



# Dee District Salmon Fishery Board

**MINUTES FROM THE PROPRIETORS' OPEN SESSION  
AT RIVER OFFICE, MILL OF DINNET  
18:00 HRS, THURSDAY 20 MAY 2010**

**PROPRIETORS/  
MANDATES:**

Simon Blackett - Invercauld  
Guy Bentink - Dess  
Jim Cameron - ADAA  
Stewart Fleming - ADAA  
Dave Gordon - RDT  
Oliver Hickman - Middle Blackhall  
Alastair Hume - Garthdee  
Edward Humphrey - Dinnet & Kinord  
John Lewis - Garthdee  
David Macdonald – Stonehaven Angling Association  
Iain Morrison - RDT  
Ian Murray - Lower Invercauld  
Malcolm Nicol - Ballogie  
John Pirie - Culter  
Alistair Thomson – Banchory

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ian Scott, Chairman  
Board & Trust Staff  
Alan Williams – Spey Board  
Roger Knight – Spey Board  
Ian McLaren – Marine Scotland

The Chairman opened the first of a series of meetings which had been arranged following the feedback at last year's AGM where "informal sessions" were called for to update and discuss the work of the Board and Trust. This first event was centred round, but not limited to, Stocking and Hatcheries and was supported with independent advice from the Spey Fishery Board and Fisheries Research Services.

Mark Bilsby provided an overview on the Board's current policy on stocking and reminded everyone of the reasons behind the Board's decision to close the hatchery in 2005. The main reason for the closure of the hatchery was that the limiting factor was the poor quality of the parr habitat, where fish numbers were bad and that adding more fish to these areas would not increase smolt production. This in combination with the irreparable condition of the hatchery had been the rationale behind the closure. To this end the Board decided to focus efforts on improving the quality of parr habitat and the easing of obstructions to fish migration.

Lorraine Hawkins of the River Dee Trust provided a presentation (*copy attached*) of rod catches, juvenile stock numbers and the use of additional stocking with hatchery fish. Data from the Dee suggests there is no requirement for hatchery stocking – stocks are significantly above the level where hatchery stocking might be beneficial.

A presentation from Roger Knight on the resources, costs and benefits of running the Spey hatchery followed (*copy attached*). Roger provided answers to the arising questions and advised that the River Spey is currently examining their returns from the hatchery via their genetics sampling programme. Results are due in three years when the Spey Foundation will be required to revisit their policy. Roger highlighted that if the Dee were to follow suit there would be a significant financial impact on costs which would be reflected in the Proprietors' annual levy.

The majority of people attending were supportive of the River Dee Board's position on stocking and the format of the evening was well received. The remaining meetings will be held on 16 June and 10 August with the main topics being **Trial Season Extension** and **2011 Conservation Code** respectively.

A question and answer session followed with the main items being:

**Q1: The data which has been shown includes the extra fish caught in the 2 weeks in October. Can I suggest that the figures during the extension are not included in the analysis and are provided as an Appendix in the future.**

A1: This was accepted.

**Q2: Why are there no parr in the river?**

A2: Adrian Hudson of River Dee Trust responded advising that parr stocks in the river have not changed and that there was an abundance of parr where the habitat was good.

**Q3: Hatcheries were the real way to go and you also have a lot of poor habitat. What about the improvement of this and what is the River Dee's plan for going forward?**

A3: Where we have a diffuse pollution problem there are typically plenty of eggs but fewer parr. We are seeing that where we are putting in buffer strips we are getting real improvements in parr numbers. We are looking to transfer similar techniques to the Upper Dee and are currently surveying 140 km of riverbank to this end.

**Q4: What year did you assess the Dess hatchery as the stock was lost in 2009?**

A4: This is the work of several years and whilst there is no evidence that damage is being done there is also no evidence of a significant benefit. However, we would like to work with you to look at a way forward over the next few weeks.

