run can be used as a measure of its status by comparing the annual catch against long-term average catches. The data used in the graphs below are Crown copyright, used with the permission of Marine Scotland Science. MSS is not responsible for any interpretation of these data in this report.

Salmon Rod Catches

In the 2022 season, 980 salmon were reported to the board as being caught. This differs slightly from the official statistics recorded by Marine Scotland Science (MSS), who recorded 877. Three proprietors failed to return a catch report to the board. The total number of salmon caught (according to the board's figures) was 16% higher than the 10 year average (846) and 26% higher than the 5 year average (778). The end of the season (October) saw peak catches on the Beaully.

2022 Salmon rod catch with 10yr average shown in red

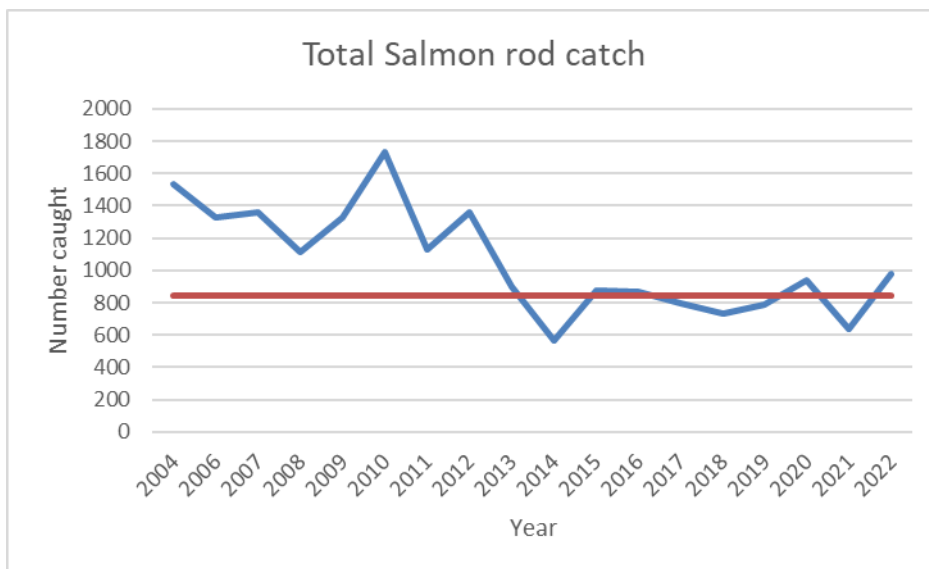


Figure 1 – Total Salmon Catch, Beaully District 1952-2012 (Source Crown copyright, used with the permission of Marine Scotland Science)

Sea Trout Catches

In the 2022 season, 387 sea trout and finnock were reported to the Board (this compares to 92 sea trout plus 0 finnock reported to MSS). The ten-year average recorded by the board is 555 and the five-year average 620. This is the lowest recorded catch since 2015. Sea trout numbers on the Beaully can vary widely and the low number caught may be due to the low water levels during the 2022 season or wider movements of sea trout around the Moray Firth.

2022 Sea trout rod catch with 10 year average shown in red

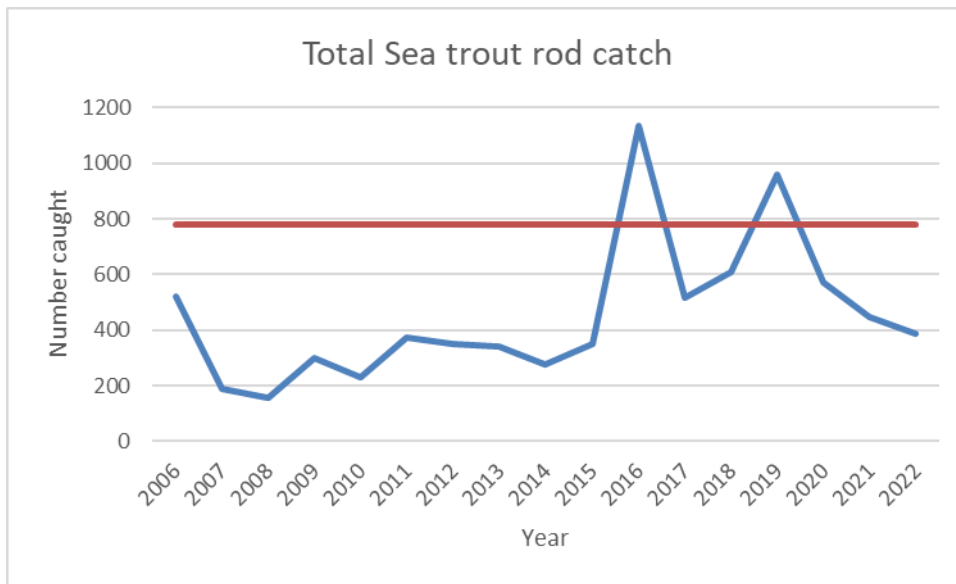


Figure 3 – Total Sea Trout Catches, Beaully District 1952-2022 (Crown copyright, used with the permission of Marine Scotland Science) N.B includes finnock.

5.0 Fish Counter Data – 2021

Data is gathered by SSE to show they are ensuring fish passage. For the Board it is a valuable source of information on adult salmon numbers returning to the Beauly and it (in combination with rod catch) also informs MSS's conservation limit assessment. The Mark 12 fish counters at the dams (and across Scotland) are thought to record approximately 65-75% of fish (based on the counters at Pitlochry). Validation conducted at the dams in August 2022, suggests an average accuracy of 77%.

- Unvalidated count data suggests a minimum of 4982 counts at Kilmorack dam between April-November 2022. The 10 year average for Kilmorack is 3583 counts, this would put the Kilmorack counts about 28% above the 10 year average- **a significant increase when compared to previous years**. When taking into consideration the efficiency of the Mark 12 fish counters, this would suggest **a total of approximately 6,128 fish passed through Kilmorack dam**.
- Unvalidated count data for Aigas dam indicate a minimum of 3334 counts. Unvalidated count data for Beannacharan dam indicates a minimum of 222 counts.

