RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025

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1. River Ayr District Salmon Fishery Board Members

Chair:

Alan Hill — Barskimming Estate, Board Member

Board Members:

Charles McDade	Sorn Angling Club
Gordon Millar	Mauchline & Ballochmyle Angling Club (Salmon Fishers' Rep)
Max Stobbs	Mauchline & Ballochmyle Angling Club
Robin Wilson	Ladykirk Angling Club
Nick Wright	Sorn Estate
Alex Reid	Cumnock & District Angling Association (resigned)
Iain Walker	Cumnock & District Angling Association (removed)

Associates:

Stuart Brabbs	Fisheries Manager, Ayrshire Rivers Trust
Struan Candlish	Fisheries Biologist, Ayrshire Rivers Trust
Carolyn Bryce	Biologist, Ayrshire Rivers Trust

Clerk: Iain K Clark, Gilson Gray LLP, Glasgow

2. River Ayr DSFB Members' Attendance

Date	Alan Hill	Nick Wright	Iain Walker	Max Stobbs	Alex Reid	Charles McDade	Gordon Millar	Robin Wilson
11/06/24	✓	Apology		✓			✓	Apology
17/07/24	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
11/12/24	✓			✓	Resigned		✓	✓
12/02/25	✓		Removed	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓

3. Report from the Chair

Thank you for attending our Proprietors meeting today so we may update you on our activities for the last calendar year.

We have been extremely busy with several projects being undertaken on the Ayr system not just in the past year but since taking up my role 3 years ago.

In the past year we have financially supported a project on the Mauchline burn to reduce silt and restore salmon populations along with our partners at ART and largely funded by the Salmon Scotland Wild Fisheries Fund. This undertaking included fencing to exclude livestock and green engineering to stabilise bank erosion. This will hopefully allow salmon and trout to repopulate this area to the benefit of the river in the years to come. The total value of these works were approx. £23,000 with our contribution being £1500.

The board continue to support ART with funding towards their very effective Giant Hogweed control and we have plans to continue this work along with providing funding towards Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam control in the coming years.
On this point we are looking at contacting local clubs and syndicates to see if we can organise a concentrated event at clearing Balsam on the Lugar water this year utilising volunteers in the worst affected areas.

We also have an App designed by the Trust that we are keen to role out to all anglers on our system for recording fish catches. Not only fish returns but repots of pollution and of Fish-eating birds etc etc can be made and allow us to react quickly to each incident. All this information allows us to manage the river more effectively.

We are also fully supportive of the works being constantly done at the Nethermills counter and we now understand that AI technology is being developed to allow us to gain even more information to see the fish numbers entering and leaving the system.

We have purchased an additional number of High Definition cameras which can be utilised anywhere on the system to allow us to tackle problem areas and as a result of this and with liaison with Angling clubs and the Police we made several inroads into the poaching fraternity and persons have been caught and are awaiting prosecution for various offences. These cameras and other initiatives are primarily for the protection of our fish stocks moving forward.

The River Ayr Watch scheme for which we have purchased the training packs etc etc should be up and running for the start of our Migratory runs this season. I have managed to get the assistance of 2 Fishermen to run this scheme and I know we will be ably supported by clubs on the system who will provide us with volunteers going forward to publicise and operate the scheme on our entire system. More information to the clubs and syndicates will be sent out and the public will also be notified via strategically placed information boards on the River Ayr Way and via social media and press.

We are now the only River in Ayrshire to hold a bird control licence, which is valid from 1/3/25 until the 31/5/25. I have organised a highly skilled number of persons to take care of this problem for us.

This application process involves approx. 2 months of my own observations on the system to provide the data required to gain this licence and I know that the fish stocks in the river are greatly helped by this project. I have spoken to members of various clubs who have seen a marked improvement in Brown Trout and Grayling numbers recently and this can only be a good thing for our Parr and Fry.

With members of all our Clubs, Syndicates and our Proprietors along with ART and the Board working together we can make a big difference to the entire system and in my 3 years I have seen the bigger picture of a Fishery Management Plan coming together and I will continue to push for all invested interests to be involved going forward.

Finally, last season was a very good year for our returning Salmon here on the Ayr and in most rivers in Scotland but the challenge is to keep this going moving forward on our river. We cannot, unfortunately, control what is happening when our migratory fish leave the system but we can do all we can to protect them while in it.

Alan Hill
Chair, River Ayr
District Salmon Fishery Board

4. Statutory Remit

The River Ayr District Salmon Fishery Board was established under the 1862 and 1868 Salmon Fisheries legislation, as subsequently amended in the Salmon Act 1986 and the Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Act 2001. This legislation was later amalgamated under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act"), which has subsequently been amended by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Acts 2007 and 2013.

The River Ayr District Salmon Fishery Board is empowered under Part 3 of the 2003 Act to manage the protection, enhancement and conservation of the Atlantic salmon and sea trout stocks in the River Ayr. It also has a duty to ensure the general protection and improvement of the fisheries within their district.

(a) Aims of The Board

- Protecting and improving the fisheries within its district
- Increasing salmon
- Running a restocking programme in selected areas where low numbers of parr and salmon are identified.
- Encouraging responsible angling

The River Ayr DSFB works to raise the profile of the economic, cultural and environmental importance of the River Ayr to the local area, both among residents and visiting anglers.

The Board represents the interests of the River Ayr at regional and national forums.

(b) The Catchment Area

Ayrshire's largest river rises at Glenbuck Reservoir on the boundary of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire and flows westwards 63 kilometres to its estuary at Ayr on the Firth of Clyde.It has a catchment area of 574 sq. kilometres and its principal tributaries include the Greenock Water, Lugar Water, Water of Fail and Water of Coyle.

Principal land uses in the catchment area are agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, leisure and recreation and urban development, the largest settlements being Ayr, Cumnock, Catrine, Ochiltree, Muirkirk and Sorn. Notable features include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) at Howford by Mauchline and the Failford Gorge, and an opencast coal mining industry. Fish species include salmon, sea trout, brown trout, grayling, eel, stickleback, minnow and stone loach.

5. Summary of the Work done by the Board

(a) Report from the Clerk to the Board

A summary of the work done in the 2024/2025 season is noted below:

1. Various correspondence, calls and documentation required to make an effective handover of the role of Clerk; and to bring the Board's records up to date.

2. Dealing with the renewal of the Board's Registration as a data controller to process personal data with the Information Commissioner's Office under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

3. Extensive correspondence and calls with various Riparian Owners, former Owners and New Owners, regarding outstanding Fishery Assessments; and preparing and updating a detailed Fishery Assessment Spreadsheet (on an almost daily basis) to update the Board's records, as payments were made, queries made and answered; and reporting to the Board.

4. Liaising with Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board regarding the Valuation Roll amd updating the Board's records

5. Letters to Riparian Owners and Tenants enclosing Fishery Assessment Notices, Reminders and Second Reminders

6. Detailed analysis of previous Assessment Rates and preparation of Reports for Board re Proposed Fishery Assessments Rates

7. Processing, and accounting for the payments of Fishery Assessments and Fishery Assessment Arrears and making payment of expenditure approved by the Board.

