

**MINUTES OF THE RIVER BRORA DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
PROPRIATORS MEETING**

**Held at Sunrise House
On Thursday 5th April 2018 at 11am**

Present		In Attendance	
The Earl Cadogan, Lower Brora North Bank	LC	Neil Wright, Clerk to the Board	NW
Mrs Angela Tyser, Upper Brora and Loch Brora	AT	Martin Livings, Head Bailiff	ML
The Hon. Martin Janson, Lower Brora South Bank	MJ	Robert Rattray, Sporting Agent for Lord Cadogan	RR
		Philippa Cliff	PC
		Christian Wroe	CW

1	APOLOGIES	Action
	None received.	
2	MINUTES OF THE 14th AUGUST 2015 MEETING	
	LC welcomed all attendees and explained that the Public meeting is usually held in April but is being moved to August in order to have the year to March 2018 accounts completed and presented at a public meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting have been circulated. LC signed a copy as being a true reflection of the meeting. The signed copy was handed to the Clerk.	
3	TRIENNIAL ELECTIONS	
	LC advised the Board that elections were required prior to the next meeting and noted that the present Board should resign and be re-elected. LC, AT & MJ were all elected to the Board and LC was elected to chairman.	
4	FINANCE UPDATE	
	NW ran through the accounts to March 2018 and noted that there is presently £23,690.77 in the account, with a profit of 9,493.52 being realised over the year, the total income through assessments was 78,750.02. The main reason for the saving was due to the Board having one less bailiff for part of the year, otherwise the Board ran to budget. There was a capital purchase of 4x4 vehicle which replaced the old Ford Ranger. NW proposed keeping the assessment at the same level until the August meeting as there is sufficient funds in the account to pay for the first round of survey work proposed by Jon Watt. The level of assessment can then be reviewed.	
5	HEAD BAILIFFS REPORT	
	ML ran through his bailiff's report and commented that the catch figures that he receives from tenants are different to those returned to the sporting agents. RR suggested comparing notes on tenants to make sure all are being recorded but advised there are always discrepancies.	

	<p>ML noted there has been around 22 fish caught to April 5th but there has been bad weather and the river has not been fished hard. LC agreed that there are not many fish being seen or caught on the lower river.</p> <p>ML reported that Graham Sutherland has been appointed as the second bailiff and he has now passed his Bailiffing exam with flying colours. ML stated that the Board is looking to employ a part time or season person to assist with the strimming and night shifts during the summer.</p> <p>ML is concerned that some tenants are not being respectful of the salmon being caught and best practice for catch and release is not being followed. Fish should ideally not leave the water. RR responded that the information is available but they may not read it. LC suggested that having a word with the main person at the start of the week may help and check their net or ensure they have one. RR emphasised that the nets need to be meshless. The proprietor agreed that it would be sensible for the bailiffs to speak to the tenant at the start of the week and advise them of best practice even if this does lead to some tenants being disgruntled.</p> <p>RR noted that there has not been much complaint regarding the full catch and release policy yet.</p> <p>LC commented on the pink salmon being caught within Scottish waters.</p> <p>ML advised that the electro fisher is going to be sent away for servicing but the number of electro fishing sites will need to be increased and an agro may be required to get to a number of sites in the head waters. Both ML and Graham Sutherland will be undertaking an electro fishing course in May. NW advised the First Aid course to be renewed after the summer season and the health and safety policy is up to date but Argo certificates would be required.</p> <p>ML requested that a second thermal imager is purchased as the first one has been invaluable and it would help to have both bailiffs equipped with them. LC & MJ agreed a second imager should be purchased. NW suggested waiting until the cost of the habitat survey was better know and then purchasing the equipment, the proprietors agreed.</p>	
6	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – RIVER CATAGORISATION	
	<p>The board briefly discuss the categorisation of the Brora to category 3, tenants not yet complaining on the lower Brora. NW noted that it looks likely there will be an annual review of the calculation being used. The Brora was only marginally in category 3, however, it is a rolling road and the best catch figures used for the calculation will drop off the 5 year average for next year's calculation which will most likely plunge the river further into category 3.</p>	
7	HABITAT IMPROVEMENT	
	<p>The Board discussed the proposals for a habitat survey and management plan for the river. All proprietors agreed to proceed with the full proposals laid out by Jon Watt with an estimated cost over 2 years being £35,000. This will lead to increased electro fishing surveys annually and there will have to be an</p>	

	<p>ongoing commitment to this data collection.</p> <p>The cost of the survey would be split based on the % allocation for assessments.</p>	
8	CONSERVATION POLICY	
	<p>LC ran through the proposed conservation policy and noted that the table for estimating the weight of fish may not accurately measure the Brora stock as they are a very unique shape. RR commented that fish are being estimated more and more and so people are not able to estimate fish so easily, weigh nets can be used.</p> <p>The Board agreed the conservation policy as proposed for 2018. (Copy attached with the minutes).</p>	
9	PREDATOR CONTROL	
	<p>CW noted that James Dent had advised that tenants had noticed a larger number of cormorants on the river this year.</p> <p>NW was to look into a cormorant licence for the 2019 season and in particular to assist with the smolt run.</p>	
10	AOCB	
	Nothing to report.	
11	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	Public meeting - Thursday the 16 th of August at 11am - venue to be decided	

Brora District Salmon Fishery Board

Conservation Policy 2018

The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016 outlined for the first time a system whereby the killing of Atlantic salmon in inland waters is managed on an annual basis by categorising the conservation status of their stocks.