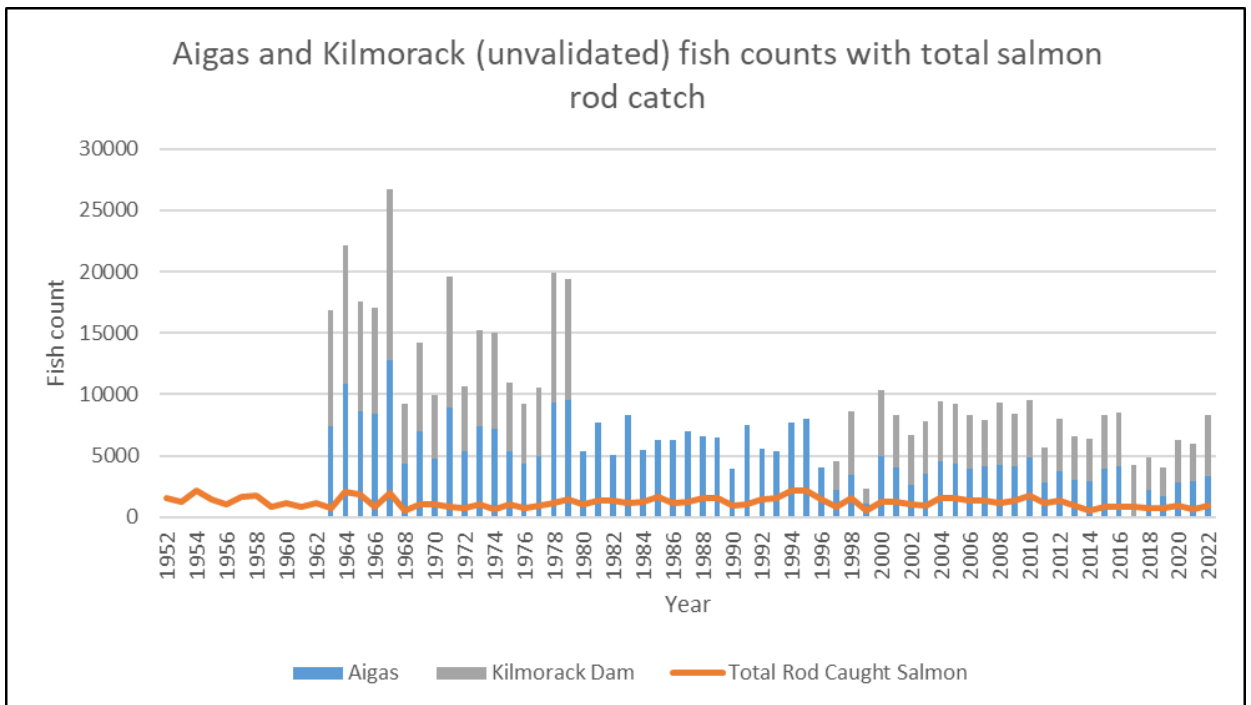


Figure 4 – Fish Pass Counter Figures, Aigas & Kilmorack Dams (source – SSE plc)

Apart from the existing Mark 12 counters, SSE have installed Artificial Intelligence counters at both Aigas and Kilmorack dams, and a Mark 14 counter at Kilmorack so we anticipate much more accurate fish counts going forward.

6.0 BDSFB Conservation Policy

The Board has a statutory duty to act for the protection and improvement of the fisheries and for the increase of salmon and sea trout within its District. The Board's recommended conservation policy in place during 2022 is attached at Appendix 1. The Board has approved a policy for 2023, with one amendment concerning guidance on fishing and water temperature.

The recorded catch and release rate for salmon in 2022 was 99%.

Guidance on catch & release best practice can be found on the Board's website
<http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk>

7.0 Salmon Conservation Status

The Scottish Government introduced The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2019. The River Beaully was Grade 1 in 2022 and this has been maintained for 2023.

8.0 Fishery Management Plan

The [Fishery Management Plan](#) was published at the end of 2022. An interactive map version was produced in spring 2023, and is due to be published.

The main aims of the Fishery Management Plan are to tackle the pressures faced by salmon and sea trout:

- 1) **Bailiffing:** Maintaining a strong bailiffing presence (see section 11.0).
- 2) **Fish habitat:** Assessing fish habitat in relation to hydro dams to see if there is an impact on the availability of spawning substrate with a view to better sediment management and habitat restoration if necessary (see section 12.0).
- 3) **Smolts:** Continuing smolt monitoring to inform regulated flows for better smolt survival plus conduct a smolt study in relation to the dams (See section 12.0)
- 4) **Riparian trees:** Encouraging riparian tree planting at the top of the catchment for climate change resilience (See section 10.)

The storyboard version of the Fishery Management Plan, 2023



9.0 Fish Surveys

In 2022 the board carried out electrofishing, smolt trapping and participated in the Adult sampling project. Please see Section 12.0 'Working with SSE' for details of smolt trapping.

Electro-fishing

As the National Electro-fishing Programme for Scotland did not occur in 2022 the opportunity was taken to look more closely at the coastal burns and to fill in data gaps. This was especially pertinent in the context of possible beaver translocations to the catchment. The second year of Farrar genetics sampling also took place (10 sites, 340 salmon fry) to help assess the number of spawning adults on the River Farrar and to look at other genetic patterns of salmon using the Farrar (e.g. run timing).

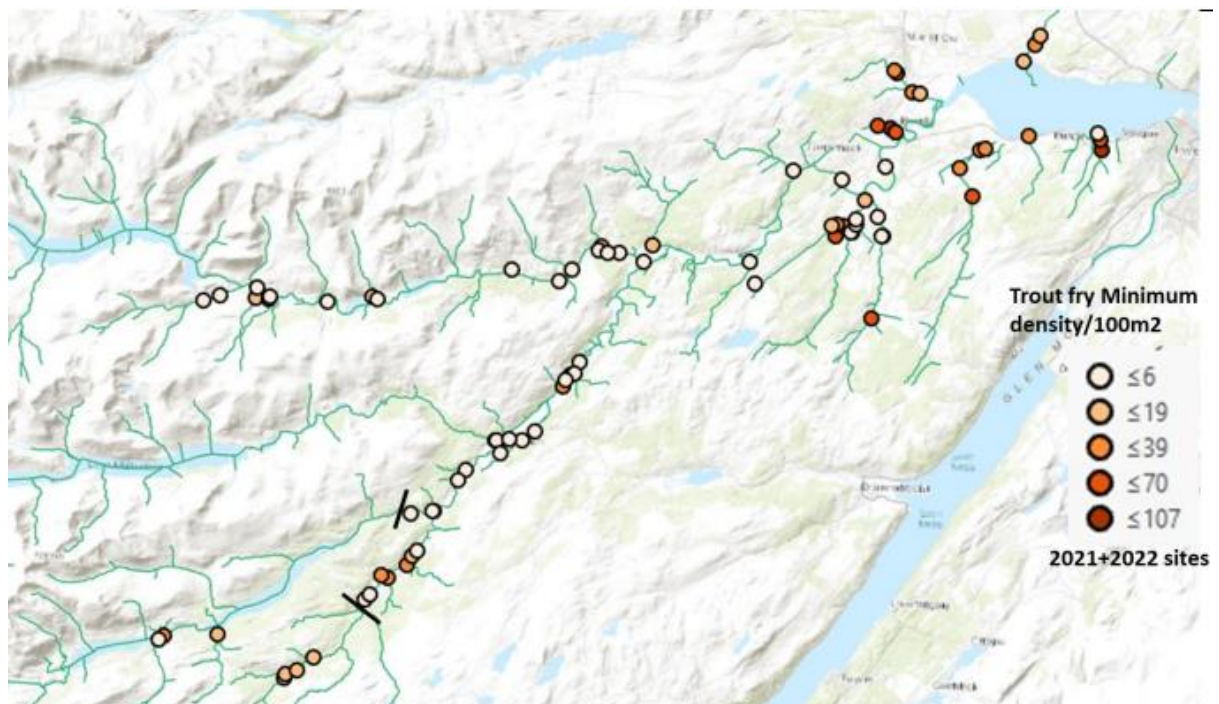
For the Coastal and data-gap filling surveys a total of 39 electro-fishing surveys were completed. 18 coastal sites were done on 6 burns, plus 21 other sites on 14 water courses including invertebrate sampling. All salmon data was analysed using the NEPs Shineyapp tool.