8. Review of financial position/Preparation of Finance Updates for Board

9. Correspondence with Azets regarding the preparation of the Draft Accounts to 28 February 2025 and associated Corporation Tax Return

10. Issuing Calling Notices, collating and issuing Board packs, taking and extending Minutes for Board Meetings, including publication on the Board's Website and liaising with Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland for publication on their websites

11. Updating the Board's Angling Code of Practice, as directed by the Board, and in liaison with Ayrshire Rivers Trust.

12. Liaising with various Board Members, Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland, as appropriate.

13. Calls, correspondence and virtual meetings with Fisheries Management Scotland, and SEPA, regarding a number of matters, including SEPA Sea Lice Framework Consultation.

14. Advising on the possible introduction of a River Watch Scheme.

15. Drafting and updating various Good Governance Documents: Draft Policy on Members' Interests, Draft Meetings Protocol and Draft Complaints Procedure (with input and assistance from Martin Donachy and Peter Kennerley) and publishing those on the Board's website after approval by the Board, and sending to the Scottish Ministers in accordance with the Good Governance obligations

16. Liaising with CE Project Management regarding the changes and updates to the Board's Website (www.Ayrfishing.co.uk)

17. Receiving and sending all correspondence for the Board.

18. Providing general advice and support to the Board, as required, including consideration of matters relating to Assessments, promotion of the Board's Code of Practice; and liaising with other clubs, associations and other organisations, as appropriate.

19. Sending letters to Riparian Owners, Clubs and Associations enclosing new Annual Catch Return Forms, sending reminders; collating Annual Catch Returns, updating the Board's records, and preparing summary spreadsheet for inclusion in Annual Report.

20. Preparation of the Draft Annual Report, including drafting and collation of reports from various Board Members and other contributors.

(b) Report on Fishery Assessments

Throughout the year, the Clerk to the Board prepared detailed Reports to the Board for their consideration. A summary of the key points to note from the Board's reasoning and decisions is below.

i. Introduction

The Board has the power under *section 44 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 Act* to impose Fishery Assessments, which are *"…assessed at such uniform rate as is determined for all fisheries in the district by the board and shall be exigible according to the valuation of a fishery as entered in the valuation roll."*

Therefore, the Board requires, each year, to determine the rate at which Fishery Assessments are assessed and issue Fishery Assessment Notices for payment by the Riparian Owners/Tenants. Ultimately, responsibility for payment rests with the Riparian Owners for the relevant year (which for these purposes, runs from 1 April to 31 March).

ii. Updating of the Board's Records regarding Ownership/Tenancies

It is critical that the Board's records are fully up to date, to ensure that the correct persons receive the Assessments, as well as other information issued by the Board.

Following the previous extensive work undertaken to comprehensively update the current Fishery Assessment List; the Clerk will continue to liaise with Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board to ensure that the Valuation Roll is updated in accordance with the Board's Records.

On many occasions this process is hampered by out of date information. A number of sales and transfers of ownership of land, associated Riparian Owners' rights and tenancies had not been notified to the River Ayr DSFB or to the Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board.

Could all Riparian Owners, Tenants, Clubs and Associations PLEASE notify us timeously of any change of ownership or tenancy, together with the date of transfer and any payment arrangements e.g. to apportion payment of Fishery Assessments. This will help us maintain accurate records and ensure that Fishery Assessments are sent to the correct persons.

Please also provide your email address and telephone contact numbers, which will aid more efficient communication with the Board generally (and help to keep costs down for the Board).

iii. Fishery Assessment Rate for 2025/2026

The Board requires to secure sufficient funds from Fishery Assessments to cover necessary expenditure to meet the Board's statutory obligations for the purpose of the protection or improvement of the fisheries within the River Ayr Catchment Area; and monies to help fund projects on the river, whilst also providing for some degree of contingency.

Historically, the Board was aware that COVID-19 caused problems for everyone, including the fishing community. As a consequence of lockdown, falling catch numbers, lack of fishing effort and the fact that some clubs had been struggling, the Board has kept the rates as low as it can, whilst noting the requirement to generate income in order to carry out its statutory functions.

The Board also considered that, after review of the new Valuation Roll from Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board (**AVJB**) with effect from 1 April 202, there was a reduction of £22,395 (i.e. 43%) in the Value of the River to £29,520.

At the Board's meeting on 11 December 2024, the Board discussed and unanimously agreed to fix the rate again at the same level as last year, namely 85p in the £. The Board took account of previous Assessment Rates and the requirement to secure sufficient funds from Fishery Assessments to cover necessary expenditure to meet the Board's statutory obligations for the purpose of the protection or improvement of the fisheries within the River Ayr Catchment Area; and monies to help fund projects on the river, whilst also providing for some degree of contingency.

(c) Consultation Responses

The Board considers that it is an important part of its role to respond appropriately to Consultations from Scottish Government, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and other organisations.

During 2024, with assistance from Ayrshire Rivers Trust ("**ART**") and liaising with Fisheries Management Scotland, when required, the Clerk continued to monitor ongoing work undertaken by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency Consultation on Sea Lice Risk Assessment Framework Consultation.

(d) Good Governance

i. Introduction:

The *Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013* requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

The River Ayr DSFB has prepared this Annual Report in compliance with the Guidance on Good Governance Obligations:

- *Section 44 (1)* requires preparation of an Annual Report and a Statement of Accounts (which shall be audited) relating to the activities of the Board. The report and accounts are to be considered by an Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.
- *Section 44 (1A)* requires the Clerk of the Board to arrange for the final Annual Report and Audited Accounts to be published and a copy of these to be sent to Scottish Ministers. Publication is to take place as soon as practicable after the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.
- *Section 44 (1B)* defines the final Annual Report and Audited Accounts as those submitted for consideration at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors or, if they are revised following that meeting, the revised versions.
- *Section 46A* requires that the Annual Report contains specific information: a summary of the activity carried out by the Board under their statutory functions in the reporting year; a summary of the proposed activity of the Board for the year to come; information on complaints made to the Board during the reporting period (their number, a statement of the nature of each and how it was disposed of); and a statement of how the Board has complied with the good governance requirements of the *Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003* ("**the 2003 Act**") during the course of the reporting year and how they propose to comply in the year to come.

ii. Statement of Compliance:

The River Ayr DSFB has introduced policies and documents, as detailed below, in order to comply with the good governance requirements of the 2003 Act. As part of this the River Ayr DSFB voluntarily adheres to the Scottish Government's District Salmon Fishery Boards Guidance on Good Governance Obligations (August 2013) and proposes to continue to comply in the year to come in the same way.

In particular, the River Ayr DSFB has operated as follows:

- Meetings Protocol
  - The Board's Protocol on Meetings is published on the Board's website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - Meetings of the Board were held on 11 June 2024, 17 July 2024, 11 December 2024 and 12 February 2025
  - 9 members of the public attended Board Meetings in 2024/2025
  - The minutes from these meetings will be posted on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and the Annual Public Meetings was held on 26 March 2025 at The Mauchline & District Kilmarnock FC Supporters Club, 8 Earl Grey Street, Mauchline, KA5 5AD.
  - A Calling Notice was issued to all Board Members and Qualified Proprietors. 4 members of the public chose to attend.
  - The minutes from this meeting will be published on the Board's Website at http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/

- Declaration of Members' Interests
  - The Board's Policy on Members' Interest is published on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - The Register of Members' Interests and Declarations are retained by the Clerk to the Board and can be viewed on a written request to the Clerk
  - We have included a standing item at each Board meeting inviting Board members to declare new/amend existing interests and all such instances are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.

