

# **RIVER CREE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

## **THE REPORT OF THE BOARD TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS AND ALSO AT THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD ON THE 24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

This report covers the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021

### **PART ONE**

This part of the report summarises what the Board have done in carrying out their statutory functions during the period and what the Board propose to do in carrying out those functions in the year ahead.

The primary duties of the Board are the protection or improvement of the fisheries within their district, the increase of salmon and the stocking of the waters of the district with salmon – Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003, section 45(1). To assist it in fulfilling those duties the Board has the benefit of the services of two fisheries trusts, Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) and The River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust (RCHHT). There are attached as appendices to this report, summaries prepared by those trusts of their activities during the period and their proposals for the coming year.

In addition to the activities of the two trusts mentioned above, the Board has dealt with other matters during the period. To some extent, the activities of the Board appear from an examination of the minutes of all its meetings, which can be viewed on the Board's website – **[rivercreedistrictsalmonfisheryboard.com](http://rivercreedistrictsalmonfisheryboard.com)**. The following is a brief summary.

Overall, the activities of the Board have been severely affected by the “lockdown” imposed in late 2020 and early 2021, and subsequent government measures to control the **Coronavirus pandemic**. During the period covered by this report the Board only held two “ordinary” meetings. A virtual ‘zoom’ meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021, and an outdoor meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The minutes from these meetings are available to view on the Boards website. It is hoped that more ‘normal’ Board meetings will be possible this coming year.

The **Conservation Code** for the District remained unchanged for the 2021 season, as the Cree retained its “grade 1” status under the **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations**, meaning that salmon again could be taken during the 2021 season. The Code appears on the Board’s website in its present form. It is heartening to note that the Cree is proposed to retain its “grade 1” status for the 2022 season. This is no mean achievement – the Cree will be the only river on the Solway to achieve “grade 1” status.

On the 7th January 2021 SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot **fish eating birds** as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 7th January to the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 (and up to the 31st May for male goosander only) and permitted a maximum of 7 goosander and 3 cormorants to be killed. The agents appointed by the

Chairman shot the quota of both cormorants and goosanders. Scaring tactics were also successfully employed. A return was submitted to SNH

It is intended to apply for a licence for the forthcoming season, and a bird count will be organised in the coming weeks to support the application

**The River Cree Management Plan** sets out how the Board aims to achieve its objective of protecting and enhancing stocks of migratory fish within the District. The current plan (dated December 2019) can be seen on the Board’s website. It will be subject to further review from time to time.

## **Privacy Policy**

The Board have completed a Privacy and Data Protection Policy. This document can be viewed on the Boards website.

## **Marine Scotland**

Two Zoom meetings took place on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021. These were “pre-consultation” meetings between various stakeholders to discuss MS salmon stocking policy. The Board explained the reasons for stocking in the Cree catchment and MS appear to agree in principle with our strategy. However, to date there has been no formal policy announcement or statement

Murdo Crosbie continued in office as the Board's only **water bailiff**. It is of some concern to the Board that we may not be able effectively to control poaching on the waters of the District. An appeal for "River Watchers" continues to be posted on the website has not produced any response.

The Board submitted a written objection (on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021) to the forestry planting of an area of ground on the High Cree catchment (comprising part of Creebank Farm). The original forest plans were altered to reduce the level of planting of non native sitka spruce, however it is believed the proposal will proceed despite our objections.

As noted in previous Annual Reports, **Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)** appears to have been abandoned by the Scottish Government. However, **Fisheries Management Scotland** (which still represents the majority of river boards) shows **WFR** as one of its "Current Priorities" on its website. This Board is not a member of Fisheries Management Scotland

Generally, in the year ahead the Board intends to continue to support the two trusts in the work they do for the Board and continue to manage the waters of the district in accordance with the River Management Plan.

## **PART TWO – COMPLAINTS**

During the year the Board received no complaints.

## **PART THREE – GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The Board has complied with the good governance requirements in the 2003 Act, as amended by the 2013 Act, as follows. The Annual Report considered at the Annual Public Meeting on the 6th November 2019 complied with Section 46A and the meeting itself complied with Section 46B. That Report and the audited accounts were

published on the Board's website and copies sent to the Scottish Ministers in accordance with Section 44(1A). The notice of the annual meeting of qualified proprietors and the annual public meeting to be held on the 24th November 2021 was publicised on the Board's website as well as on the premises of the Galloway Angling Centre and another site in Newton Stewart. A copy was sent to the Scottish Ministers to comply with Section 46C. The other requirements of Section 46C in relation to the meetings of

the Board have been complied with by publicising the dates of meetings and publishing the minutes thereof on the Board's website.