The surveys highlighted:

- Which coastal burns salmon and sea trout are using.
- Burns suffering from pollution (cattle access, enrichment)
- Previously unrecorded burns important for both salmon and trout spawning
- The very low (semi-natural) densities of brown trout in in-accessible areas of the catchment (e.g. Affric and Allt Riabhach [top of R. Glass]).

Together, the 2021 and 2022 electro-fishing data give a good coverage of the catchment.

Overview of 2021 and 2022 site locations



More work needs to be done to survey the mainstem Farrar and Glass so that a statistical comparison can be made between these two main arms of the Beaully system in relation to hydro. Sites should also be done on the Rivers Cannich and Affric to support the fish habitat walkovers conducted in 2022 and on the Beaully (see 'Fish Habitat walkovers').

For further information please see the [2022 Electro-fishing report](#).

Adult Sampling Project

2022 saw the board with the Lower Beaully Syndicate ghillies participate in the National Adult Sampling project. This involved the collection of scales, and accurate length and weight data from 65 fish caught on the Lower Beaully. Scale reading was done by Marine Scotland, the 2021 report is available [here](#) on the website.

A salmon caught during the 2022 season on the R. Beaully



10.0 Update on Conservation Work

Habitat

Invasives

Invasives work in the catchment is funded by the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) and we are guided by our [Biosecurity Plan](#). The first SISI project ended in March 2023, and the second SISI project commenced in April 2023 thanks to Nature Restoration Funding. We are very happy that we now have an Invasive Species Project Officer, Trudi, who can help us. Trudi works across the Beaully, Conon and Ness catchments.

We are at a key point on the Beaully where we CAN eradicate invasives before they take hold and damage the fishery and river, so it is vital we act now and take the threat seriously. The extent of invasive plants (especially in and around Beaully) is more than the Board alone can deal with so we work with our much valued volunteers.

Key achievements:

-We continue to work with the **Beaully Balsam Bashers** and Lovat estate. 2022 was the second year of co-ordinated himalayan balsam picking and an impact of our work was already visible at several sites. In 2022, the Beaully Balsam Bashers gave us >9.5 volunteer days of Himalayan Balsam picking time. Most known sites were picked thoroughly, and most of the priority upstream sites were picked. As seed is thought to be viable for 3 years, 2023 will be key to continue this work, and we hope to see a significant drop off in distribution in 2024.

-Skunk cabbage control continues through a mixture of manual removal and spraying. At Mauld and Ferry point manual removal took place. Kirkton burn was sprayed for the first time in 2022 and a few plants at Carnoch layby were treated.

-Japanese knotweed was treated at various sites in the catchment (Eilean Aigas, Home falls, and Ferry point), including a key site at Struy with help from trained volunteers Steve and Cat who gave us 4.5 volunteer days. As the Lower Beaully towards the estuary is too big a task, grant funding of £9,000 was secured from the **Highland Nature Restoration Fund** to employ a contractor for autumn 2023 to treat this area.

-Mink volunteers monitor rafts and are coordinated by Ali. Mink are non-native voracious predators and can impact on the wider biodiversity of the river. We have just installed 9 Remoti units to expand our network and enable more effective trapping of mink.

Invasive species volunteers 2023



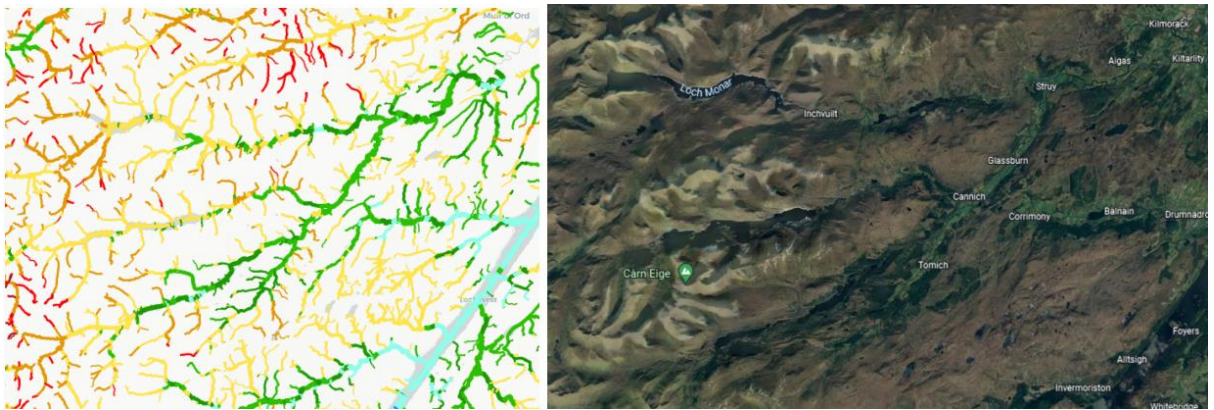
Riparian Tree Work

Planting riparian trees (or encouraging natural regeneration along river banks) is the easiest way of making the catchment resilient to climate change and has multiple other benefits. We have been encouraging landowners to take up riparian tree planting in the following ways:

-Following on from the 'Trees, Fish, and Carbon Credits' talk hosted by the board in February 2022, a draft riparian forestry plan was drawn up for and with input from Braulen estate. Several site visits have occurred with Paul Greaves the Trees for Life Riparian project Officer who can help provide support above and beyond what Forestry Grant Scheme can provide. The plan is now with the Factor of the estate who may decide to incorporate riparian planting into the Long-Term Forest Plan.