**Q5: Is there a consensus or analysis that would encourage the Board to put lime into the ground to increase the PH?**

A5: Ian McLaren of Marine Scotland confirmed that the problem of acidification is reducing in Scotland and that it is not a problem for juvenile stocks in the Dee.

**Q6: Why do the Ghillies not take part in the Spey hatchery programme?**

A6: Roger Knight responded that there were various reasons and that whilst enthusiasm was good to start with there was now a lack of interest, whilst others have estate maintenance duties and cannot be released or are on holiday after a long fishing season.

**Q7: Where do you take your stocks from for the Spey Hatcheries?**

A7: Stocks are taken primarily from the tributaries, although a number come from the main stem. However, we have extensively reviewed our stocking policy over the last 18 months to ensure that broodstock capture will not adversely impact upon natural spawning. In due course we hope that the genetics analysis project will enhance our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses (in terms of abundance) of the breeding populations within the Spey catchment.

**Q8: How serious was the problem before you (Spey) commenced a hatchery?**

A8: In a good year we had been catching 15,000 fish – in 1999, 6000 fish which was less than 40% of the maximum – but there has been some indication of improvement since then. We would be very pleased if we had seen the same improvements as the Dee in 2009 to date.

**Q9: Exactly what information will DNA testing give us? For example, will you be able to tell us in the next 4 or 5 years that for fish caught in the lower river where they will be spawning?**

A9: We are currently doing a programme of sampling juveniles which will build up a genetic map of fish populations across the catchment. We will have preliminary results available in September/October 2010 and full results in the next 3 years. This will be made available to all proprietors, ghillies and the wider community, together with a 2 page layman's guide.

**Q10: How will the genetic information be used to improve the stock levels?**

A10: We will be targeting our habitat restoration efforts in areas where the genetics work has shown there to be a particular weakness in the runs of fish.

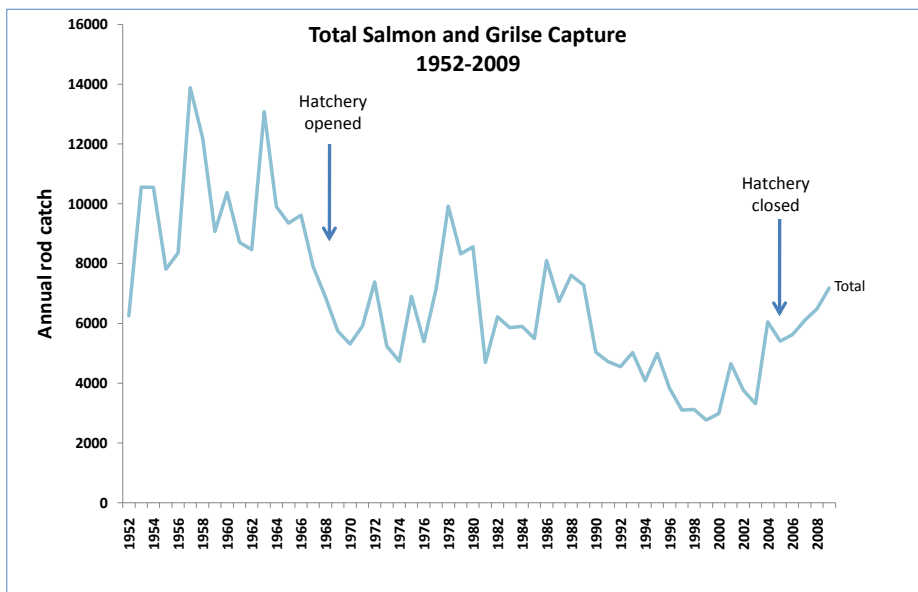
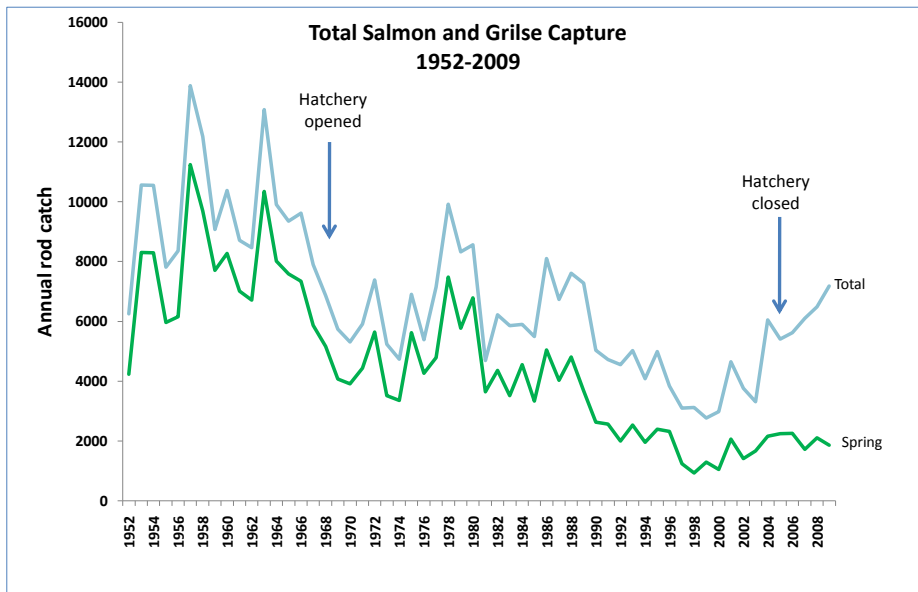
**Q11: A number of small fish have been caught recently – are they grilse, or something else?**