The Board's complaints procedure is publicised on the website in accordance with Section 46D.

The Board has established a register of relevant financial interests of members of the Board (available for public inspection) in accordance with Section 46E.

In the following year the Board intends to comply with the good governance requirements by keeping its procedures under review and observing the good governance requirements so far as possible. Of course, the ongoing government restrictions imposed as a result of the **Coronavirus pandemic** may make it impossible fully to comply with the good governance requirements, for example in relation to the holding of an Annual Public Meeting.

#### **PART FOUR – GENERAL**

The Marine Scotland officially recorded 2020 rod catch for the Cree, Fleet and Dee Districts was 489 salmon and grilse. It is unhelpful that there are now no stand-alone figures for the Cree District. The change in reporting style is apparently driven by data protection concerns. The Board's estimate of the 2020 rod catch for the Cree was 460 salmon and grilse, which would suggest that the Fleet and Dee had only 29 fish between them.

The Board's estimate of the rod catch for 2021 season is just over 200 salmon and grilse. This figure is significantly down on the 2020 catch (460). However, angling effort was greatly reduced due to the drought conditions for much of the season, with three of the most productive months not fishable due to the very low water conditions. When rain did finally arrive in August, the NSAA waters fished very well and recorded a catch of over 118 salmon for the season - making it one of the top three years in the last six. However, the seatrout catches remain very low (perhaps the worst recorded).

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This is the final report mentioned in section 44(1) of the 2003 Act.

**Jamie Hyslop**

**Chairman**

**Dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021**



## **THE RIVER CREE HATCHERY AND HABITAT TRUST CHARITY SC042355**

During the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 RCHHT carried out the following works on the catchment of the District.

### **HATCHERY WORKS**

We started the broodstock collection on the Water of Minnoch on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November which proved to be on the late side with fish already spawning. The number of fish taken from the top section above Kirriereoch Bridge was reduced to 7 hens. I stripped the first fish on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. I stripped the last Cree fish on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. Electro fishing the Penkiln Burn for brood fish over two days we handled approx 60 fish of which 11 were fin-clipped.

Broodstock & Egg numbers

Minnoch 17 Hens 8 Cocks Approx 65,000 eggs

Penkiln 14 Hens 9 Cocks Approx 65,000 eggs

The River Cree broodstock collection proved difficult once again and all fish were caught by rod and line.

Cree 7 Hens 4 Cocks Approx 29750 eggs

The Hatchery ran smoothly again with very little in the way of cooler conditions in the early days. This meant that the eggs developed quicker again this year with the first of the Minnoch eggs starting to eye up on the 12<sup>th</sup> December. Cooler conditions arrived in January which slowed the development of the eggs. The first of the eggs started to hatch on the 15<sup>th</sup> February. The gravity-fed water supply which is giving us a bigger volume of water to play with has held out during this year's drought conditions.

### **Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2020**

The first fry were stocked out on the 7<sup>th</sup> June which is later than usual due to the cold spring and this was completed by the 24<sup>th</sup> September. The stocking sites and approximate numbers of fry stocked were as follows:-

Penkiln

Pulbae Burn

Green Burn

Campbells Burn

Garlies Burn

Upper Penkiln Burn

Upper Penkiln Autumn Fry

Minnoch Eldrick Burn Kirriemore Burn Pilnyark Burn  
Rowantree

Cree

Fardin Burn Claughrie Burn Challoch Burn

Castle Burn

Millburn

Linloskin Autumn Fry

Approx No Eggs 15,000

5,000 3,000 7,000 20,000 10,500

Total 60,500

10,000 20,000

10,000 5,000

Total 45,000

20,000 1,000

4,000 5,000 8,000

10,500 Total 48,500

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The Penkiln Autumn fry were stocked out at the beginning and the end of September with 10,500 fin-clipped fry being stocked from a couple of hundred metres above the concrete bridge all the way up to the upper concrete bridge.