-A **catchment prioritisation review** comparing the [planting prioritisation maps](#) produced by Marine Scotland's Scottish River Temperature Monitoring Network with google earth imagery was conducted in October 2022 and the findings have been shared with Erchless, Cannich, and Guisachan estates.

Catchment Prioritisation Review Oct 2022



11.0 Fisheries Protection (Ali Skinner)

I have a varied role, and this includes working with the Senior Biologist, Seasonal Bailiff and many others. I am also in regular contact with the Bailiffs from the Ness and Cromarty Boards to share any fisheries intelligence.

I continue to keep a very high profile to deter poaching activity on the rivers and along the coastline. Whilst poaching activity may be declining, there is no doubt that without the dedicated professional work of the BDFB Bailiffs, the rivers Beaully, Glass and Farrar would be far more of a target for such illegal activity.

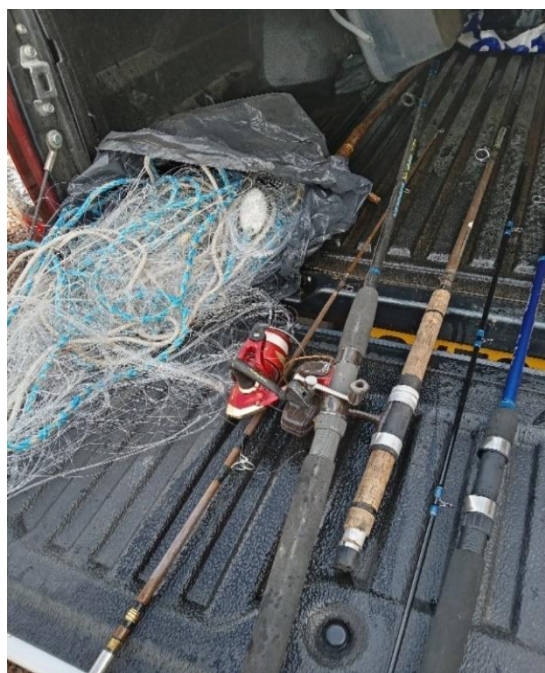
I have fostered excellent working relationships with the bailiffs, ghillies, river watchers, volunteers, and staff from SSE. I arrange for the catchment to be patrolled 14 hours a day (where possible), through a combination of early/day/late/night patrols during the season to try and deter potential poaching activities within the catchment.

Members of the BAC and river watchers have been very helpful passing on information on suspicious behaviour and of strange cars parked at the river. I have found the local Police Wildlife Officers to be a great source of information and they have also been extremely helpful when I have had to contact them.

I would like to say a special thank you to the Seasonal Bailiff, Bob Smart for his work during the 2022 season and to George Coleman who has been with us since February. This 2023 season is already starting to get busy.

Fisheries Protection is reviewed annually, and recommendations are worked on ahead of the following season.

*Wildlife Crime Officer from Police Scotland carrying out a joint patrol with the Beaully Water Bailiff.
Fishing gear seized*



River Patrols

The total numbers of patrols (carried out by both the Fishery Officer and Seasonal bailiff) are shown below.

River	Patrols (25 May 2022-2023 May 2023)	Warning Letters Issued/Advice given
BAC water	320	1 Warning letter 4 verbal warnings/ Advice
Beauly -Syndicate and Middle	480	1 Warning letter 10 verbal warnings/Advice
Glass	175	1 Warning letter 8 verbal warnings/ Advice
Farrar	110	1 verbal warning/ Advice
Beauly Firth	190	2 Warning letters 18 verbal warnings/ Advice

Lower- Middle Beauly: 800 patrols were conducted on the Beauly Angling Club (BAC) waters and Lower and Middle beats of the Syndicate during the season May 2022- May 2023. I have spoken to several youths regarding fishing the BAC waters without a permit. Two warning letters were issued. Fourteen anglers were removed from the BAC and Syndicate waters for fishing without a permit and fishing with the wrong tackle. I got called out on 31 different occasions during the season. Local Ghillies have removed persons about to fish the LBFS beats.

Glass: 175 patrols were conducted on the river Glass during the season. One warning letter was issued, and fishing equipment was seized for small scale fishery offences. Very few anglers fished the river until July except for Pike and Brown Trout fishermen, but we kept a good presence in the area. I met with the Bailiff and Ghillie from the Glass and agreed our joint working operational plan for the season. There has been a massive increase on anglers fishing the river Glass for Brown Trout this year 2022/23. I got called out on 16 different occasions during the season.

Farrar: 110 patrols were conducted on the river Farrar and a number of small-scale fisheries issues have been addressed so far, one person buying a Brown Trout permit but was challenged by the Farrar Ghillie and found to be using Salmon tackle also (no permits). I have an excellent working relationship with the Ghillie on the Farrar. I got called out on 3 different occasions during the season.

Beauly Firth: 190 patrols were conducted within the Beauly Firth. One monofilament net was found on the shoreline while carrying out a night patrol and information passed onto Police Scotland. I have received numerous phone calls reporting possible poaching in the Beauly Firth by small scale vessels and have been carrying out as many patrols as possible. Several vessels have been inspected on arrival into Kessock pier and only Pollack and Mackerel have been found. I contacted Marine Scotland Compliance and arranged a joint Beauly Firth patrol. They deployed one of their inshore vessels to carry out a rib patrol within the Inner Beauly Firth with help from the Beauly Water Bailiffs from land. No nets were found but ongoing joint patrols will be arranged for 2023. I got called out on 10 different occasions during the season.

Fisheries vessel FPV Jura helping with a Beaully Firth Patrol



Offences Reported

One incident (recorded and posted on YouTube) was reported to the Procurator Fiscal. No further action was taken due to lack of evidence.

I organised several joint patrols throughout the season with the local Wildlife Crime Officer from Police Scotland. This collaborative approach will be ongoing to deter any illegal fishing. All poaching incidents are passed onto the Wildlife Crime Officer to record on Police Scotland's database.

Please feel free to contact me regarding any issues on the river by email at ali@beaullyfisheryboard.org or by phone on 07786741482.

12.0 Working with SSE

The Beaully system is heavily affected by hydro-electric schemes operated by SSE. The Board has a good working relationship with SSE and recognises that through working together

improvements for fish and the river can be made. For a number of years members of the Board have held twice annual liaison meetings with representatives of SSE. The Board views these meetings as important in maintaining a good relationship with SSE enabling discussion on any specific concerns regarding the impact of the hydro-electric schemes within the catchment.