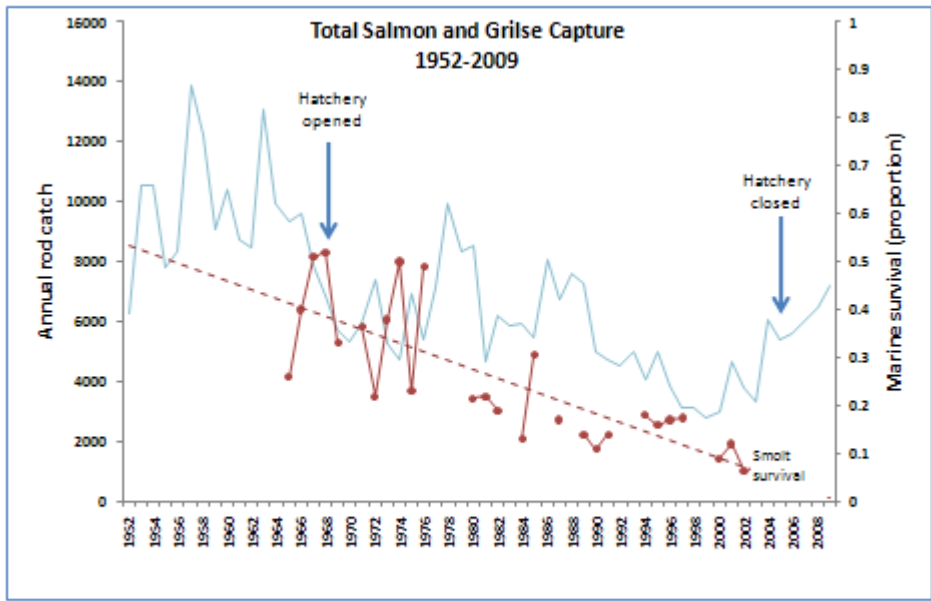
A11: We do not have an answer to this until we have completed our scale report which will be available in early summer.

An open invitation was extended to all to go out with the Dee Salmon Fishery and River Dee Trust personnel to see at firsthand what is happening on the River. Similarly, anyone wishing to visit the Spey hatchery should contact Mark Bilsby, River Director in the first instance.