Linloskin Autumn fry were released 16<sup>th</sup> August and 24<sup>th</sup> September. We stocked approx 10,500 into this location. All autumn fry were in good condition and all were fin-clipped.

**Electro- Fishing**

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We surveyed 11 stocked sites and 6 non-stocked sites. We made a start on the electro-fishing surveys in week commencing the 2nd of August, once conditions had cooled. The fin-clipped sites on the upper Penkiln, which totalled 3 sites, proved to be very healthy. The Claghrie Burn was also surveyed and produced a good return of fry with very good growth rates (picture below). This site was stocked with approx 1000 fry this year due to the poor result last year of no survival. I am only cautiously optimistic as since it was stocked the burn has not had many rises of water and possibly gives a false picture of fry survival.

All Results Attached

Photo of some of the Fry from the Claghrie Burn





## ***RCHHT Electro fishing results stocked sites 2021***

All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m<sup>2</sup>

Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Upper Penkiln Burn Autumn Fry	03/08/21	3	2	0	12c	6.0
Upper Penkiln Burn (Middle)Autumn Fry	03/08/21	2	4	0	13c	6.4
Upper Penkiln Burn (Lower) Autumn Fry	03/08/21	12	5	11.6	14c	6.2
Claughrie Burn	03/08/21	0	0	72	0	6.4
Castle Burn	02/09/21	1.5	1.5	16	1.5	6.86
Challoch Burn	02/09/21	13.5	0	99	0	6.78
Millburn	02/09/21	0	0	90	0	6.9
Eldrick Burn	19/08/21	8	7	57	23	6.82
Pilnyark Burn	19/08/21	26.5	0	7	11	6.57
Kirriemore Burn	19/08/21	11	1	34	5	6.54

## ***RCHHT Electro fishing results Non stocked sites 2021***

All figures converted to give Minimum densities per 100m<sup>2</sup>

Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Penkiln Above Junction with Cree	02/09/21	2.8	1.4	117	26	6.4
Penkiln Below Ladies Pool	16/09/21	6.3	1.8	42.4	47	6.9
Penkiln Above Mattie Whites Bridge	03/08/21	14	1	140	27	6.5
High Cree Below Barjarg	16/09/21	2	0	2	7	6.9
Darnaw Ford	16/09/21	0	0	41.4	1.3	6.9
High Cree Above falls	16/09/21	3.5	0	35.4	1.7	7

0

0 Red

0 Orange

0 Yellow

0 Light Green

0 Dark Green

### SFCC classification

#### Salmon fry

0	absent	White
<4.7	E very poor	red
4.7-<10.3	D poor	orange
10.3-<20.3	C moderate	yellow
20.3-<42.1	B Good	Light green
>42.1	A excellent	Dark green

#### Salmon Parr

0	absent	White
<2.6	E very poor	red
2.6-<5.1	D poor	orange
5.1-<9.1	C moderate	yellow
9.1-<15.8	B Good	Light green
>15.8	A excellent	Dark green

#### Trout fry

0	absent	White
<2.5	E very poor	red
2.5-<5.3	D poor	orange
5.3-<12.4	C moderate	yellow
12.4-<30.3	B Good	Light green
>30.3	A excellent	Dark green

#### Trout Parr

0	absent	White
<1.6	E very poor	red
1.6-<3.1	D poor	orange
3.1-<5.6	C moderate	yellow
5.6-<10.4	B Good	Light green
>10.4	A excellent	Dark green

## HABITAT WORKS

### Rhododendron Clearing

No Work done due to Covid and access restrictions.

### **Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam**

No spraying done this year, plants should be of a good size to spray in 2022

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### **Bankside and instream works**

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Early spring we removed 6 large trees from the Cree. These trees were cut up and removed from the wooded area between Linloskin and the Suspension Pool. This was achieved by using a hand winch and tractor and several volunteers

### **Forestry Project**

Work on the upper Minnoch was hampered by Covid 19. Permission was eventually granted at the end of April and we began planting at the beginning of May. Approximately 3000 broadleaf trees were planted over many miles of burns and the upper Minnoch. The burns included the Pilnyark, Eldrick, Kirriemore, Fardin, Upper Penkiln and the Minnoch from Kirriereoch Bridge up to the confluence of the Eldrick and Pinyark. Picture below of trees that we have planted over the last few years.



