

BEAULY DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD

SALMON & SEA TROUT CONSERVATION POLICY

2026

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

- **100% catch & release**

In line with FMS guidance we are recommending 100% catch and release so long as the IUCN considers GB populations of salmon to be endangered. In no circumstances will more than 1 fish be taken per angler per season.

SEA TROUT

- **100% catch & release**

In line with FMS guidance we are recommending 100% catch and release of sea trout up until the balance of scientific evidence suggests that populations are stable and recovering.

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.

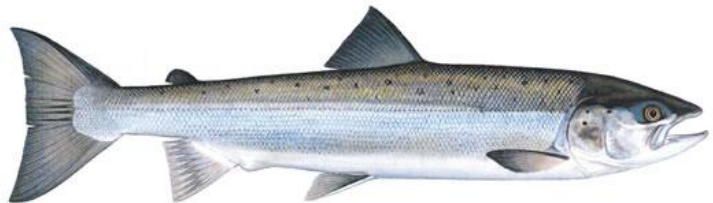


Hen: This is a summer fish – 'springers' are often darker by spawning time while late entrants may still be silver flanked. Fully mature hens have soft, swollen bellies and spawning is imminent if they also have protruding vents.



'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)