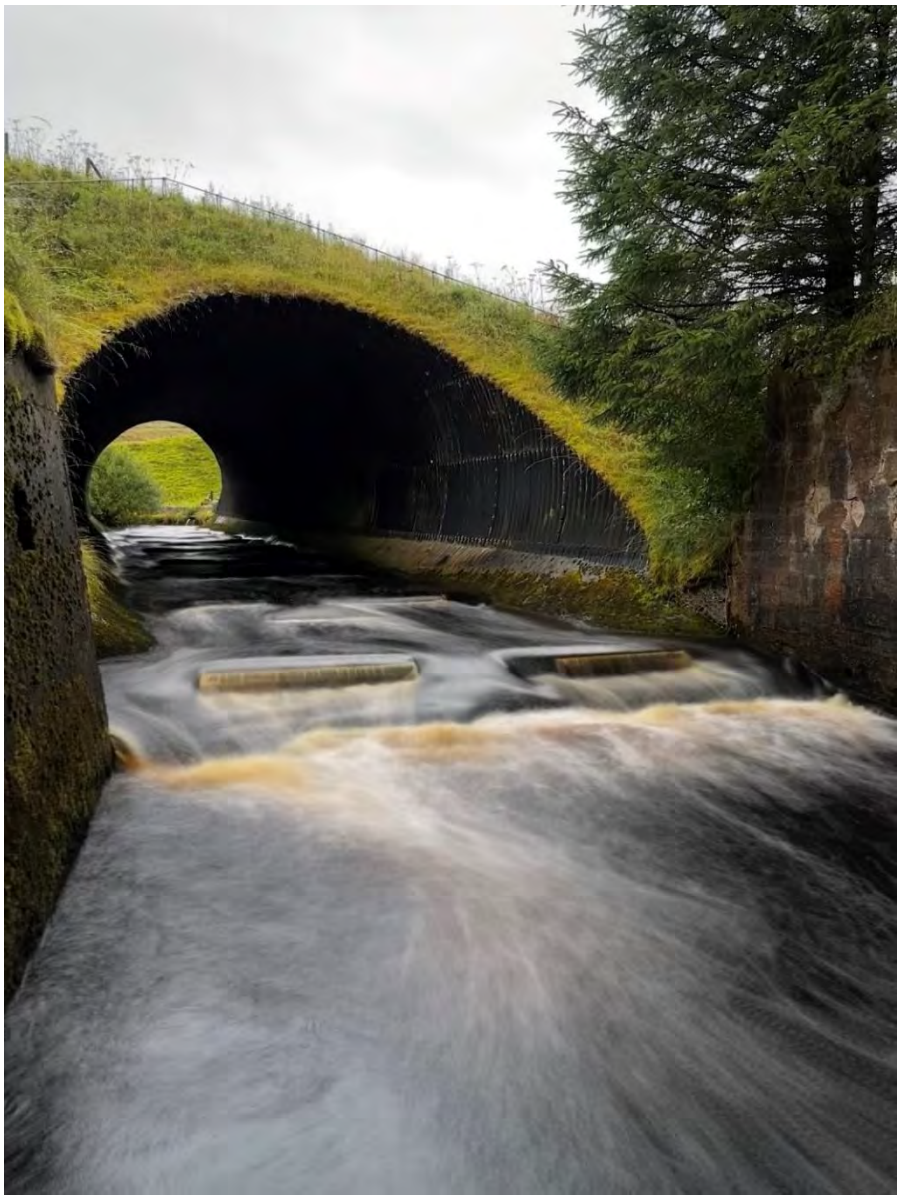
- Complaints Policy
  - The Board has set up and maintains a Complaints Procedure, which can be viewed on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - The procedure is reviewed annually.
  - There have been no formal complaints during 2024.

- Annual Report and Audited Statement of Accounts

  - This Annual Report will be published on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - The Audited Statement of Accounts will be published on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/
  - The previous Audited Statements of Accounts have also been published on the Board's Website at: http://www.Ayrfishing.co.uk/about-us/

- Reporting to Scottish Government

  Since these procedures have been introduced by the Board, the Board will be reporting to the Scottish Ministers using the following address: DSFBGoodGovernance@gov.scot



(e) Code of Practice

The Board regularly reviews and revises the Code of Practice when required.

The Current Code of Practice is produced as follows:

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

Clerk to the Board: Iain K Clark, LLB (Hons), Dip LP, NP
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Website: www.ayrfishing.co.uk

CODE OF PRACTICE

The River Ayr District Salmon Fishery Board has produced this Code to conserve our fish stocks for now and the future.

1. **Mandatory by Law:**

   (a) For the River Ayr, the Salmon & Sea Trout Season is from 11 February to 31 October inclusive. The Brown Trout Season is from 15 March to 6 October inclusive.
   (b) The Scottish Government Marine Directorate has designated the River Ayr as Poor (Grade 3) as part of Conservation measures enforced by the *Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016* (as amended). Therefore all salmon must be returned alive i.e. are **subject to Mandatory 100% Catch & Release.**
   (c) In any event, it is a criminal offence:
      i. to retain a salmon or grilse before 1 April, so they must be returned
      ii. It is a criminal offence to kill a coloured/gravid salmon.
      iii. All kelts must be returned.
   (d) All salmon, and grilse caught must be returned and recorded in your catch returns.

2. *Gyrodactylus Salaris* Declaration Forms must be signed by Anglers before fishing.

3. **The Board recommends:**

   (a) The Board continues to pursue a voluntary agreement with anglers to delay the start of the salmon fishing season until 15th March each year.
   (b) On any spinning lure, only one treble hook should be used.
   (c) The use of barbless or crushed barbed hooks, so Anglers can return fish without unnecessary damage.
   (d) Against worm fishing for salmon. However, where worm fishing takes place, please use circle hooks, so Anglers can return fish without unnecessary damage.
   (e) Against the use of prawn, shrimp, or any organic baits at any time.

(f) All sea trout and whitling are returned and recorded in your catch returns.

4. **Safe landing and handling requirements**

Before you set off, make sure you have the following tackle for safe catch and release:

Suitable tackle - Use fishing tackle that is capable of landing salmon quickly to avoid exhausting them before release.

Barbless hooks – for quick release and minimised risk of bleeding when removing the hooks, always use a barbless hook. A size 8 (or preferably smaller) is recommended.

A **knotless net** – use a wide, soft knotless net to minimise damage by allowing the fish to lie flat as well as reducing damage to its scales.

Tip: to assist with a swift release make sure you have a tool, such as long-nosed forceps, at hand for prompt hook removal. Also, if you plan on recording or taking a photograph of your catch, make sure that you keep all the equipment close to hand so that this can be done quickly.