In general terms the Regulations prohibited the retention of salmon caught in coastal waters, permitted the killing of salmon within inland waters where stocks were above a defined conservation limit i.e. those rivers accorded category 1 or 2 status and required mandatory catch and release of salmon in areas which fell below their defined conservation limit following the assessment of salmon stocks i.e. those rivers accorded category 3 status.

The grading is based on the average rolling rod catch for the previous 5 years vs the hypothetical number of salmon in the river. Looking at historic catch data from 1952 to present the average catch for the Brora is in a period of a dip but not unusual based on historic data.

The River Brora has been graded as category 3 for 2018 which means total, 100%, catch and release.

SALMON

- Due to the Scottish Governments categorisation there will be 100% catch and release.

SEA TROUT

- Sea Trout over 1½lbs are particularly valuable and should be released. A maximum of two sea trout under 1½lbs (about 15 inches in length) per angler per week may be killed but it would be preferable to kill only smaller fish. If anglers are fishing for less than a full week all sea-trout should be returned.

GENERAL

- All coloured fish must be released
- Fly fishing only
- Use barbless hooks as best practice
- Do not use treble hooks
- When releasing fish, try to keep the fish in the water at all times and use knotless mesh landing nets.

PINK SALMON

Subject to further Government advice any pink salmon caught should be killed and, in the first instance, please advise Martin Livings of the capture. The fish will then be passed to Fishery Board staff for analysis. However, it is very important to identify that any fish are pink salmon as killing an Atlantic Salmon will be illegal.

GYRODACTYLUS

Proprietors or their appointed nominees are urged to ensure that anglers fishing their waters have completed and signed a declaration regarding sterilizing fishing equipment.

Equipment can be sterilized by using one of the following precautions:

- Dry equipment at a minimum of 20 degrees C for at least 2 days.
- Heat for at least 1 hour at a temperature of over 60 degrees C.
- Deep freeze for at least 1 day.
- Immerse in a solution suitable for killing Gs for a minimum of 10 minutes. Suitable solutions include; Virkon (1%), Wescodyne (1%), sodium chloride (3%) and sodium hydroxide (0.2%).

These rules are subject to any amendment to the current legal requirements that might be imposed by Scottish Government as a result of their ongoing conservation measures.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS:

A record of numbers and weights of all fish caught together with a record of the pools and the anglers' names must be kept and returned to the letting agent.

Tagged fish

Please report any sightings of tagged fish to Martin Livings, the head bailiff and if one is caught please record the information on the tag before releasing the fish.

Permits

The additional abbreviated conditions of let must be carried in lieu of a permit, which tenants must produce if requested by representatives of the owner or agents

CATCH AND RELEASE ADVICE

Planning Ahead

Before fishing a pool, always identify where a fish can be safely landed without risk of damage on rocks or stones. If fishing alone, take a net. Traditional large mesh salmon nets can cause split fins and tails. Have long-nosed forceps or a similar tool close to hand for prompt hook removal. If you want a photo of your salmon before release, have your camera ready, for example, on a neck lanyard.

Playing Fish

Fish should be played quickly and as firmly as possible so that they can be released before becoming too exhausted

Landing Fish

We urge you not to lift the fish out of the water by any means if it is at all possible. At the very least, never lift your salmon from the water by its tail, or gill cover: you will cause internal damage. Avoid taking them onto the bank or dragging them over stones or gravel. Use a soft, knotless net with small mesh size with a shallow, wide bottom to allow the fish to lie flat. Knotless mesh is a legal requirement.

Tailers and gaffs are prohibited and it is recommend that the ketchum release tool, or equivalent, are used as the most effective hook disgorgers.

Fishing From Boats

If fishing from a boat, where convenient, take the boat to the shore to land the fish. If the fish is landed in a boat, ensure that the fish is laid on a flat, wet surface for unhooking. A soaking wet towel or unhooking mat is ideal for this purpose. Laying the fish upside down will often calm it for unhooking. Fish produce most of their energy from their tails, and so holding down the tail on a flat surface will keep a fish still.

Unhooking & Recovery

When the fish is quiet, remove the hook carefully and promptly with forceps. Fish should be allowed to recover and returned in steady clean water, but not in a fast flow. Recovery may take some time.

If fish are deep-hooked, particularly in the gills, it may not be possible to remove the hook – **snip the line close to the hook. This will cause less harm to the fish than removing it.** As an additional precaution, it is wise not to fish at all during extended periods of hot weather.

Recording Your Catch

Only lift the fish from the water for the minimum time necessary.

Photography - Keep the fish in or briefly just above the water. Support the fish gently under the belly and loosely hold the wrist of the tail.

Weighing - If possible, use a weigh net, or scales hooked on to a conventional net.

Measuring – Do it in the water. Take a tape measure or mark up your wading staff or the butt section of your rod as an easy indicator.

Weight can be estimated from length – see the Environment Agency scale reproduced below or see the Salmon Atlas or letsflyfish websites for an online calculation. Fish should be measured from the nose to the fork of the tail.

Length (ins)	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
Weight (lbs)	5	6	6½	7½	8¾	9¾	10½	12	13	14¾	16	17	19	20¾	22½	24¾	26¾	29	31