

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 23rd NOVEMBER 2022

This report covers the period from the 1st October 2021 to the 30th September 2022

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**. The following is a brief summary.

During the period covered by this report the Board held six ordinary meetings (13th Oct 2021, 9th Feb 2022, 4th May 2022, 6th July 2022, 16th Aug 2022, 13th Oct 2022) . The minutes from these meetings are available to view on the Boards website.

The **Conservation Code** for the District remained unchanged for the 2022 season. The Cree retained its “grade 1” status under the **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations**, meaning that salmon could be retained during the 2022 season. However, the Boards Conservation

Code applies strict limits on the numbers of Salmon that can be retained, and fishing methods. The Code appears on the Board's website. All river proprietors on the Cree have agreed to abide by the Conservation Code.

The Cree will again retain its "Grade 1" status for the 2023 season. The Cree will be the only river on the Solway and in SW Scotland to achieve "Grade 1" status. The Doon and the Urr are Grade 2, all others are Grade 3.

This achievement is recognition of all the hard work that Murdo Crosbie and his team of volunteers put in to the river Cree. I would like to publicly thank Murdo for all his efforts.

On the 27th January 2022 SNH granted the Chairman a licence to shoot fish eating birds as an aid to scaring them. The licence period was from the 27th January 2022 to the 30th April 2022 (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 took place on 19th November 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 Plan was reviewed and amended by the Board. The current plan (dated June 2022) can be seen on the Board's website. It will be subject to further review from time to time.

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. The Board believes that the current rod catch figures (especially when compared to other rivers locally) prove the River Management Plan is working

Privacy Policy

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

Marine Scotland

There have been no meetings with Marine Scotland and no further information or detail on the proposed “Salmon Strategy”. At present, The Board have explained the reasons for stocking in the Cree catchment and MS agree in principle with our strategy. However, to date there has been no formal policy announcement or statement.

Marine Scotland included a statement within one of their public announcements which said that they would seek to increase the rate of voluntary catch and release from its current level of 95% (and 99% in the spring) to 100%. If this policy was not successful, then MS would consider mandatory 100% catch & release on all rivers in Scotland – irrespective of the river grading. The imposition of mandatory catch and release is a very worrying development. Anglers releasing the “extra” 1% to 5% will certainly not halt the catastrophic decline of Atlantic Salmon

Bailiffing

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. Forest and Land Scotland have removed the old “catch return” boxes at Kirriereoch and also erected temporary “No Fishing” signs. More permanent signage is to be produced by FLS

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 24th November 2021 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 23rd November 2022 was publicised on the Board’s

website. 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.

PART FOUR – GENERAL

Catches - The Marine Scotland officially recorded 2021 rod catch for the Cree District was 193 salmon and grilse (468 in 2020). The 2021 fishing season was greatly impacted by drought river conditions from April to August. This severely restricted angling effort. Good numbers of salmon and grilse were observed in the tidal waters – but these fish could not access the upper river due to the drought conditions. Although this figure is less than half that of 2020, it is still considerably more than other local rivers achieved in 2021 (Bladnoch 12, Luce 69, Nith 142).

The Board's estimate of the rod catch for 2022 season is in excess of 350 salmon and grilse. Water conditions were much more favourable for angling this year. The NSAA waters fished very well and recorded a catch of over 150 salmon and grilse for the season.

Notable catches this season were four salmon from the High Cree, and 14 fin clipped hatchery-origin salmon reported by anglers (less than 10% of the hatchery fry are fin clipped)

Hatchery Operations – I am pleased to report the delays in obtaining permission experienced last year (which meant that no broodstock were captured from the Minnoch system, and consequently no fry were planted out in the Minnoch or high Cree), were resolved this season. The Stocking Policy Document was received from GFT within the deadline and was agreed by the Board.

Broodstock capture this season has been made more difficult by continuous high water. However Murdo and his team are to be applauded for successfully capturing sufficient broodstock to satisfy the Stocking Policy.

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

Jamie Hyslop

Chairman

Dated 23rd November 2022

=0=



THE RIVER CREE HATCHERY AND HABITAT TRUST CHARITY SC042355

During the period from the 1st October 2021 to the 30th September 2022 RCHHT carried out the following works on the catchment of the District:

HATCHERY WORKS

Broodstock collection on the Water of Minnoch was severely delayed due to FLS and Glentroll estates. When we did eventually get given the green light it was on the late side and, although we did electro fish above Kirriereoch bridge, the decision was to leave what fish were there due to lower numbers than in previous years. I stripped the first Penkiln fish on the 15th November and stripped the last fish on the 2nd December.

