

**Council**

**CNL(04)42**

***Progress with the development and implementation of Habitat Protection and  
Restoration Plans***

***(Tabled by the European Union)***

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#### **EU – UK(England & Wales)**

An inventory of salmon rivers is being developed in line with the NASCO Plan of Action CNL(01)51. Most sections in Parts A (River data) and Part B (Salmon production data) are complete, though some aspects still require some development. The detailed information for Part C (Habitat impact data) has not all been collated nationally, though individual rivers have their own Salmon Action Plans (SAPs) which identify habitat problems. Such SAPs have now been completed for the 63 principal salmon rivers in England & Wales. A national review of progress towards achieving conservation limits is currently underway. Based on the individual SAPs this will identify the key problems, including habitat issues, affecting rivers across the country.

The implementation of the EU's Water Framework Directive will be a key driver for assessing and improving salmon habitat over the next decade. By 2015, most inland and coastal waters, including salmon rivers, are expected to have achieved 'good ecological status' (including fish communities) or have a plan in place to do so. This year, GIS-based inventories are being developed to identify areas of rivers and estuaries at risk of not achieving 'good ecological status'. The work is due to be completed by December 2004.

#### **EU – Germany**

As the Atlantic salmon became extinct in all German river systems around 1950 (due to habitat degradation, water pollution, construction of dams, hydro power stations, etc.) and salmon restocking projects, first on a very small scale, started only about 20 years ago, no self-sustaining salmon populations have as yet been re-established in the river systems draining into the North Sea. Though all projects concerning the re-introduction of salmon, as a rule, go hand in hand with the restoration of habitats, an official inventory covering all relevant river systems does not exist at the national level. At the level of the federal states (*Bundesländer*) the relevant Ministries of the Environment and their agencies keep river inventories for a range of other purposes (e.g. status of water quality, areas of conservation, etc.). Inventories of rivers where salmon are being re-introduced within major programmes have been established at least in Baden-Württemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz and Sachsen. These concern parts of the Rhein and Elbe river systems.

However, as a result of a private initiative of one of the associations of German recreational fishermen (*VDSF - Verband Deutscher Sportfischer e.V.*) a comprehensive inventory of about 30 salmon restocking projects was published in 2003. For each project, information is provided on the watercourse systems, their status regarding restocking and habitat suitability, technical and biological data on restocking measures, financing, technical cooperation, analysis of opportunities and risks, contacts and public relations measures. The German re-introduction projects embrace all four major river systems draining into the North Sea: Rhein,

Ems, Weser and Elbe; each project addresses a different sub-catchment. Up to now a total amount of around Euros 10 million is estimated to have been invested in restocking of Atlantic salmon alone.

As a rule, for each of the above-mentioned projects a salmon habitat restoration or protection plan has been developed, the implementation of which is being regularly reviewed and updated. It is highly probable that the relevant aims of the NASCO Plan of Action are being met, although in most cases they will be unknown to the people involved on the spot. However, this would have to be checked in future.

For those projects that are integrated into major programmes (e.g. international programmes like “Salmon 2000”, International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, “Elbe 2000”) comprehensive evaluation and monitoring systems have been introduced. Whether and to what degree they exist for the other projects would have to be checked in future.

References (list of publications):

- a) “Lachse in Deutschland”, Verband Deutscher Sportfischer e.V., ISBN 3-9808390-2-8, (June 2003, 135 pages)
- b) “Der Elblachs”, Sächsische Landesanstalt für Landwirtschaft, August-Böckstiegel-Str. 1, D-01326 Dresden, (November 2003, 96 pages)
- c) ”Wanderfischprogramm Nordrhein-Westfalen / Statusbericht zur ersten Programmphase 1998-2002”, Ministerium für Umwelt und Naturschutz, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, D-40190 Düsseldorf, (2001, 112 pages)

## **EU – UK(Scotland)**

Responsibility for the development and implementation of habitat and restoration plans lies with the local management and research organisations; the District Salmon Fishery Boards and the Fishery Trusts.