Landing the fish
It's vital not to lift the fish out of the water; research has shown that salmon which are exposed to air, even for a short period, have a significantly reduced survival rate. Certainly do not lift the salmon by the tail or gill cover, as this can cause internal damage as well as damage to tendons.

Recording your catch
If you want to take a photograph of your catch, keep the fish in the water or at least slightly above it and support the fish gently under its belly. When handling the salmon, always do so with wet hands to avoid damaging (burning) the fish's outer boundary layer of mucus – which protects it against disease and parasites. If you must weigh the fish, then weigh with the fish enclosed in the net or use a weigh net.

A tape measure or wading stick can be marked to record approximate length – this should be done while the fish is kept in the water. This can also be used against a chart to measure approximate weight.

Recovery and unhooking the fish
Gently remove the hook by hand or with forceps when the fish is quiet. If it is deeply embedded, then cut the leader as close as possible to the hook. Generally, fish can be released and survive with the hook still attached and this will cause less damage to the fish than if the embedded hook is removed.

Recovery may take some time, but it is vital for fish to be allowed to recover before they are released into clean, steady water.

Download a helpful Best Practice Guidance from Fisheries Management Scotland:

https://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Best-Practice-Guidance-Catch-and-Release-January-2025.pdf

5. **Farmed Salmon / Pink (Pacific) Salmon**

If you capture a farmed salmon or pink (pacific) salmon, it should be humanely killed and the Board informed on the above contact details. Scale samples (in the case of pink salmon, the whole salmon) should be taken and sent to Ayrshire Rivers Trust.

The capture should also be reported on the Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) Website Reporting tool at:
https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/1b8632f1d06c48c89bbac8901d084346

FMS Guidance on identifying farmed salmon can be found at:
http://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/200908-Aqua-Guidance-for-Anglers.pdf

Ayrshire Rivers Trust's video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwKwPv1yGBM&t=271s

FMS Guidance on identifying Pink (Pacific) Salmon can be found at:
http://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/210519-INNS-Statement-Pink-salmon.pdf

6. **Giant Hogwood /Japanese Knotweed / Himalayan Balsam**

See Ayrshire Rivers Trust leaflet at:
http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ART-Invasive-Weeds-Information-30.06.21.pdf

7. **Catch Returns**

Ayrshire Rivers Trust has helped the Board in developing a Catch Return App for use by anglers in the River Ayr catchment. This allows you to record your Rod Effort and Catches and upload details of the date, time and location to a central location, which will aid the provision of official Annual Catch Returns to both Scottish Government Marine Inspectorate and the River Ayr DSFB.

Download the App at:

https://survey123.arcgis.app?itemID=562e8514d0d64a47a55849bd92ae4469

Or use the camera on your phone to scan the QR Code:

8. **Safety**

Be aware of safety on and around the River. Anglers approach the River at their own risk.

Please spread the word on this Code of Practice. Your Board are investing in the future so that we all can continue to enjoy the sport on the River.

(f) Scientific Report

Ayrshire Rivers Trust
working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

The River Ayr DSFB: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors & Annual Public Meeting

Catch records and returns – the new App for anglers

The Catch Reporting App has been trialled, altered and we feel is fit for purpose although there may be further tweaks and updates required from time to time as with any App. It is important to circulate the App widely and for anglers to use it if there's any chance to get meaningful data returned. The Trust will provide a QR code to make installation to any smart phone a simple and straight forward process. This QR code can be circulated with clubs, owners and syndicates and stickers/notices could be provided in fishing huts and at key access points. We will also shortly have a video that demonstrates the installation and use of the App although most should be able to work it out without too much difficulty.

Invasive Weeds Control

The Trust continued with extensive invasive weeds control within the catchment this season and that was supported financially by the DSFB.

Giant hogweed control over the years has dramatically reduced the occurrence of this plant since we first survey its distribution and started control in 2008. Japanese knotweed control has been sporadic since 2008 but some progress has been made. Himalayan Balsam was absent in 2008 but came to the catchment sometime around 2014/2015 and has become widespread since.

Staff treated every flowering GHW plant in the catchment in 2024, this is essential to prevent further seed production. The plants that do appear are therefore developing from the seedbank in the ground and this is continually being reduced. The strategic approach appears to be working well and while we haven't remapped the catchment since 2008, there is an obvious and huge reduction.

Figure 1: 2024 was the 16th successive year this strategy has been in place – making it the second longest running control strategy in the country.

Japanese knotweed was controlled from Glaisnock House downstream and additional target areas near Pennyfadzeoch from where it was thought to be spreading.

Similarly, Himalayan Balsam was sprayed across large stands around Pennyfadzeoch which should have greatly reduced seed production in 2024.

Nethermills Counter – AI counting - Progress so far
The Trust secured funding to develop Artificial Intelligence software and assessment of the counter data. The early trials with this software is encouraging but it still requires a huge amount of work between now and the end of February when the project ends. We are working through the 2023 and 2024 data extracting images of fish for the AI process.

While the counter was never designed to count smolts, the AI is proving that this is possible and we may return to the Marine Development Fund to seek support to run an experimental smolt count on the river next spring.

Should we be able to direct smolts through the fish pass rather than through the turbine, this AI counting system could be the most incredibly useful method of measuring output and returning adults, the two most valuable data sets for any river managers.

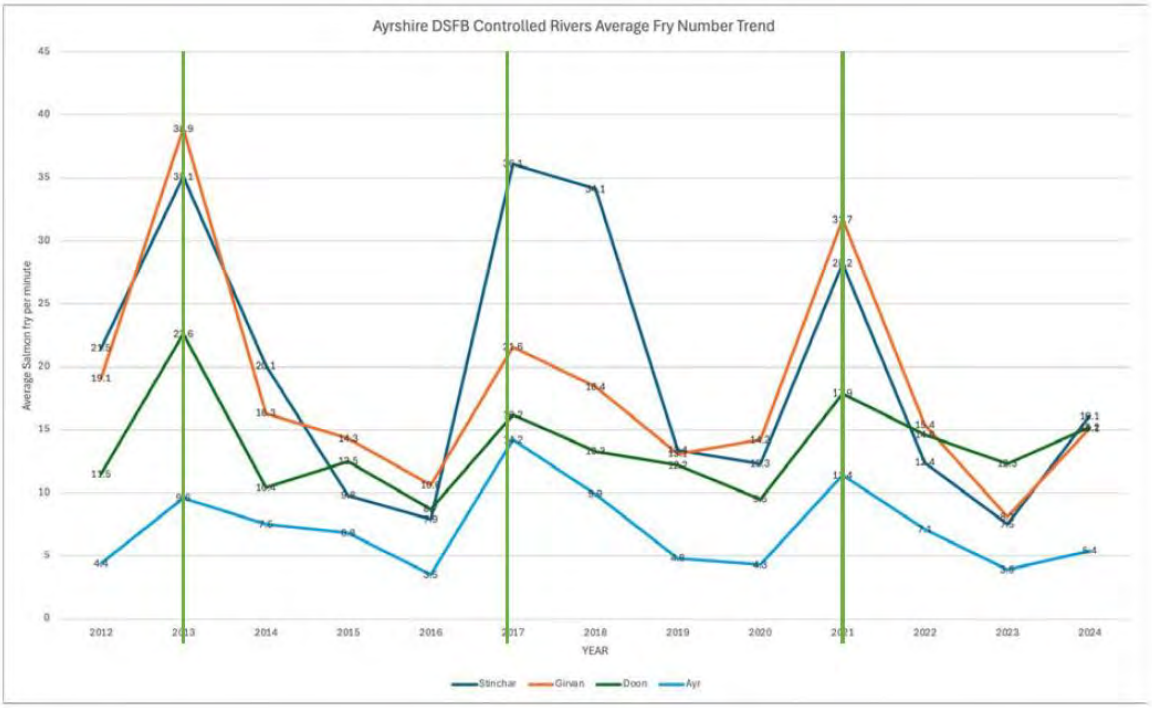
We are already designing a system using bubble curtains to herd smolts to the fish pass. More details on this will follow if the Marine Development Fund is supportive.