Receiving the new smolt trap provided by SSE for smolt monitoring, March 2023

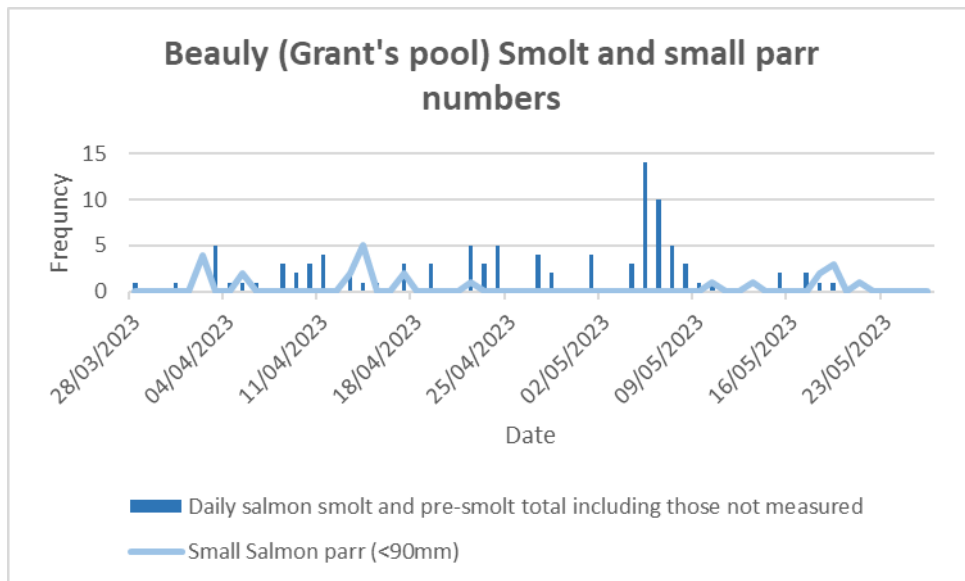


Smolt Monitoring: Assessing smolt run timing for improved flow management and smolt survival.

Smolt monitoring is carried out in the catchment to pin down smolt run timing to enable better flow management by SSE for improved smolt survival and passage at the dams. Building on work done in 2021 and 2022, a 6ft rotary screw trap provided by SSE was installed at Grants pool (between Aigas dam and Erchless) on the River Beauly. Box traps were also installed in the upper catchment where previous monitoring had occurred (R. Farrar, downstream of Beannacharan dam, and at Fasnakyle).

This monitoring found smolts to be running on the Beauly (above the dams) between 27 March-19 May, with smolts detected between 3 April-4 May at the top of the R. Glass. The pattern of small parr numbers caught at the Farrar box trap suggests smolts were likely to have been running 10 April- 5 May. Therefore, monitoring suggests that smolts had vacated the top of the catchment in the first week of May.

We provided 71 DNA samples to the SAL-MOVE project who will look at if there is any genetic determinant to run timing in smolts.



Trap efficiency was not assessed for the 6ft smolt trap due to the low numbers of smolts caught suggesting very low trap efficiency. We hope to improve this monitoring by installing the 6ft trap by the Erchless fishing hut in 2024 where the river is narrower.

SSE’s smolt protection protocol was similar to that in place in 2022. SSE implemented Phase 1 flows for smolts between 1 April-31 May with Phase 2 flows being in place between 24 April-26 May. SSE staff have been monitoring the number of smolts in the dam gate slots and we are due to access the dams at the beginning of June. Thanks to our 18 volunteers who gave us **10 days** of their time to help with this monitoring.

Flows and Sediment Management

Observations continue to be made on potential hydro-morphological issues in the catchment as this is a key part of our work-programme and a priority in our Fishery Management Plan.

With our 2022 trainee Louise, we completed fish habitat walkovers on the Rivers Cannich and Affric to start to characterise the distribution of fish habitat and substrate in these rivers, relative to large hydro dams.

In summer 2023 we will complete walkovers of the R. Farrar and R. Beauly to continue to assess the potential impact large hydro might be having on fish habitat (in particular spawning habitat, in the absence of sediment management). We will also include a review of old photos to see how the rivers have changed since the dams were put in in the late 1950s. Reports will be written in due course, providing recommendations for further work and remediation.

Improvements to sediment management can improve fish habitat in our rivers.

Kelt monitoring

A significant proportion of kelts may come back as repeat spawners so it is vital that they are allowed unimpeded passage out of the catchment. Kelts are able to travel down the fish passes at all three dams in the accessible reach but sometimes numbers above the dams can build up. SSE and Board staff regularly check for this and at least two kelt releases occurred in March-April this year.

Temperature and Dissolved Oxygen monitoring

We have two temperature loggers in the catchment (one at the top of the R. Glass, the other at the top of the R. Farrar) and we hope to install a third one below Kilmorack dam in due course. Water temperature is very important for fish and gives us an insight into smolt run timing, peak summer temperatures, and when upstream migration can occur.

Dissolved Oxygen monitoring was suggested in response to an incident where 3 dead adult salmon were found in short succession in July 2021, raising concerns that water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels may have exacerbated the state of these fish.

Monitoring was done 12 Aug in an upstream direction at 6 sites in the catchment after a period of warm weather. The calibrated DO probe was attached to a buoy so it hovered at approximately 0.9m depth. Sites were chosen to reflect where adult fish may rest. DO did vary between sites with temperature and DO being lowest below Kilmorack dam, with highest DO found above the influence of Aigas. All readings showed oxygen (>5mg/L) and water temperature (5-22°C) necessary for adult salmon to move upstream.

Then and now photo comparison, Ross's pool, R. Farrar. February 2023



13.0 Statutory Duties

Stocking Applications

Under the Aquaculture & Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007, the Board has a duty to consider any application for stocking of any life stage of salmon or sea trout. Written consent must be obtained from the Board before any such stocking takes place.

No applications for stocking were received by the Board during 2022. The Board does not currently operate any stocking programme of its own.

Compliance with Good Governance

Meetings

The annual meeting of qualified proprietors was held on 9th June 2022. This meeting was publicised by means of the Board's website and direct notification to proprietors and a copy of the notice sent to the Scottish Government. The minutes from the annual meeting of June 2022 can be viewed at <http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk/>

An annual public meeting was held on 8th December 2022. Five members of the public attended.

In addition, meetings of the Board were held on 9th June, 28th June, 22nd September, 8th December 2022 and 28th March. These meetings were publicised by means of the Board's website. The approved minutes from these meetings can be viewed at <http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk/>

Annual Report and Accounts

This annual report will be published at <http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk/> . The annual report for 2021-22, including approved accounts for the year to 31 December 2021, was published on the same website and a copy sent to Scottish Government. Draft Annual Accounts to 31 December 2022 are attached to this report at Appendix 2.

