



Project No. LIFE04NAT/GB/000250

## **Newsletter 2 – Spring/Summer 2006**

Welcome to the second Newsletter of the Conservation of Atlantic Salmon in Scotland Project.

**Personnel** - Since the last Newsletter, there has been a change in personnel within the Project Team led by Dr Colin Bull. Claire Myles, the Project Administrator, left the team in early April to assist with her husband's business. We wish Claire well in her new post. We would like to welcome Gill Gentry, the new Administrator for the project who took up post on 12 June. Gill is an existing SNH member of staff and is familiar with the Project, and will be a valuable asset to the Project Team.

**Action achieved since May05** – Good progress has been made with a range of actions which have been delivered efficiently by the Project teams. We would like to thank the local partners for adhering to what has been a challenging timetable and programme of works so far.

**National Actions achieved-** At a central level, a number of actions have been completed. The **CASS website** is now live and can be viewed at <http://www.snh.org.uk/salmonlifeproject/> - the site is a valuable resource and provides a wealth of information relating to the project. Regular updates will be made to this site.

Filming has begun for the **project DVD**, this will be another means of educating stakeholders about the project, and this will be widely available once the project is complete.

**Salmon in the Classroom:** A partner training day for salmon in the classroom was held on 16 Dec 2005. This important project is being delivered by Elspeth Englishe on the Tay and Esk. She is also contracted by SNH to deliver

Salmon in the Classroom on a wider scale. This project involves teaching schoolchildren about salmon and their local river. The children keep eggs in the classroom until they have hatched and they release the fry back into the rivers. There is also a visit to the Almondbank hatchery. The website, which is hosted by SNH, is now live <http://www.snh.org.uk/salmonintheclassroom/index.shtml> and this has more detailed information on the programme.

Recently, **Rhona Brankin MSP, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development** attended one of the days that Tayside schools released their fry back into the rivers. There was wide press coverage in local and national newspapers and a feature on Grampian News (See below). This project is also being delivered to schools in the Rivers Oykel, Dee, Moriston, Bladnoch and Spey catchments.



**Deputy Environment and Rural Development Minister Rhona Brankin MSP visits the Tay catchment as part of the Salmon in the Classroom project**

**Local Projects-** Turning to the local projects, a great deal has been achieved since our last newsletter in June 2005. Taking the various partners in turn:

**Oykel** - The Duchally dam is situated in the upper reaches of the Cassley which is a tributary of the Oykel. The dam diverts some water through a tunnel to hydro generating facilities in neighbouring Loch Shin. Improvements in the form of installing a novel design of screen and associated cleaning mechanism, are required to better guide smolts past the intake, so they can continue to migrate downstream.

The fish pass and its controls also require upgrading to ensure improved passage of salmon upstream and downstream at low water flows. The dam currently restricts access to and from 13km of suitable habitat for juvenile salmon. Only a few fish used to access the upper reaches of the River Cassley, but due to work on alternative flow regimes approximately 350 adult salmon have migrated upstream annually in the past three years. These projects are now complete. The flat bar screens were installed successfully between May and October 2004 according to the specifications set out in the contract. The automatic screen cleaner and the fish pass refurbishment were also successfully installed by October 2004.

The Kyle of Sutherland DSFB have also successfully purchased the rights to 6 netting stations on the lower river to significantly reduce adult salmon exploitation. Their staff are also actively engaging in a programme of education and awareness-raising activities with local owners and stakeholders about the salmon "catch-and-release" programme in place on the River Oykel.

**Spey** - A number of works relating to fish passage in the Spey catchment have been completed. These relate to small, but locally important, obstructions to salmon passage, including road culverts, small dams and screens for off-takes. Obstacle work accomplished under the co-ordination of the Spey Fishery Board include-

- Truim screens have now been installed on Truim dam (Scottish & Southern Energy);

- Work is underway to improve the design of the gates at the Spey Dam fish pass (Alcan);
- Work to upgrade Rothiemurchus fish farm smolt screens is now complete (Rothiemurchus Estate)
- Culvert modification on the Ballintomb Burn has been complete (Carron & Laggan Fishings, Mr C. Martin);
- Ford and Culvert modifications have been completed on Fochabers burn (Crown Estate and Moray Council)
- Fish pass upgrade at Dufftown weir (Diageo)



**Entrance to the new fish pass fitted at Dufftown weir**

The Spey Fishery Board are now actively restocking a number of the areas upstream of these actions to ensure the salmon populations receive a 'kick start'.

Two Vaki fish counters were purchased in August 2005 but are still waiting to be installed. Installation should take place during summer 2007.