Electrofishing and monitoring
We performed the annual timed surveys and the results are included below.
It is important not to compare the results that are included from other rivers however the trends can be assessed and they all follow a similar pattern.

We have undertaken considerable assessment of the wind farm developments taking place in the North Kyle Forest however these areas are largely trout habitat. Never the less, these burns flow to the Burnock Water and Lugar or the Water of Coyle and then the Ayr and therefore the results and findings should be of interest to the DSFB.

While we can’t reveal too much at this point, we have found declines in the trout population recently in limited areas and are working with the developers to mitigate any contributing factors. Over the duration of the monitoring programme, we may be able to pinpoint the underlying causes and agree mitigation measures. Additionally, we use invertebrate monitoring throughout these sites as they provide long term indication of changes to water quality and invertebrate communities. Essentially, we wish to identify, contain and resolve issues before they can impact salmon habitat downstream.

River Ayr main stem timed salmon fry survey results 2012-2024															
SITE	LOCATION	Salmon /min	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TAM4a	A77 Stepping stones main channel	FRY	1.2	0.2	0.8	0.4	0.2	10	0.8	1.7	0	2	6.2	0	0
TAM14	Oswald's Bridge	FRY	8	2	0.2	0.4	0	3.6	0.8	1	1.4	3.4	0.8	0	0
TAM15	Tarholm Bridge	FRY	3.6	3.6	0.8	4.4	4	20.2	6.4	4.4	6.8	43.4	8	3.8	3.8
TAM11	Downstream Stair Dam	FRY	0.8	2.2	0.4	0.4	0	4	0	0.4	2.4	0	1.6	0	3.6
TAM13	Stairaird, Priest's Weel pool	FRY	3	11.8	4	4.6	1.4	10.8	4.8	3.6	4.4	2	1.4	0.8	4.4
TAM3	Downstream Howford Bridge	FRY	0.2	8.2	2.4	1.6	0.2	11.4	0.8	2.3	1.8	0.4	6.2	0	2.8
TAM17	Catrine, at bonded warehouse	FRY		7.2	1.2	0.2	3.2	9.8							
TAM16	Glenlogan Bridge	FRY	1.4	2.6	1.8	0.6	0.8	18.6	4	1.6	7	3.2		0.2	1.4
TAM9	Downstream of swinging bridge	FRY	17.8	18.8	31	25.2	13.6	33.4	26.8	20	8	28	17.8	13	12.2
TAM1	Netherwellwood Bridge	FRY	11.2	24.6	17	16.4	8	10.4	16.8	5.2	12	23.8	6.4	10.2	10.2
TAM18	Mainstem, d/s of Ponesk	FRY		16.8	34.4	28.4	11.4	10.8	4.8	2.6	3	11.4	5.6	6.4	9.2
TAM19	River Ayr at Crossflatt	FRY										16.2	23.4	9.8	12.2
TAL2	Downstream Ochiltree Weir	FRY	4.4	32.2	9	16.2	9.6	31.6	55.2	22		26	16.6	9.8	10.2
TAL7	Mill Affleck, upper	FRY	3		5	0.8	1.1	17.8	4.8	2		6.6	10	3.6	3.4
TAL15	Cumnock Rugby Club, d/s foot bridge	FRY	0.2	4.1	2.8	0.6	0.2	9.2	0	0.4	0.4	2.8	0.4	0.2	0.4
TAL18	Lugar Gravel Extraction	FRY											15		12.2
TAL6	Lugar Village	FRY	5	0	1.2	1.2	0.4	11.4	13	0.4		0.2	1.8	0	0
MEAN		FRY	4.4	9.6	7.5	6.8	3.5	14.2	9.9	4.8	4.3	11.4	7.1	3.9	5.4



When the juvenile data from across the four DSFB controlled rivers is plotted they clearly follow the same annual trends, the one commonality all these rivers share is that salmon all have a marine phase within the lifecycle and this has a very significant impact upon juvenile populations irrespective of hatchery operations or any other in river variables.
We continue to improve the freshwater environment to maximise the output from our rivers.

Spawning 2024

The spawning redds appeared to be well populated in 2024 and ART staff visited several key locations at the beginning of December and found good numbers of fish spawning at all of them Of course we won't be able to fully understand how good a spawning season 2024 was until we begin electrofishing this summer. If there are any Board members or proprietors who would like to spend some time electrofishing, then please just get in touch with the biologists to arrange an outing.

Figure 3: A salmon on the Upper Greenock - beyond the culvert with recently fitted baffles.

Barriers

We met with SEPA at the Ness Falls and Burnock Mill Dam with a view to considering full or part removal of these barriers. This is a SEPA initiative that we support however, it is essential landowners are brought on board. This can be the most difficult part of the process as often local opinions are often rather different from the scientific perspective. However, should these barriers be removed, it would open easier access and habitat across several lineal miles of catchment and that is bound to be beneficial considering the quality of habitat that will be made available.

We removed a weir on the White Esk (Border Esk) catcment for SEPA in October using a new technique never before used in Scottish Rivers. The reason behind this project was for ART and SEPA to assess the technique's potential for removing the Ness Falls Weir at Sundrum.

Figure 4: The Burnock Mill Weir

Pollution

Pollution continues to be a regular problem and we often receive complaints from the Lugar Water near Ochiltree and elsewhere in the catchment. We reported incidents to SEPA and Scottish Water and hopefully these issues have been addressed.

Bogend Burn

Another notable issue has arisen at Catrine where a developer felled trees into the Bogend Burn and stripped soils from the site while creating storage bunds along the bank top. ART reported these issues to SEPA and formally complained to East Ayrshire planning department over failures at this development. We met on site with the architect/developer and a Planning Officer in December and there is to be a further meeting at the beginning of April with all the stakeholders; ART and the Board will be represented.

Figure 5: There has been large scale felling of riparian woodland that was then left blocking the burn at spawning time in 2024

Figure 6: These large soil bunds are just meters from the Bogend Burn and threaten to slump and pollute the watercourse and the entire river Ayr

Pink Salmon

2025 may herald the return of Pink Salmon to the catchment and we encourage anyone catching, seeing or otherwise aware of their existence within the river to let us know asap. We are looking to collect tissue samples from these fish should they appear.