Broodstock & Egg numbers

Minnoch 0 Hens 0Cocks 0 eggs

Penkiln 12 Hens 8 Cocks Approx 57,500 eggs

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

Cree 7 Hens 3 Cocks Approx 27,500 eggs

The Hatchery ran smoothly with very little in the way of cooler conditions. This meant that the eggs developed quicker again this year with the first of the Penkiln eggs starting to eye up on the 25th December. Conditions remained mild, and as a result, the first of the eggs started to hatch on the 4th February.

Stocking Sites & Numbers for 2022

The first fry were stocked out on the 17th May and this was completed by the 30th August. The stocking sites and approximate numbers of fry stocked were as follows:-

<u>Penkiln</u>	<u>Approx No Eggs</u>
Pulbae Burn	15,000
Green Burn	5,000
Campbells Burn	3,000
Garlies Burn	5,000

Upper Penkiln Burn	18,000
Upper Penkiln Autumn Fry	10,500
	<u>Total 56,500</u>

Minnoch

Eldrick Burn	0
Kirriemore Burn	0
Pilnyark Burn	0
Rowantree	0
	<u>Total 0</u>

Cree

Fardin Burn	0
Clauchrie Burn	0
Challoch Burn	7,000
Castle Burn	5,000
Millburn	5,000
Linloskin Autumn Fry	10,000
	<u>Total 27,000</u>

The Penkiln Autumn fry were stocked out at the beginning of August through to 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 from the 19th July through to the end of August. We stocked approx 10,000 into this location. All autumn fry were in good condition and all were fin clipped.

Electro- Fishing

We surveyed 13 stocked sites and 3 non stocked sites. We made a start on the electro-fishing surveys in week commencing the 11th of July. The fin clipped sites on the upper Penkiln, which totalled 3 sites, once again proved to be doing well. This year results have been very interesting due to several sites not being stocked in 2022 and only Parr from last years stocking being present.

Photo of some of the Autumn Fry from the Upper Penkiln burn



Site	Date	Trout Fry	Trout Parr	Salmon Fry	Salmon Parr	PH
Cree Bank above falls	2018	7	2	18	18	
Cree Bank above falls	2020	20	0	67	3	
Cree Bank above falls	2021	3.5	0	35.4	1.7	
Cree Bank above falls	2022	6.6	0	7.7	10.9	
Cree Bank below fall	2018	1	5	27	21	
Cree Bank below fall	2022	1.8	.4	2.2	4.5	
Claghrie lower	2018	34	21	1	0	
Claghrie lower	2022	4	6.1	0	0	

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

A walk over survey has shown some new growth and some re-growth.

Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam

Spraying took place from the start of September, only plants that had flowers or were of a considerable size were sprayed. Area covered was

from the weir at the Ghyll pool down to the A75 Bridge. Plants below the A75 Bridge were left for a further year to hopefully mature and flower. Plants are left until the autumn and to flower as this is the best time to hit them with Glyphosphate.



Bankside and instream works

Early spring we removed 3 large trees from the Cree. These trees were cut up from the wooded area on the Linloskin side of the Ghyll pool . On two separate occasions we removed over 50 shopping trolleys from the lower river. These were removed with the help of Volunteers. After speaking to the supermarkets, they have made changes to the security of the trolleys to try and avoid this problem in future.



Forestry Project

Work on the Fardin burn and the Shalloch burn proceeded during the winter of 21/22 . The Fardin burn had been planted previously and the Sitka regen had been left due to time constraints. The regen was felled, brashed and stacked before moving onto the Shalloch burn where one thousand trees were planted, staked and tubed by RCHHT volunteers.



Fardin Burn Before



Fardin Burn After

School Visits

The First of the visits were due to start in November and at the last minute were cancelled due to a spike in covid cases. Penninghame primary 5s did get to the second visit in May where they released a few fry. They then were given a demonstration on how to do kick testing for invertebrates and were given the opportunity to study the insects up close. The third visit was held at Glenamour loch and involved the children having a go at fishing. This was done over two groups and between them

they caught approx 50 Rainbow trout which were despatched and taken home. NSAA and RCHHT had bought extra fish for the event to try and make the experience enjoyable.

Fish Eating Birds

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

Fin Clipped Salmon

During the 2022 angling season I had reports of fourteen fin clipped hatchery fish being caught. Galloway Estate water reported 4, 2 from Machermore beat and the remainder from NSAA water fish ranged from 3lb to 12lb.

Mr Tim Fowler 6.5lbs
From Cunninghams Ford
Galloway Estate Water

Mr Rozewicz 4lbs
Machermore pool
Machermore beat



PROPOSALS FOR NEXT YEAR

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 with 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 license.

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



- Habitat Works

GFT previously prioritised various water courses across Galloway as requiring habitat enhancement to recover juvenile salmon numbers – some of these waters lie within the Cree catchment. GFT continue to work with partners on these priority waters:

Garchew Burn (runs into the High Cree) – riparian trees were planted on the banks of the burn and protected from stock in high wooden tree enclosures.