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## **School Visits**

All school visits were on hold due to Covid restrictions.

## **Fish Eating Birds**

A licence for scaring/shooting was granted in early January which permitted 7 Goosanders and 3 Cormorants to be culled. This was achieved by the end of May. Also during this period, we were patrolling parts of the lower river using scaring tactics.

### **Fin-Clipped Salmon**

During the 2021 angling season I had reports of six fin-clipped hatchery fish being caught mostly from NSAA water. One was caught while fishing for broodstock in the Barclay Pool on Galloway Estate water.

Picture of a 10lb spring fin-clipped fish I caught myself from the Brewery Pool in May



**PROPOSALS FOR NEXT YEAR**

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It is intended to operate the hatchery and stock salmon fry into the catchment as set out in the Board's stocking policy document agreed on the 8th September.

Work will continue to monitor INNS along the banks of the Cree and Penkiln Burn and eradication measures will be taken as necessary.

It is intended to net the Cree once again with a view to removing pike and perch.

It is intended to remove any trees or obstructions that are causing any problems i.e. bank erosion or the potential to cause flooding.

We have now got the go ahead to work on the Upper Minnoch, Fardin and Shalloch burn removing and clearing Sitka Spruce regeneration trees. This project will also involve the planting, staking and putting deer guards on 1000 + trees of indigenous species (alder, downy birch, rowan and aspen) along the banks of the burn. This work will commence in December 2021 through to June 2022

It is intended to continue and expand our school programme and to promote angling for all.

It is intended to continue with the shepherding of the smolts by scaring and, at times, shooting fish eating birds under licence.

It is intended to continue with surveying by means of electro-fishing stocked and non-stocked sites.

**Murdo Crosbie**

**Hatchery co-ordinator**



## **Summary of GFT work on the Cree catchment over the last 12 months**

This season has been difficult for salmon and trout. While sufficient water flows allowed smolts to leave the river in the spring this was followed by a prolonged dry spell throughout the summer. Very low water flows, high water temperatures (we recorded water temperature up to 29°C locally) and fluctuating oxygen levels resulted in difficult instream conditions for juvenile fish and for adult fish entering the river.

- **Water Quality Monitoring**

GFT continued to collect water quality data (with a particular focus on acidification) across the High Cree and upper Water of Minnoch during winter / spring months. GFT run a detailed Water Quality Monitoring Programme across the upper reaches of the Galloway rivers, including the Cree, which provided evidence of the on-going acidification problems. It is planned to continue this (present Cree catchment sites mapped below) and to expand overall coverage. Samples are analysed with a calibrated specialised sonde ensuring that results cannot be disputed. Data collected is used to modify forestry redesign plans, comment on new planting proposals and identify areas for peatland restoration. GFT are also developing a network of continuous water temperature monitoring loggers to guide riparian tree planting programmes.

- **GFT stocking guidance report for CDSFB**

GFT produced the River Cree Stocking Guidance Report 2021-22 which assists the CDSFB to secure

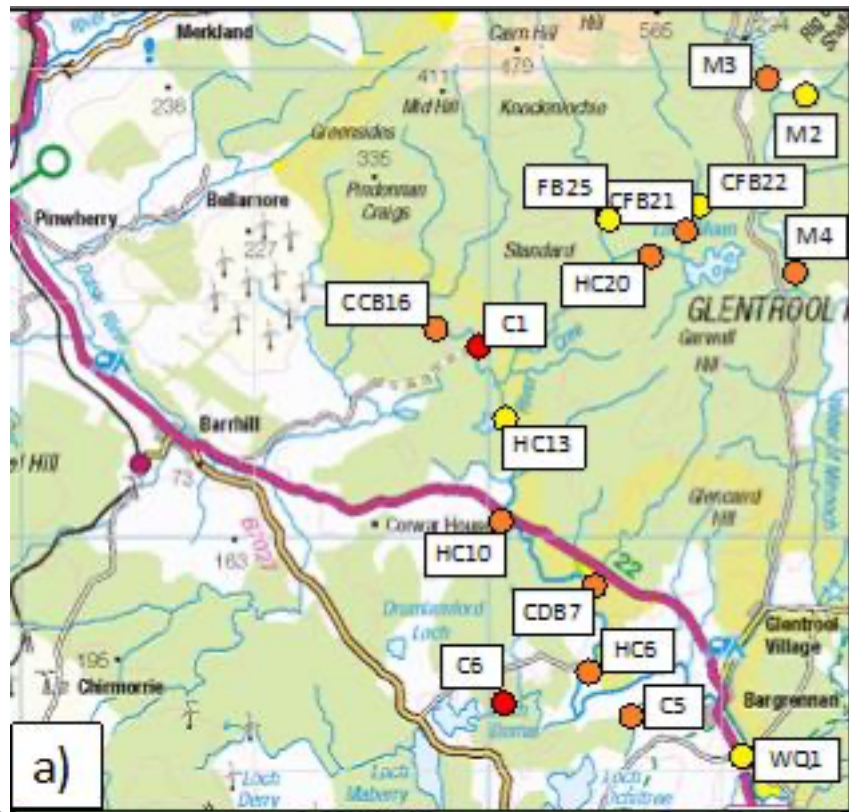
their annual broodstock collection license and permissions. • **2021 Electrofishing Survey results:**