Annex 1: Identification of Pink Salmon

Pacific pink salmon, when fresh from the sea, are steel blue to blue-green on their backs, silver on the flanks and white on their bellies. There are large black spots on the backs, upper flanks, adipose fins and tail – some of the spots on the tail can be as large as the fish's eyes. They are very uniform in size, reaching only 40 to 60cms in length. It is possible that at first sight, a fresh pink salmon may be confused with a small Atlantic salmon.

Pink salmon
Note shape of tail, spots on tail and dark mouth. *Images courtesy of Helmsdale DSFB & River Dee Trust*

Breeding males are immediately identifiable because of their humps and they will almost certainly be running milt at this time of year. Their black tongues and heavily spotted tails are also very obvious. Females will show heavily spotted tails and be pinkish-brown on the flanks.

Male Pink salmon in breeding colouration – note the shape of body and heavily spotted tail *Image courtesy of Nigel Fell*

(g) Electrofishing Report

Ayrshire Rivers Trust

Figure 1: Lugar Water

River Ayr Catchment

Electrofishing Fish Survey

2024

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1. Introduction

The Ayrshire Rivers Trust (ART) was formed in 2000 to provide a source of local fisheries management and biological expertise in Ayrshire. The Ayr DSFB helps to fund ART each year and in return receives management advice and survey work. A major part of the survey work involves examining the distribution and density of fish populations through electrofishing at a network of sites throughout the Ayr catchment. The sites visited in 2024 by ART were examined both as part of a long-term monitoring strategy and to address specific issues arising from the previous year.

The aims of the 2024 electrofishing surveys were:

- To examine salmon fry production in the main stem of the River Ayr and Lugar Water
- To monitor changes in fish density elsewhere in the catchment, in both good and poor quality sites, as part of a long term monitoring strategy
- To determine the extent of salmon migration in sub-catchments
- To determine the success of any management interventions
- To provide the Ayr DSFB with the information from these surveys and advise on management strategies

1.1 Salmonid fish and fisheries

Migratory salmonids; Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and trout (*Salmo trutta*) and other native fish populations commonly use freshwater habitats for breeding and development of early life-stages. Typically, juvenile salmon and trout spend between one and three years in freshwater before migrating to sea as smolts. Salmon may spend between one and three years in the Atlantic Ocean before returning as mature fish to spawn within their natal river, at or close to their original hatching site. Sea trout differ from salmon in that they are part of a resident brown trout population and migratory forms are made up of a high proportion of females. Sea trout may spend less time at sea and unlike salmon, remain in nearby inshore marine waters to feed. The use of both marine and freshwater habitats during their life-cycle makes migratory salmonid populations vulnerable to deterioration or loss, from or in a wide range of habitats.

Isolated resident brown trout populations may also be present upstream of waterfall barriers that prevent access from the sea. These populations form an important part of a functional ecosystem and are likely to contribute to downstream populations through downstream migration.

1.2 Biodiversity

Other than Atlantic salmon and brown trout, native fish such as lamprey (*Lampetra spp.*), stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) and European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) also utilise freshwater habitats. Fish and freshwater habitats also support a range of other native flora and fauna and consequently mitigation to protect water resources for such species is likely to benefit a range of other biodiversity and conservation objectives.

2. Methods

2.1 Data recording

ART is a full member of the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC), which is an association of Scottish fisheries management organisations including Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS), Marine Scotland Science (MSS) based in Pitlochry, and District Salmon Fishery Boards. The SFCC has, in partnership, agreed on a common methodology for data collecting and recording and has developed a database for entering and storing data in an agreed format. The SFCC also provides electrofishing training to its members, and ART's biologists have attended and passed electrofishing training courses organised by SFCC. Wherever possible, ART's surveys are therefore carried out to the standards required by the SFCC and data are recorded using the agreed format.

2.2 Techniques

Fish populations at each site were assessed using electrofishing. This is a widely used technique to examine freshwater fish communities. The method uses electricity to attract and stun fish, which allows operators to remove them from the water. The fish are transferred to a holding container until they have recovered and then anaesthetised using a mild solution of MS222 (Tricaine Methane Sulphonate). Each individual is then identified, measured and returned unharmed to the area from which they were captured.

Battery powered backpack equipment (Hans Grassl model IG600) was used at all sites. Smooth DC was used to maximise catch efficiency, while minimising potential damage to fish and other wildlife. A minimum voltage of 200V was used, to ensure efficient fish capture.

Two different techniques were used to relate the number of fish caught to actual fish densities, in stream-area delimited and time-delimited surveys. In smaller watercourses, it was possible to cover the entire survey area accurately, and the number of fish captured could therefore be related to the wetted area of the site. However, for the larger main stem sites, the full area of the river could not be electrofished effectively. In these cases, the ART survey followed existing guidelines, and carefully timed the electrofishing runs to obtain a figure for fry caught per minute. Protocols in both cases followed SFCC standards until 2012 when ART introduced greater accuracy in timed surveys by fixing the time actually spent fishing using new dedicated timing equipment fitted to the anode. Therefore, since 2012, ART's timed surveys have been consistently performed with increased accuracy.

2.3 Timed surveys

Biologists are increasingly finding that timed surveys are an effective and efficient way of examining fish production, particularly in larger watercourses. While timed fishing does not provide an absolute value for fish densities, it can be extremely useful in comparing different parts of a catchment or wider area, provided that catch efficiency does not change between sites. This potential source of error can be minimised by ensuring that an identical protocol is followed at every site and by using a standard team of fully trained personnel.

Sites for this part of the survey were chosen to cover suitable salmon fry habitat throughout as broad a geographic range as possible up the main stem of the river. It is particularly important to examine these habitats, because in many rivers the majority of salmon spawning and juvenile production is likely to take place in the main stem of a river, rather than smaller side tributaries. Restricting electrofishing surveys to smaller watercourses, using area based surveys, may therefore fail to identify important factors affecting salmon populations or annual trends.

Shallow run and riffle areas were targeted, preferably with a maximum depth of 30 cm. Electrofishing runs were timed, with a single 5-minute run being carried out at each site, all within typical fry habitat. The timer started at the beginning of each run and only counted when the anode was switched on in the water, meaning that the 5-minute period covered only the time spent truly fishing. The electrofishing operators proceeded in an upstream

direction throughout, working in a zigzag pattern to avoid covering the same area twice, and staying in shallow areas suitable for fry production. In some cases, this meant that the whole channel width was not covered, however because the fish numbers were to be related to time, rather than area, this can be accounted for.

2.4 Density surveys

For density surveys, the survey sweep began at the downstream end of the section and moved back and forwards across the channel so that every part of the bed was covered. Hand nets were generally found to be effective over a wide range of flow, depth and substrate types and were used at all sites unless stated otherwise.

Salmon and trout were separated into year classes on the basis of length frequency histograms. As fish grow at very different rates between sites, this was repeated for each site individually. Age classifications can be checked by examining the number of annual rings on scales taken from fish of a range of sizes where deemed necessary. Fish densities were then separated into fry and parr for the presentation of results. Throughout this report the following notation has been used to distinguish fish year classes: salmonid fish less than one year old are recorded as 0+ year class or fry, whilst fish one year or older are recorded as 1+, 1 + + or parr.