The annual report 2022-23 and accounts for 2022 will be published on the website once approved.

Complaints

The Board has set up and maintains a complaints procedure which can be viewed at <http://beaully.dsfb.org.uk/> . The procedure was reviewed at the Board meeting of 4 December 2014 and remains unaltered. This policy was notified to Scottish Government.

No complaints have been received in the last year.

Members' interests

The register of members' interests can be viewed at the offices of Bidwells, Elm House, Cradlehall, Inverness. We have included a standing item at each Board meeting inviting Board members to declare new/amend existing interests and all such instances are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.

14.0 Other work

Bird Counts

Ali Skinner co-ordinated two 2023 spring sawbill counts to aid our 2023 licence application. These were carried out 25 January and 17 April with volunteers. Bird count results, observations recorded by ghillies and scaring and shooting activities will be submitted to NatureScot as part of a control licence renewal application.

Burn clearing

All proprietors were contacted to help ensure burns were clear ahead of the November 2022 spawning season. Ali conducted inspections of the Belladrum catchment.

Oral History Project

We hosted Louise Senior, a NatureScot funded, Working with Rivers Trainee in Spring 2022 (up until mid-June). This enabled us to conduct an Oral history project. In total, we chatted to 13 interviewees about their insights and memories of the river. For more information see page 16 of [FMS's annual review 2023](#) or have a listen here:

<https://www.ambaile.org.uk/search/?searchQuery=Beaully+Fishery+Board>



All contributions have been deposited in the Highland Archive Centre for public access and are now available to view online - see link below. Watch this space for the full project report coming soon.

Estuarine Netting

We are currently working with the Ness board with the aim of buying out a couple of key estuarine netting stations in the firth. This should protect returning adult salmon from possible commercial fishery interests.

Advice and Consultations

Responses and advice were provided for the national draft Beaver strategy (through FMS), beaver translocation consultation (Trees for Life), Moniack ditch re-profiling to help create wetland ([West Loch Ness Farm Cluster](#)), Balmore woodland, Spittal to Beaully 400kV line (SSEN), Cannich trout fishery, Balnallick/ Strathglass woods, Misgeach planning outage (SSE), and for an abstraction on a burn above Knockfin bridge (SEPA).

Additionally we updated our contribution to the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan.

Pollution Incidents

We investigated:

- the presence of fish below Aigas dam at the end of November. SSE extended the fish lift period for an additional fortnight to ensure any remaining fish that wanted to migrate and spawn upstream were free to do so.
- A report that the run-of-the-river hydro on Home burn wasn't allowing enough water down the burn.
- The location of Bridgend burn and Green bridge outfalls. These were recorded after a report of intermittent pollution.

An outfall on Bridgend burn, March 2023



15.0 Priorities for the Forthcoming year

Our priorities for the coming year are in line with our statutory function and Fishery Management Plan. The Fishery Management Plan (Storyboard version) will be made available in due course. We hope to do the following:-

Fisheries Protection

We will ensure **bailiffing** is carried out during the fishing season in co-ordination with Marine Scotland compliance, Police Scotland, and neighbouring catchments. We will continue to encourage proprietors to improve their permitting systems for more effective bailiffing.

Fish Surveys

Apart from the **National Electro-fishing Programme** for Scotland (if this goes ahead), electro-fishing surveys will focus on assessing the potential hydro-morphology (substrate and flows) pressure in relation to the dams. Invertebrate sampling at historic sites may occur if time/ staffing allows. The board will aim to host a UHI intern (if available) and/ or contractor over the summer to get the electro-fishing work done. The board will participate in the **National Adult Sampling Project** in partnership with the Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate ghillies if this project goes ahead.

Habitat Improvement

The board will continue to eradicate **invasives** in the catchment in an upstream to downstream direction with help from our Invasive species officer, Trudi. A focus in 2023 will be managing a contractor to treat the large stand of Japanese Knotweed at Beauly as this will have multiple biodiversity and community benefits. We now have four willing (and trained) volunteers be able to help with follow-up treatment. We will also continue to support the **Beauly Balsam Bashers** in this important third year of co-ordinated pulling.

We aim to continue encouraging more **riparian trees** to grow in the upper catchment. Specifically through engaging with landowners, Riverwoods, and Trees for Life's Riparian Officer to help buffer the future impacts of climate change.

Working with SSE

We are working with SSE on future smolt monitoring plans for improved smolt survival. This will likely involve improving our monitoring by installing the 6ft rotary screw trap at Erchless to improve our estimate of when smolts are running. This may also start to allow us to estimate smolt output for (most of) the catchment. We will continue to work with SSE to refine the smolt protocol.

An initial report summarising the results of the 2022 fish habitat/ substrate walkovers on the Cannich and Affric rivers will be ready in due course and will form the basis for discussions with SSE about the potential for improved sediment management in the catchment for improved spawning and fry habitat. We plan to complete **walkovers** of the R. Farrar and R. Beauly summer 2023.

We will continue monitoring kelt build ups at the dams.

Other work

The Board will continue to gather evidence to inform licence applications for **piscivorous bird** management and make improvements to the monitoring of specialist seal ingress into the river.

Continued co-ordination of blockage clearing on tributaries will continue to ensure good **fish passage**.

