

Agenda item 4.6  
For information

**Council**

**CNL(07)25**

***Unreported catches – Tabled by UK (Scotland)***

*Unreported catches – Tabled by UK (Scotland)*

**Methods used in assessment**

The size of the unreported catch in Scotland, as elsewhere, is difficult, by definition, to ascertain.

*Unlawful fishing:* Unlawful fishing is a clandestine operation, no records of catches are kept, and in most instances, there is little evidence that it has occurred.

Among its range of fisheries protection duties, the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency (SFPA) patrols inshore waters and cooperates with District Salmon Fisheries Boards (DSFBs) on salmon fishery-related matters. A helicopter is available for specific projects. In recent years, SFPA has recorded few or no illegal nets being deployed, and no requests have been received from DSFBs for helicopter or inshore patrols.

*Non-reporting of fish taken lawfully:* Where lawful catches are unreported or under-reported, it is extremely difficult to derive any robust measurement of the level of non-reporting. As it is an offence for any salmon caught by rod and line to be sold in Scotland, it is not possible to compare rod catches with any market sales. As most fish taken by the net fisheries are sold to long-standing customers rather than via fish markets, comparison with market sales is again of limited value. The principal net fisheries in Scotland are sampled on a regular basis throughout the fishing season, and fishery scientists are confident that the recorded catches are substantially correct.

*Intelligence gathering:* In the late 1980s, local management groups were approached and asked for their views on the subject. Local enforcement officers (principally water bailiffs) are asked to provide information on their perception of the size of unreported catches, although this is necessarily anecdotal evidence.

**Assessment of unreported catches**

The results of these surveys, modified by our best understanding of the situation, prior to and since the survey, are used to provide a range of likely unreported catch rates (expressed as a percentage of the total catch (min and max)) for 1SW and MSW salmon separately for use in the national run reconstruction model. The mid-points of the exploitation rates ranges are applied to the catch to provide an estimate of the unreported catch in tonnes.

**Additional measures coming into force**

There has been a statutory requirement for the proprietors or occupiers of salmon fisheries in Scotland to provide to the government, annually, records of the numbers of salmon caught at their fisheries. Return rates of around 95% are achieved, and best intelligence indicates that those that do not make returns have not operated their fisheries. The database is continually being updated to take account of changes in ownership.

The Conservation of Salmon (Collection of Statistics) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1 January 2007. This will allow DSFBs to collect salmon catch statistics from salmon fishery proprietors or operators within their districts up to twice per annum. These data will be available for comparison with the reported catches returned to the Scottish Executive.

### Trends in unreported catches

The trend in the estimated unreported catch shown below (Figure 1). The observed declining trend is a function of both reduced catches and a progressive reduction in the unreported rate throughout the series.

Figure 1. Estimated unreported catch (t), 1971-2006. (Note: 2006 value is provisional).