At some sites a single run, semi-quantitative protocol was used. While this method does not provide accurate information on absolute fish densities, it is commonly used as a relative comparison between sites or at the same site between years. This method is often chosen as it allows a greater number of sites to be visited in a surveying day or it is used when very few salmonids are caught in the first run of a survey.

Fully quantitative, three run protocol sites were used to assess absolute fish densities with confidence limits. When applying this protocol, the entire area is fished three times (with a twenty-minute interval between each run) and all fish caught are identified and measured. Where sufficient fish are present, an estimation of the fish population per $100m^2$ of water can be calculated using the Zippin estimation method. If the Zippin calculation is not possible, either a minimum estimate of the fish population is given for the first run or a Carle and Strub estimate is provided.

3. Results Classification

3.1 Timed sites

In order that the results from one river or site can be compared easily with others, a results classification scheme has been introduced. The results from all the timed-electrofishing sites surveyed across Ayrshire from 2020 to 2024 were collated and the total salmon fry densities figures ranked and split into 20% divisions, excluding sites where no fry were recorded. The groups were then assigned a classification indicating the relative number of salmon fry caught per minute. The timed results classification score was revised this year to include the five year average scores, with the 2019 results dropping out to be replaced by the 2024 results. It should be noted that this does not allow for comparison of classifications out with the 5 year period stated due to the yearly update of breakpoints.

Table 1: 2020 - 2024 Ayrshire timed sites salmon fry classification

Salmon fry breakpoints (No/min)	Classification
0.0	Absent
0.1 – 3.6	E – Very poor
3.7 – 8.2	D - Poor
8.3 – 13.1	C - Moderate
13.2 – 21.3	B - Good
>21.4	A - Excellent

If salmon fry are absent this often indicates that salmon cannot access this area, or there are other serious problems preventing survival or discouraging the use of this habitat.

3.2 Density sites

The results from surveys where fish densities are obtained are now classified according to the SFCC Scottish national classification scheme which was derived using data from over 1600 Scottish sites covering the period 1997-2002 (*Godfrey, 2005*). This allows ART and the reader to interpret local fish populations in a Scotland-wide context. The national classes should be periodically revised as fish populations will inevitably change over time, even on a national scale.

Table 2: SFCC classification salmon fry and parr density breakpoints

Salmon fry (No/100m^2)	Classification	Salmon parr (No/100m^2)
0.0	Absent	0.0
<4.7	E – Very poor	<2.6
4.7 -<10.3	D - Poor	2.6 -<5.1
10.3 - <20.3	C - Moderate	5.1 - <9.1
20.3 - <42.1	B - Good	9.1 - <15.8
>42.1	A - Excellent	>15.8

Table 3: SFCC classification trout fry and parr density breakpoints

Trout fry (No/100m^2)	Classification	Trout parr (No/100m^2)
0.0	Absent	0.0
<2.5	E – Very poor	<1.6
2.5 -<5.3	D - Poor	1.6 -<3.1
5.3 - <12.4	C - Moderate	3.1 - <5.6
12.4 - <30.3	B - Good	5.6 - <10.4
>30.3	A - Excellent	>10.4

3.3 Electrofishing survey limitations

Electrofishing is a common means of obtaining data on juvenile salmonid populations (*SEERAD 2007);* however, it is only effective in shallow streams.

The survey sites chosen were selected to be representative of the general habitat type present within each sub-catchment and to include a range of flow and substrate types. The SFCC protocol recommends that the minimum survey length is six times the mean channel width at the site, with a minimum of 20m length (SFCC 2007). If the site selected is representative of the local habitat the survey should provide a robust estimate of local fish populations. However, it is possible that if fish populations are low or have a clumped distribution, the data from an electrofishing site may not adequately sample the full range of fish species present in that area.

It is usually impossible to capture all the fish present within a site, therefore depletion sampling, where fish are removed from a site in a series of successive electrofishing runs, are used to provide an estimate of the total fish

population present. The rate of decline in each run and the total number of fish captured are used to estimate fish stocks. However, if fish numbers are low (less than 40 per site) the confidence limits will be wide and Zippin depletion estimates will be unreliable (Schnute, 1983). If this is the case, Carle and Strubb depletion estimates will be used.

It is considered that it is impossible to prove the absence of fish by electrofishing, therefore, whilst the failure to capture fish at a site may indicate that the population is low, it cannot be assumed that target species are necessarily absent. Similarly, the absence of individual species from electrofishing results should not be assumed to be indicative of the overall status of the species as many factors may contribute to the results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Timed Electrofishing Sites

In total, ART examined 16 timed sites in 2024 across the Ayr catchment. Overall, the 2024 results were higher than the previous year but below the 10 year average. The results are shown in table 4 and figures 1,2 and 3 below.

Table 4: Results from the Ayr catchment salmon fry timed surveys 2024

Site	Location	Grid Ref E N	Date	Salmon fry caught per minute	Classification	Other species*
TAM4a	A77 Stepping stones main channel	236206 621581	15/07/24	0	Absent	SL, E
TAM14	Upstream Oswald's Bridge	238742 623105	15/07/24	0	Absent	SL, E
TAM15	Tarholm Bridge	239247 622126	15/07/24	3.8	Poor	SL
TAM11	Below Stair Dam	243774 623549	15/07/24	3.6	Very Poor	Sa par, SL, E
TAM13	Stairaird	246773 626159	15/07/24	4.4	Poor	SL
TAM3	D/S Howford Bridge	251600 625350	15/07/24	2.8	Very Poor	Sa par, Tr fry, Tr par, SL
TAM16	Sorn 100m u/s Glenlogan bridge	253723 625812	17/07/24	1.4	Very Poor	Sa par, SL
TAM9	Swinging Bridge, Limmerhaugh	261792 626876	17/07/24	12.2	Moderate	Sa par, SL
TAM1	Netherwellwood Bridge	265280 626150	17/07/24	10.2	Moderate	Tr fry, M, SL
TAM18	River Ayr d/s of Ponesk	248909 624353	17/07/24	9.2	Moderate	Tr fry, M, SL, L
TAM19	River Ayr at Crossflatt	270450, 627550	17/07/24	12.2	Moderate	Tr fry, Tr par, SL
TAL2	Lugar Water, below Ochiltree Weir	251220 621350	16/07/24	10.2	Moderate	Tr par, SL, M, E
TAL7	Mill Afleck Upper	252304 620824	18/07/24	3.4	Very Poor	SL, M
TAL15	Cumnock Rugby club, d/s foot bridge	256124 620147	18/07/24	0.4	Very Poor	Sa par, SL, M
TAL18	Lugar Gravel Extraction	261690 620278	18/07/24	12.2	Moderate	Sa par, SL
TAL6	Lugar, in Lugar village	259066 621127	18/07/24	0	Absent	Sa par, Tr fry, SL

A summary of the results from the last thirteen years are shown below in Tables 5 and 6. In 2024, Salmon fry were recorded at thirteen sites, but absent from three sites where they had been recorded in previous years (TAM4a, TAM14 and TAL6).