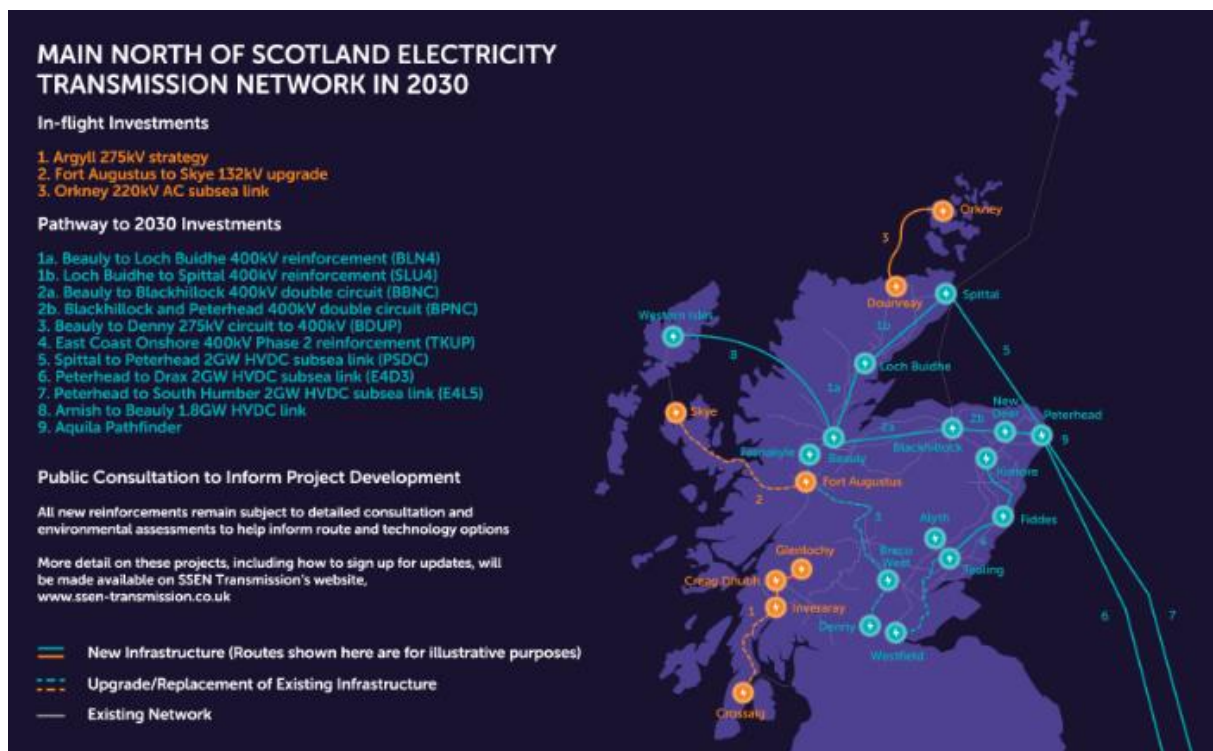
Louise (our 2022 Working with Rivers trainee), as a volunteer, may write up the **Oral History Project** to make it more accessible.

We will continue to work with the Ness board on reducing the threat from **estuarine netting** in the firth.

We will also continue **providing advice** to developers and proprietors, and support landowners to participate in Agri-environment schemes and other grant funding schemes.

We are expecting a significant amount of consultation from SSEN at the end of the year in relation to a tranche of overhead transmission lines and related infrastructure. The large amount of development is part of the delivery of the UK's [2030 Net Zero targets](#), and is likely to significantly alter the local landscape.

Map from www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/2030-projects/



Report prepared by: -

Alastair Campbell, Clerk to the Board

Ruth Watts, Senior Biologist

Ali Skinner, Fisheries Officer, Bailiff

APPENDIX 1

BEAULY DSFB CONSERVATION POLICY 2023

BEAULY DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

SALMON & SEA TROUT CONSERVATION POLICY

2023

The Beauly District Fishery Board has a statutory duty to act for the protection and improvement of the fisheries and for the increase of salmon and sea trout within its District. With declining rates of marine survival, the conservation of stocks should be of prime importance to all anglers. This Conservation Policy represents a minimum requirement all anglers should adhere to.

SALMON

Given current concerns regarding salmon stocks, the Board supports and encourages responsible catch and release practice throughout the season, with the aim of achieving 100%. Specific policy guidance is given below.

11TH FEBRUARY TO 31ST MARCH - STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

Under **The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations 2014**, it is an offence to retain any salmon caught before 1 April. By law, all fish must be released. Every effort should be made to ensure no harm is caused to fish prior to release.

1ST APRIL – 30TH JUNE

- **100% catch & release**

To protect vulnerable spring salmon stocks, it is the Board's recommended policy that all salmon be released

1ST JULY – 15TH OCTOBER

- Release all hen fish of any size and all cock fish over 7lbs (66cm/26 inches)
- Retain only one cock fish under 7lbs per angler per week with a maximum of three per season
- All coloured and unseasonable fish should be released. Please see illustrative guide overleaf.

SEA TROUT

- Release all finnock of 1 pound (35cm/14 inches) or less
- Release all sea trout of 3 pounds (50cm/20 inches) or above
- Retain only two fish per angler per week with a maximum of six per season
- All coloured and unseasonable fish should be released (smolts, kelts, over-wintered finnock)

GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Fishing should be by Fly only. To facilitate the release of fish barbless or crimped hooks should be used. Treble hooks should not be used.
- Under the provisions of The Conservation of Salmon (Prohibition of Sale) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 the sale of rod caught salmon or sea trout is illegal.
- When releasing fish, try to keep them in water at all times and under no circumstances should fish be lifted clear of the water by their tails. Guidance on catch & release best practice can be found on the Board's website <http://beauly.dsfb.org.uk/>
- The use of 'knotless' mesh landing nets is a legal requirement and will help prevent the fish from being damaged.
- Be mindful of water temperature. During a warm summer the best time to fish will be in the morning before river temperatures have warmed up. When water temperature is above 18°C consider stopping fishing until temperature is lower. Warm water holds less oxygen, and a fish played in warm water will be more stressed, and this can decrease survival rates for released fish.

How can salmon be recognised at the different stages of their life?

Fresh-Run Salmon

Recognised by the pristine condition and bright silver flanks. Fish straight from salt water have loose, easily detached scales and many carry sea lice which drop off within a few days. Hen salmon (illustrated) have a tiny kype on the lower jaw, but unlike cocks they retain normal head proportions while in the river.



Maturing 'coloured' Cock & Hen

Cock: The combination of "tartan" colours is typical although shades vary - the fully developed kype, used in fighting rivals, and the enlarged adipose fin, are the most consistent indicators of maturity.



Hen: These are usually less coloured than cocks of similar age and they never have enlarged jaws. This one will have spent a few weeks in river or estuary - note the coloured head and lack of true silver flanks.



'Unseasonal' Cock & Hen in Breeding Dress

Cock: The combination of 'tartan' colours is typical although shades vary - the fully developed kype, used in fighting rivals is the most consistent indicator of maturity.



Hen: This is a summer fish – 'springers' are often darker by spawning time while late entrants may still be silver flanked. Fully mature hens have soft, swollen bellies and spawning is imminent if they also have protruding vents.



'Unclean' Kelt

Kelts are salmon which have spawned. Usually identified by the thin shape, distended vent and presence of "gill maggots" on the red gill filaments, they are often encountered by anglers in spring when they regain a silvery appearance and can be mistaken for fresh run 'springers'. Kelts must be returned unharmed.



(Illustrations used with permission from the Atlantic Salmon Trust www.atlanticsalmontrust.org)

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

Beauly District Fishery Board

Annual Report and Unaudited Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

Draft

A9 Accountancy Limited
Elm House
Cradlehall Business Park
Inverness
IV2 5GH

Beaulieu District Fishery Board

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Statement of Changes in Equity	4
Notes to the Unaudited Financial Statements	5 to 7

Draft

**Independent Examiner's Report to the on the Preparation of the Accounts of
Beaully District Fishery Board
for the Year Ended 31 December 2022**

I report to the board on my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022 which are set out on pages 2 to 7.