Board and Trust biologists have identified inventories of habitat issues such as over-grazing, and man-made obstacles, and many steps have been taken already to deal with these. The biologists collect information according to protocols developed by the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) to ensure standardisation of methods. Data are held in a standardised database incorporating GIS techniques, which currently provides coverage for about 80% of Scotland. The biologists also maintain databases that map out and catalogue habitat surveys, identify areas where there are problems and they monitor the effects of measures taken.

River management plans are in place for almost 100 rivers throughout Scotland. This represents about 20% of the total number of salmon rivers, but a much larger proportion of the salmon resource.

As an example of initiatives taken, the Tweed Foundation, in collaboration with local landowners and other groups, has undertaken major works including installing 116km of bankside fencing for bank stabilisation, and the removal or easing of 47 obstructions to ease passage of fish. A total of 189 monitoring sites have been established. Some £2m has been spent on habitat enhancement work in the last decade. Major grant assistance has been provided via the EU Objective 5(b) programmes, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish natural

Heritage, Scottish Borders Enterprise and many private sources. Much of this type of work is being repeated throughout Scotland.

A total of 18 Scottish salmon rivers have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation. A bid for EU LIFE Funding has been submitted by Scottish Natural heritage in collaboration with the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards. The overall objective is to safeguard and maintain the abundance and diversity of salmon in Scotland and will bring together organisations with responsibilities for around 38% of the wild salmon resource in Scotland. The project aims to

- remove netting on 2 rivers,
- remove or bypass 25 obstacles, improving access for salmon to 187km of habitat,
- improve 39,060m<sup>2</sup> of habitat for spawning and nursery areas,
- restock restored areas with local populations on 3 rivers,
- control grazing along 38.85km of rivers
- stabilise 2,816m of eroding banks, and reduce siltation from runoff
- extend and diversify riparian woodland along 4 rivers
- provide general guidance and local codes of practice for gravel extraction,
- raise awareness of Natura 2000 and salmon conservation issues with river owners and the public.

### **EU – UK(Northern Ireland)**

Baseline habitat surveys have been conducted for the Rivers Bush, Glendun, Blackwater and Shimna in the FCB area and the Foyle catchment. The data have been captured on GIS. The data will be used to update conservation limits transported from River Bush and to inform habitat restoration

Some habitat restoration works have already been carried out in the Bush and Foyle catchments.

Funding of £400k has recently been secured from the European Economic Area Financial Instrument for salmon habitat restoration and this will be targeted on rivers Main and Clanrye in Northern Ireland and River Deelee in Donegal(Foyle catchment).

Amendments have been made to primary legislation to protect habitat. The Fisheries Amendment Bill NI 2000 makes it an offence to remove material from a river bed without Fisheries Conservancy Board (FCB) consent. Also it gives the FCB powers to re-instate fisheries habitat following a pollution incident and to recover the costs. Previous remedial action was limited to re-stocking with cost recovery.

Liaison arrangements have been strengthened with the statutory drainage ,the Rivers Agency, to minimise the fisheries impact of drainage works and arrangements are in place to consult with Planning Service on the impact of planning applications.

### **EU – Ireland**

The inventory of salmon rivers in the Irish Republic has been significantly improved in 2003 with the addition of information on the accessible wetted area for salmon in all 173 salmon rivers. (Quantification of the Freshwater Salmon Habitat Asset in Ireland using data

interpreted in a GIS platform, Central Fisheries Board). The following work has been completed:

Measurement of the quantity of potential salmon producing habitat (wetted river and lake surface area).

Determination and measurement of river gradient of potential salmon producing habitat.

Determination of water quality status in each of the 173 salmon rivers.

Determination of the extent of salmon anadromy in salmon rivers.

The above information is provided on a national, fisheries district and individual river system basis. The availability of this habitat information has facilitated the setting of conservation limits for salmon on an individual river basis taking into account each rivers potential salmon production. This is a considerable improvement on the previous method of setting CL's based on catches largely derived from the mixed stock commercial fishery.

The development of this river habitat database will allow quantification of habitat impact to be undertaken and habitat rehabilitation plans can then be prepared.