Water of Minnoch (upstream of Waterhead of Minnoch) – 300 native trees and willow whips planted on the south bank to help keep down water temperatures. Logs were also pinned into the river bed to improve instream habitat.

Clauchie Burn (runs into the High Cree) – this is a GFT priority water, Forestry and Land Scotland have now cut back conifer regen from 1,800 m of banksides along the upper burn (see photo below).



- Forest Plan consultations

GFT have met with FLS Forestry Planner and Environmental Forester to discuss various plans and comments submitted. Main plans being reviewed are Kirroughtree Land Management Plan (covers the Palnure) and Minniwick Land Management Plan (High Cree and Minnoch).

- Cree Annual Stocking Guidance Document

GFT electrofished 4 stocking sites to monitor the hatchery programme. No concerns were found. GFT compiled the Stocking document in the autumn, which was agreed with Cree DSFB, and is used to support the broodstock license and permissions. This work was funded by the CDSFB.

- Water Temperatures

There are temperature loggers now in the High Cree to understand more about how high water temperatures get in this peaty water.

- 2022 Electrofishing Survey (non-stocked sites)

No NEPS surveys were undertaken in 2022. GFT had been delivering 4 year rolling catchment wide wild fish electrofishing programme for the CDSFB. Although the CDSFB do not fund it now, GFT wanted to continue it in 2022 with sites focussing on the High Cree. This produces an important data time series to assist in responding to consultations and managing the overall fishery. As part of a RSPB event, GFT electrofished the lower Cordorcan Burn and Coldstream Burn in the Wood of Cree. Both had good populations of trout and salmon (including a herling in the Cordorcan Burn).

Table 1: 2022 electrofishing results from High Cree, from most downstream site (2019 results for same sites in brackets):

Site No.	Site (sites start in the lower reaches of the High Cree and move upstream. The final sites are near Loch Moan)	Grid reference (NX)	Expected source of the salmon	Salmon fry*	Salmon parr*
HC1	High Cree, riffle u/s of Clachaneasy	355751	Wild	3.0 (5.0)	5.0 (5.9)
HC2	High Cree, d/s of Bargrennan Bridge	349763	Wild	14.2 (6.9)	4.7 (10.8)
HC4	High Cree, over hill from Dalnaw Farm (limestone riffle)	320765	Wild	19.2 (23.9)	2.0 (4.4)
HC5	High Cree, riffle above 3 Counties Pool	318762	Wild	20.2 (17.2)	2.0 (2.3)
HC6	High Cree, Carrick Burn (lower)	318761	Wild	5.4 (18.6)	20.4 (8.6)
HC7	High Cree, by Balnahoin (limestone riffle)	319770	Wild	8.8 (13.6)	2.5 (2.3)
HC8	High Cree, d/s Dalnaw Farm bridge	321771	Wild	10.1 (2.1)	4.3 (4.2)
HC9	High Cree, Cairnderry Burn	323789		0 (0)	0 (0)
HC10	High Cree, u/s of Cairnderry Burn outflow	322789	Unclear	0 (0)	3.2 (0.7)
HC11	High Cree, Amimean Bridge	302804	Unclear	0 (0)	1.3 (2.9)
HC12	High Cree, riffle area	304825	Hatchery	5.2 (0)	4.76 (0)
HC13	High Cree	307839	Hatchery	0 (0)	1.6 (6)
HC14	High Cree	327856	Hatchery	1.3 (1.3)	2.6 (11.3)
HC15	High Cree, Loch Moan outflow	334862		0 (0)	0 (0)
HC17	High Cree, Cairnfore Burn	345869		0 (0)	0 (0)

*fish numbers are all standardised to density per 100 m² of water (minimum densities)

- [Water quality monitoring](#)

GFT run a programme covering the Galloway rivers utilising 3 sondes (which record pH data every 15 minutes) and undertake various spot sampling programmes. A different river is focused on each year for the sondes, it was the Fleet last year. Spot sampling did take place on the Minnoch in March 2022 during a flood so these are worse case pH's.

OID	Easting	Northing	River_3	pH
1	235844	591449	Minnoch (Waterhead)	4.76
2	236549	591330	Pilnyark Burn	4.6
3	235788	590256	Rowantree Burn	4.45
4	236193	589722	Minnoch	4.7
5	236317	589563	Un-named Burn	4.94
6	236914	589508	Knochlach Burn	5.01
7	236573	587719	Pillow Burn	4.73
8	237240	586444	Kirriemore Burn	5.36
9	236731	585509	Kirriemore Burn	5.26
12	236539	581500	High Mill Burn	4.65
13	236482	581271	Low Mill Burn	4.36
14	237132	578615	Pulnagashel Burn	4.82
15	237100	578615	Minnoch	4.97