Respective responsibilities of river proprietors and examiner

The river proprietors are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013. The river proprietors consider that an audit of the financial statements is not required. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the board and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the board members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter had come to my attention:

- which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records and prepare accounts in accordance with the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 or the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 have not been met; or
- to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

.....
H. E. Young CA CTA
A9 Accountancy Limited
Elm House
Cradlehall Business Park
Inverness
IV2 5GH
Date:.....

Beaully District Fishery Board

Profit and Loss Account for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Turnover		<u>131,233</u>	<u>138,192</u>
Gross profit		131,233	138,192
Administrative expenses		<u>(133,361)</u>	<u>(128,592)</u>
Operating (loss)/profit		(2,128)	9,600
Other interest receivable and similar income		<u>157</u>	<u>6</u>
(Loss)/profit before tax		<u>(1,971)</u>	<u>9,606</u>
(Loss)/profit for the financial year		<u><u>(1,971)</u></u>	<u><u>9,606</u></u>

The above results were derived from continuing operations.

The company has no recognised gains or losses for the year other than the results above.

Beaully District Fishery Board

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	3	2,959	3,344
Current assets			
Debtors	4	8,665	15,533
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>87,818</u>	<u>81,878</u>
		96,483	97,411
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	5	<u>(6,775)</u>	<u>(6,117)</u>
Net current assets		<u>89,708</u>	<u>91,294</u>
Net assets		<u>92,667</u>	<u>94,638</u>
Capital and reserves			
Retained earnings		<u>92,667</u>	<u>94,638</u>
Shareholders' funds		<u>92,667</u>	<u>94,638</u>

In accordance with the engagement letter dated 3 May 2022, we approve the financial statements set out on pages 2 to 7. We acknowledge our responsibility for the financial statements, including the appropriateness of the accounting basis as set out in note 1 to the financial statements, and for providing A9 Accountancy Limited with all information and explanations necessary for their compilation.

Approved and authorised by the director on

.....
Frank Spencer Nairn
Chairman

Beauly District Fishery Board

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	Retained earnings £	Total £
At 1 January 2022	94,638	94,638
Loss for the year	(1,971)	(1,971)
At 31 December 2022	92,667	92,667
	Retained earnings £	Total £
At 1 January 2021	85,032	85,032
Profit for the year	9,606	9,606
At 31 December 2021	94,638	94,638

Beauly District Fishery Board

Notes to the Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

1 Accounting policies

Statement of compliance

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice applicable to Smaller Entities), which have been applied consistently (except as otherwise stated).

Accounting convention

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the requirements of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013.

Income

Levies represent amounts receivable from the proprietors in order to finance the work of the board.

Tangible assets

Tangible assets are stated in the balance sheet at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

The cost of tangible assets includes directly attributable incremental costs incurred in their acquisition and installation.

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged so as to write off the cost of assets, other than land and properties under construction over their estimated useful lives, as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Plant and machinery	25% straight line basis
Tenants improvements	5% straight line basis

2 Staff numbers

The average number of persons employed by the company (including the director) during the year, was 3 (2021 - 3).

Beaully District Fishery Board

Notes to the Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

3 Tangible assets

	Tenants improvements £	Plant and machinery £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
At 1 January 2022	-	6,091	6,091
Additions	1,197	-	1,197
At 31 December 2022	1,197	6,091	7,288
Depreciation			
At 1 January 2022	-	2,747	2,747
Charge for the year	60	1,522	1,582
At 31 December 2022	60	4,269	4,329
Carrying amount			
At 31 December 2022	1,137	1,822	2,959
At 31 December 2021	-	3,344	3,344

4 Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Current		
Trade debtors	4,636	10,825
Prepayments	4,029	4,708
	8,665	15,533

5 Creditors

Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Due within one year		
Trade creditors	4,132	3,081
Taxation and social security	1,617	1,992
Accruals and deferred income	1,026	1,044
	6,775	6,117

Beaulieu District Fishery Board

Notes to the Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

6 Control

The board is controlled by the elected proprietors.

7 Related parties

Members of the board represent proprietors who pay levies to the board. Levies are paid in accordance with assessed rateable values. The members of the board are assessed at the same rate as proprietors who are not members of the board.

8 Financial commitments, guarantees and contingencies

Amounts not provided for in the balance sheet

The total amount of financial commitments not included in the balance sheet is £6,008 (2021 - £12,562).

Beauly District Fishery Board

Detailed Profit and Loss Account for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	2022 £	2021 £
Turnover		
Levies receivable	76,217	75,445
Income from SSE Renewables	43,596	41,819
Contracting income	6,920	20,928
Grants and subsidies	4,500	-
	<u>131,233</u>	<u>138,192</u>
Employment costs		
Wages and salaries (excluding directors)	(75,729)	(70,645)
Staff NIC (Employers)	(2,421)	(2,474)
Staff pensions (Defined contribution)	(2,788)	(2,678)
Health & safety costs and training courses	(60)	(1,457)
Staff clothing	(274)	(755)
	<u>(81,272)</u>	<u>(78,009)</u>
Establishment costs		
Insurance	(2,600)	(3,849)
Upkeep of property	(4,496)	(83)
Small tools and equipment	(1,484)	(1,803)
Fisheries Management Scotland	(2,686)	(331)
	<u>(11,266)</u>	<u>(6,066)</u>
General administrative expenses		
Telephone and fax	(980)	(945)
Irrecoverable VAT	(5,756)	(6,732)
Computer costs	(141)	(12)
Administration costs	(10,297)	(8,017)
Trade subscriptions	-	(823)
Sundry expenses	(1,614)	(1,011)
Project expenses	-	(4,793)
Motor expenses	(16,397)	(13,684)
Advertising	(573)	-
Accountancy fees	(3,350)	(3,625)
Legal and professional fees	-	(3,196)
	<u>(39,108)</u>	<u>(42,838)</u>
Finance charges		
Bank charges	(133)	(155)
Depreciation costs		
Depreciation of tenants improvements	(60)	-
Depreciation of plant and machinery	(1,522)	(1,524)
	<u>(1,582)</u>	<u>(1,524)</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements.

Beaulieu District Fishery Board

Detailed Profit and Loss Account for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

	2022 £	2021 £
Other interest receivable and similar income		
Bank interest receivable	<u>157</u>	<u>6</u>

Draft



BIDWELLS