Six stocked sites were electrofished by GFT and included in the Stocking Guidance report.

Four sites were electrofished on the Cree catchment this summer as part of the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) – table below presents data as minimum densities of fish per 100 m<sup>2</sup> of water. The salmon fry densities on the High Cree at Arnimean Bridge proves natural spawning occurred here which is very encouraging and shows the on-going recovery of salmon stocks in the High Cree. Very good densities of salmon parr were also recorded on the High Cree by Bargrennan. NEPS outputs may be used to set River Categories in the future.



High Cree – by Bargrennan 15.8 salmon fry 20.9 salmon parr (NX348764)  
High Cree – by Clachaneasy 12.3 salmon fry 7.7 salmon parr (NX356746)



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High Cree – by Arnimean 9.4 salmon fry 2.6 salmon parr Bridge (NX306801)  
Pulnagashel Burn (Minnoch 0 salmon fry 0 salmon parr tributary) upstream of the  
visitors centre. (NX376797)

Data collected in 2021 by GFT (part of a 3 year rolling electrofishing programme  
monitoring wild salmon stocks) are presented below as minimum densities of fish  
per 100 m<sup>2</sup> of water:

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Cree – d/s Creebridge Weir Cree – u/s Suspension Bridge Cree – Whitehills  
Cree – near Challoch

Cree – by Penninghame House

Minnoch – Kirrieroch Bridge

Minnoch – Tarfessock

## Minnoch – u/s of Rowan Tree Burn confluence

70.2 salmon fry 79.6 salmon fry 20.8 salmon fry 40.4 salmon fry 51.8 salmon fry  
63.3 salmon fry 93 salmon fry 65.1 salmon fry

7.8 salmon parr 20.8 salmon parr 8.5 salmon parr 3.7 salmon parr 9.2 salmon parr  
4.8 salmon parr none

18.9 salmon parr

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Salmon parr caught at NEPS sites have a genetic sample taken to check for genetic evidence of fish farm escapees. The 2018/2019 genetic data was published recently and in those 2 years there was no evidence of any salmon fish farm escapees spawning in any SW Scottish river.

- Forestry consultation

GFT submitted detailed comments on the new forest plan for Eldrick Forest (covering 1,114 ha). This is a key area for the High Cree as it covers about 1,500 m of the west bank High Cree (above Arnimean Bridge) and most of the Clauchrie Burn. GFT comments requested wider buffer zones, conifer regen removal, deciduous tree planting and the replacement of 2 impassable culverts on the Clauchrie Burn – which appear to have been accepted. Comments were also submitted to Scottish Forestry on a new tree planting scheme close to the Water of Minnoch.

- Habitat Works

Glenhead Burn (upstream of Loch Trool) very nearly dried up this summer. The burn's natural source is dammed and diverted into Loch Dee, so it should contain a lot more water. GFT have ensured it is included in a SEPA review of the Galloway Hydro license review with a request that a compensation water flow is returned to the Glenhead Burn to raise water levels during drought years.

Habitat enhancement works on the upper Water of Minnoch and Garchew Burn have been agreed with the relevant landowners and design plans compiled. These practical works are about to start and will be completed before March 2022.