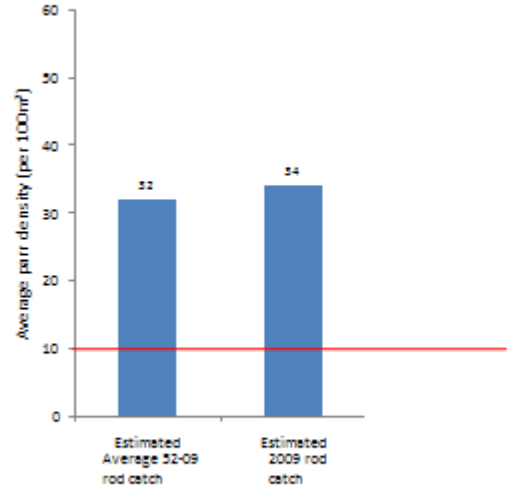
**Ian G Scott**  
Chairman

**Copy of River Dee Trust Presentation  
Dr Lorraine Hawkins**





## Natural Productivity



Parr density expected from stocking at 5 eggs m<sup>-2</sup>

# Factors limiting natural production

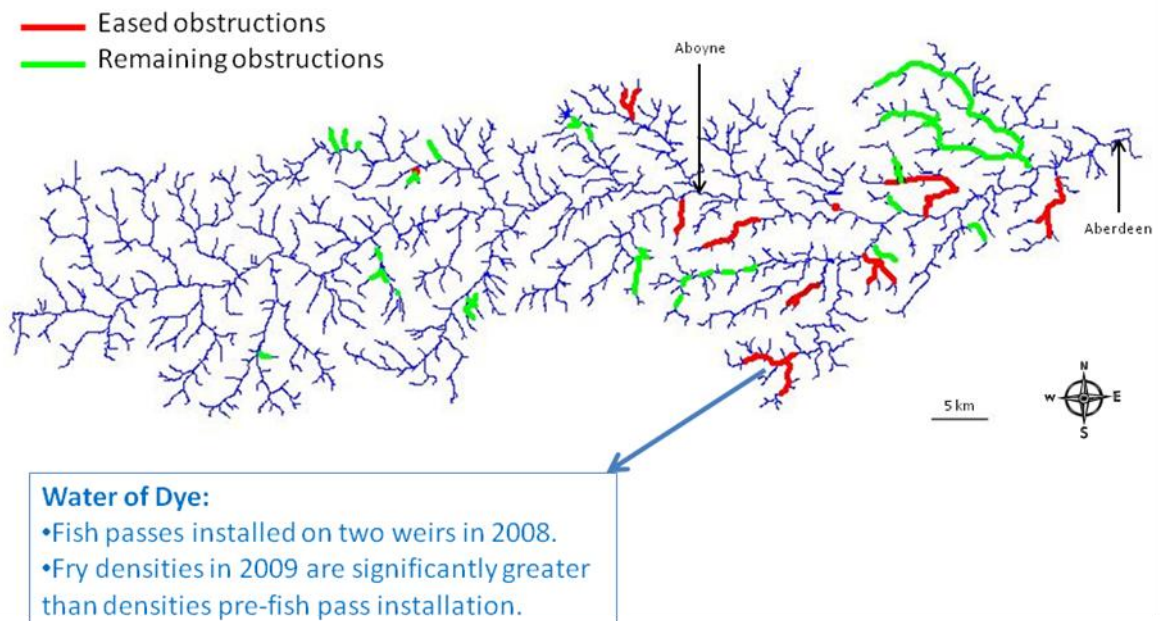
1. Access to habitat



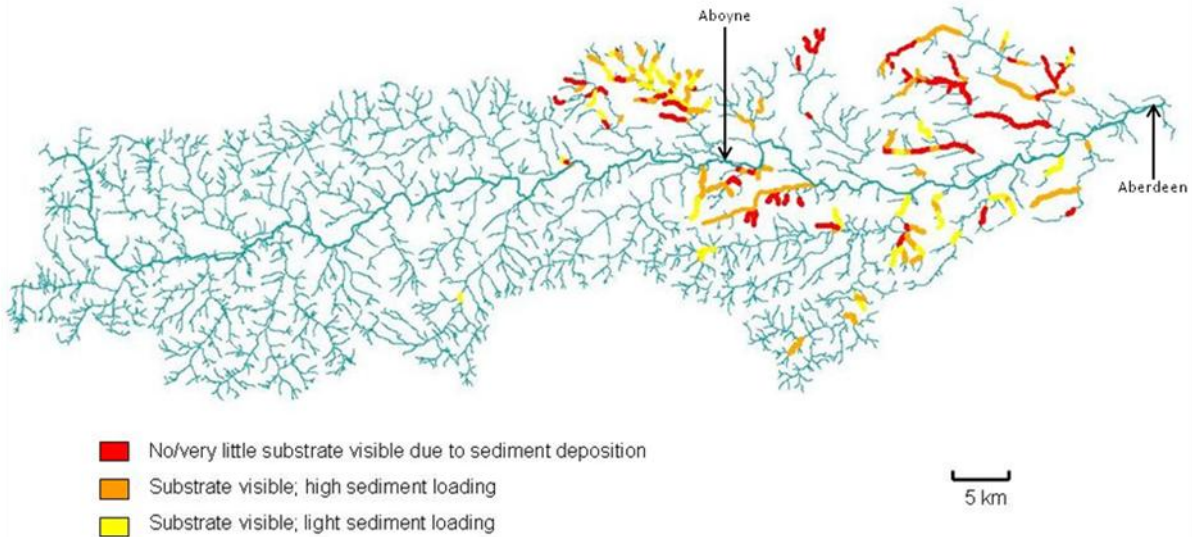
2. Quality of habitat



## Access to habitat



# Habitat improvement areas

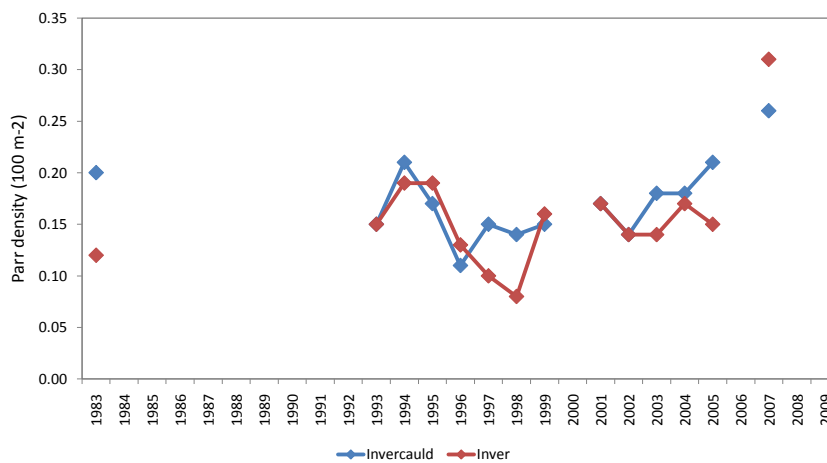


River network reproduced under licence from CEH

Parr density (100m<sup>-2</sup>)

	Good habitat	Poor habitat
Tarland burn	27.1	2.7
Dinnet burn	67.8	1.8

## Main stem parr density



Data provided by Marine Scotland (Faskally)

# Smolt ranching

*To increase rod catch by 1000 fish:*


10,000 extra adults need to be produced

Requires 1 million hatchery smolts to be produced

At rate of rearing of 80 pence per smolt (cheap rate) – cost of £800,000 p.a. In running costs.

Spey  
Fishery  
Board

## *The Spey Fishery Board's Hatchery Operation*



20<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Spey  
Fishery  
Board

## *Introduction*

- This is **NOT** an attempt by the Spey Board to try to persuade the Dee to open a hatchery!
- Nor is it an attempt to even suggest how the Dee Board should manage its fishery.
- This is an outline of how the Spey conducts its hatchery/stocking operations, the costs involved and the implications it has on other operations.

