

TAY SALMON NEWS

January 2021

New Board Elected

On 8 December, a new TDSFB Board was elected at the triennial election. This was the first ever election held as a postal ballot because of Covid 19. Two places were available for lower proprietors and five for upper proprietors. The following were elected.

Lower Proprietors:

David Godfrey (Mandate for Tay Salmon Fisheries Co.) 16 votes.

Andrew Parrott (Perth and Kinross Council Representative) 8 votes.

Upper Proprietors:

Alastair Riddell (North Chesthill) 47 votes.

Toby Metcalfe (Mandate for Crown Estate Scotland) 44 votes.

Iain McLaren (Mandate for Kinnaird) 39 votes.

Michael A W Smith (Mandate for Burnmouth) 30 votes.

Bobby White (Mandate for Stanley Fishings) 30 votes.

The following upper proprietor candidates were unsuccessful.

Claire Mercer Nairne (Meikleour) 16 votes.

Jim Perrett (Mandate for Drummond Foundation) 15 votes.

Simon Furniss (Mandate for Dunkeld House) 12 votes.

Bob Mason (Mandate for PDAA Logierait) 9 votes.

Joe O'Donnell (Mandate for Taymount) 4 votes.

The following representatives of salmon anglers were also co-opted onto the Board.

Jerry Saunders

Nicola Thompson

Allister Wallace

Iain Wood

Dates of forthcoming Board meetings and minutes of previous meetings are available at www.tdsfb.org/reports.html

Opening Day Celebrations Cancelled

The Opening Day of the Tay salmon fishing season, 15 January, is normally a day of celebration, being the first of Scotland's bigger salmon rivers to open. Beats up and down the river hold opening celebrations and in recent years the Board has supported a large and growing public opening ceremony at Meikleour. Following last season's difficulties, we were looking forward to such a happy day again.

However, because of the resurgent Covid 19 situation the public opening ceremony has of course been cancelled.

We all hope the vaccine rollout is successful and that normality is able to resume shortly.

Angling Allowed but Limited under latest Scottish Government Restrictions

In advance of the start of the new salmon season Marine Scotland (a part of Scottish Government) has helpfully provided advice for angling in light of the recent Covid 19 lockdown introduced in Scotland.

Angling will be permitted but only if subject to significant restrictions and limitations on travel. If you have not already done so, we ask all proprietors and anglers to read this official Scottish Government guidance before letting fishing or going fishing.

This is obviously a fluid and changing situation but the latest Scottish Government guidance can be found at

<https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/2021/01/05/guidance-for-anglers-during-coronavirus/>

Hatchery News

Winter is a critical time in the hatchery. Fishing for new broodstock to supplement our unique stock of “reconditioned” kelt broodstock commenced in October. We received a licence from Marine Scotland to catch 206 broodstock between the tributaries Eden, Errochty, Fillan, Garry, Ruchill and Tilt. Wet weather hampered the fishing but approximately 130 fish were obtained. The shortfall mainly came from the River Tilt, the most difficult river to fish.

The new broodstock were almost all stripped successfully as were broodstock fish that were reconditioned for their first time this year. However, our older reconditioned broodstock were unusually slow to mature this year. As many as 19 females are still not quite ready to spawn even in mid January. We have never experienced a situation like this before. It is presumed the delay has been caused by the unusually mild conditions that prevailed through the early winter.

Marine Scotland Stocking Policy

In 2019, Marine Scotland introduced a new salmon stocking policy which has affected the number of broodstock the Board can take under licence. Of particular concern the policy was introduced without consultation with stakeholders. Perhaps helped by a Petition raised in the Scottish Parliament by Bob White through the Scottish Gamekeepers’ Association’s Fishing Group, Marine Scotland held an online consultation event in December, to be followed by a written one shortly.

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Prospects for the New Season?

It is of course impossible to predict with any certainty what any new season will bring beforehand. Last year, however, we were pleasantly surprised to find a better run of 2SW salmon in the river when lockdown ended in May. Sometimes a better run of 2SW salmon then translates into a better run of 3SW salmon the following year. These bigger 3SW salmon tend to return earliest in the year, usually peaking in March. So, if this follows, there may be more fish in the 15 to 20 pound bracket this spring.

Improving Communications

We hope that anglers, proprietors and other interested parties find this newsletter useful, but we are aware that stakeholders would sometimes like more interaction with the Board.

Board meetings are, of course, open to the public to watch and every year we hold an Annual Public Meeting and an Annual Meeting of Proprietors which is also open to the public to sit in on. However, we also appreciate that interested stakeholders may be scattered far and wide and attending such meetings is highly impractical for many or indeed most.

But, having conducted the latest Annual Meeting of Proprietors digitally on Zoom, it is clear that holding meetings and events in that format can allow us to communicate and interact directly with a much wider range of people than has ever been the case before.

With this in mind we wish to commence this process by holding our 2021 Annual Public Meeting electronically at 7pm on the evening of Tuesday 23 March 2021 and will be publicising this extensively. Joining instructions can be obtained directly from the Clerk.

If there is a demand for it, we also propose to hold online seminars about the River Tay and the Board’s work and other events in due course.