**Dee** -Large-scale habitat improvement works are ongoing in a number of areas in the Dee catchment with 6982 m of fencing already erected to reduce impacts of grazing on river banks, and construction of silt traps to decrease siltation. Coppicing of alders on 9070 m of the riparian zone will increase stream productivity, and 7948 m<sup>2</sup> of boulder placement work which has been carried out will re-create parr habitat lost during channel straightening



**A new stock fence on the Beltie Water, River Dee (far left) is established well back from the bank, to allow natural vegetation to colonise and protect the bank**

There are various obstacles to be removed or eased on Dee tributaries. On the Cattie burn, there is a series of 3 weirs which are to be completely removed. On the Beltie, remains of an apron used to house a counter will be removed. On the Dye, there are fish passes at two weirs (owned by Scottish Water) which are to be improved. On the Coy Burn in the grounds of Crathes Castle, a fish pass will be fitted to a weir owned by the National Trust. The careful negotiations are ongoing with the National Trust to come up with a solution which fulfils the requirements of the CASS project (and legal requirements) but maintains the integrity of the dam structure and does not adversely affect the visual impact (as the grounds are landscaped) too much. Consultant designers have been awarded contracts for design solutions to the above obstacles.



**Dam on the Coy Burn that is to have a fish pass fitted.**

**.Esk** – The preparatory fluvial audit of the Glen Clova area has been completed, with recommendations to undertake extensive stock-fencing to protect riverbanks against damage from livestock trampling and grazing and minimize erosion. Discussions are currently underway with landowners to plan fencelines and agree on future management. Issues. As referred to earlier, Elspeth English is coordinating a major educational project in the Esk and Tay catchments.



**Areas such as these where livestock access is exacerbating erosion on the Upper South Esk w, will be fenced-off to allow natural regeneration of vegetation.**

**Tay** - the work on Stronach Borland lift is underway and the whole job should be complete by the time this Newsletter is published. The work has involved removing the top gate of the fishpass and instead of refurbishing it (as was originally planned) Scottish & Southern Energy have had to commission the building of a new gate. The gate runners were in very bad condition and required to be machined in situ. In addition to these tasks the by pass valves and the freshet gate have also required to be refurbished. The Borland lift controller will also be replaced which will add significantly to fish passes functionality. Work has also begun on a fluvial audit of the Tay catchment using aerial photography to start the process to inform stakeholders of Best Practice for gravel extraction in this area.

**Tweed** - Gala Water fish pass: the step and pool fish pass is being modified to enable a Vaki fish counter to be installed. Engineers have been

awarded a contract to carry out the work which has been slightly delayed at the moment as the Tweed Foundation now require planning permission for the work. Work is expected to start as soon as this is received.

**Bladnoch** -The Galloway Fisheries Trust are engaged in a large programme of improvement and monitoring works. In terms of habitat improvement, windblown debris has been cleared from the Clugston burn, opening up 1300 m of spawning habitat. Fencing has been erected which has minimised 1906m of bankside grazing overall. Proving the worth of this type of work, salmon redds have been found beside all fenced areas. Deciduous tree planting is being arranged for Polbae and Glassoch Burns and a specification is being drawn up to install a fish pass over Polbae Dam.



**Large debris blockages on the Clugston burn have been removed to allow fish access**

Monitoring the effects of the improvements is to be done via electro-fishing to inform on the status of certain sub-populations, such as spring salmon. Eggbox work has been carried out on the upper Bladnoch to assess impacts of acidification from conifer plantations in spring 05 and 06. A smolt trap was purchased and deployed on the River Bladnoch in 2005 until a dead sheep got caught up in it! Replacement parts were ordered and the repaired trap is operating well again in 2006.

The Board have successfully purchased a 99 year lease for a netting station netting in the

River Bladnoch to reduce adult salmon exploitation.

**Moriston** – Preparatory surveys indicated that salmon habitat was present in the area upstream of the Ceannacroc heck, modifying the original plans in this area. Work by Scottish & Southern Energy is currently underway to install a fish pass to allow salmon to re-colonise the area naturally, without any need for re-stocking.



**The new fish pass under construction at the Ceannacroc heck, River Moriston**

**Forestry Commission** – FC have been involved in several projects. On the Bladnoch, 30.85 ha of conifers have been felled, and an additional 7ha has been felled and mulched. On the Spey: a 244ha area on Allt Gheallaidh has been felled to waste, thus completing FC actions on the Spey. Felling operations in the Dee catchment have begun on various burns prior to LIFE works taking place. Management plans for the Sheoch and March Burns are now complete.

**If you have any questions, the Project Team would be delighted to help you – please do not hesitate to contact Colin, Ruth or Gill on 01796 484120 or email: colin.bull@snh.gov.uk**