## SFB/SF Management Structure

- To the outsider, the Spey Board and the Spey Foundation are two separate organisations.
- One is a Statutory Body, the other a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable status. But this is really for accounting purposes only.
- **In practise, we work as one. Both organisations are dependent upon one another.**
- Both share the same Chairman, Director & Admin. Staff

## Spey Fishery Board Structure



N.B. The Patrol Boat is operated by Richard Whyte and Jason Hysert, who also bailiff the Lower beats of the River Spey

## *The Spey Fishery Board's Hatcheries*

- The SFB operates two hatcheries – one at Sandbank in Glenlivet (pictured), the other at Tulchan Estate.
- The Tulchan Hatchery is owned and operated by Tulchan Estate, at their own expense, but under an agreement with the Spey Board whereby the Board supervises its operation.
- 1.1 million Salmon fry produced in 2008/2009; now 1.3 million.
- Full-time Hatchery Manager and Part-time Assistant (60%)
- A 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year commitment



## *Spey Fishery Board: Hatchery*

- One of the SFB's largest annual investments – circa £120,000 p.a.
- Broodstock Capture begins on 1<sup>st</sup> October each year.
- Conducted using an electro-net and portable generator .
- All of the Bailiff Staff and some Foundation staff are required, each of whom requires a Dry Suit and safety equipment.



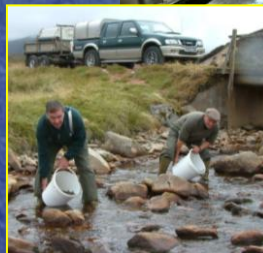
## *Spey Fishery Board: Broodstock Capture*

- A team effort - 8 staff, plus assistance from some ghillies.
- Specialist equipment: boat, generator, electro-net, fish tanks & oxygen, protective clothing & trailers
- Annual servicing of equipment – Health & Safety
- Governs our vehicle policy – hatchery and bailiff staff require large 4X4 pickups, which in turn require more regular servicing
- Broodstock capture also conducted for the Findhorn and Deveron DSFBs



## *Spey Fishery Board: Hatchery*

- Fish are stripped and eggs Collected in November.
- Fish are reared in incubators and tanks, separated according to their river of origin.
- Planting of fry from June/August back into the same areas of parental origin.
- Maintenance & Disinfection in September.
- Cycle begins again on 1<sup>st</sup> October.



## Spey Fishery Board Stocking: The Costs

- *Practical Costs*
  - The Bailiffs modus operandi will change
  - Manpower allocated to hatchery operation may sacrifice that dedicated to habitat improvement.
- *Financial*
  - Significant investment to establish a hatchery.
  - Annual running costs take in to account the costs of hatchery staff, bailiff time, vehicle costs, and general expenditure (heat, light, maintenance etc.)
  - Reducing hatchery production does not lead to a proportional decrease in expenditure e.g. 1.8 million salmon fry in 2008 cost circa £123,000, but 1.1 million in 2009 cost £101,000.

## Spey Fishery Board Stocking: The Costs

- *Financial Costs in 2009*

Running Costs (heat, light, maintenance)	£ 4,863
Hatchery Manager (salary, NI, pension)	£ 31,800
Hatchery Assistant (60%)	£ 16,237
Other Bailiffs time	£ 38,763
Motor Fuel (40% of total i.e. 50% less Director)	£ 6,330
Motor Maintenance (40% of total)	£ 2,658
Equipment & Protective Clothing	£ 450
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 101,101</b>
	<b>(£ 123,692 in 2008)</b>

## Manage Fisheries: Why Bother?

- £11.8 million to local economy
- 367 full-time equivalent jobs
- High Conservation Value (SAC)

Challenge to maintain  
economic value of  
fisheries while  
achieving long-term  
conservation  
obligations