The overall results from the River Ayr Catchment (average fry/min) for 2024 are mixed with an overall slight increase in fry/minute when compared to 2023. Most sites stayed in the same categorization with the exceptions of Downstream Stair Dam (TAM11) which improved from 'absent' to 'very poor'; Stairaird Priest's Well pool (TAM13) which improved from 'very poor' to 'poor'; Downstream Howford Bridge (TAM3) which improved from 'absent' to 'very poor' and main stem downstream of Ponesk (TAM18) which improved from 'poor' to 'moderate'. There were no sites that moved down a category.

Despite this, the 2024 mean fry caught per minute (5.4) was still lower than the 10 year average from 2015-2024 of 7.1 fry per minute. Furthermore, even at the highest performing sites (TAM9, TAM19 and TAL18) the category was still 'moderate'.

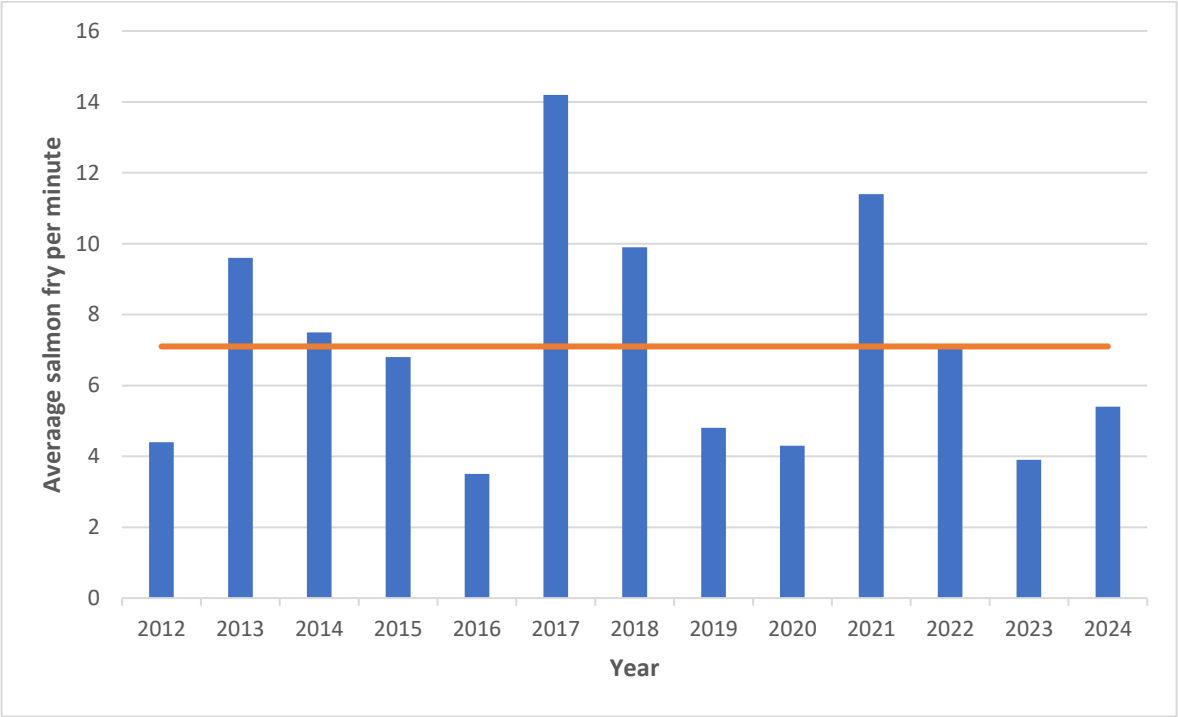

Figure 2: Mean Fry per minute across Ayr catchment since 2012 with accompanying 10 year average line. In 2024 the mean was 5.4 fry/minute. Average from 2015 to 2024 is 7.1 fry/minute

Mean salmon fry per minute was higher in 2024 (5.4) than in 2023 (3.9) but lower than the 10 year average (7.1). There was a difference of 1.7fry/minute between the 10 year average and the average salmon fry for the catchment in 2024.

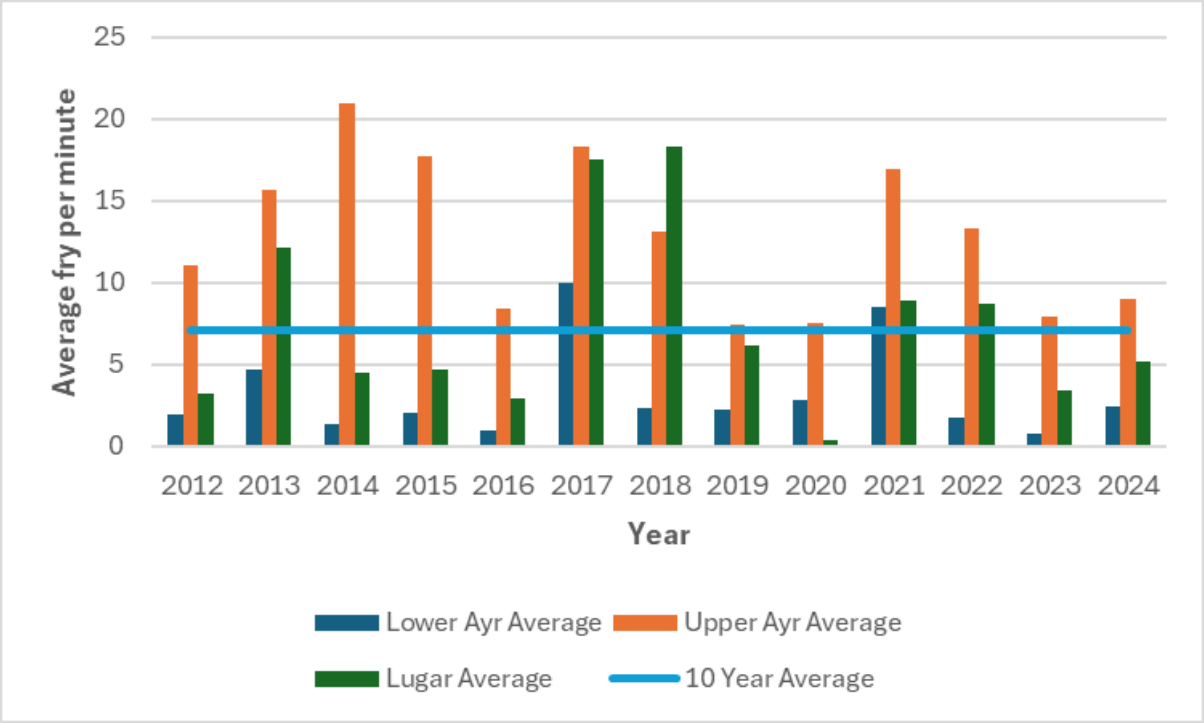

Figure 3: Comparison of timed electrofishing results on the River Ayr over 13 years, separated into upper, lower and Lugar catchments. The 10-year catchment average from 2015-2024 is 7.1 salmon fry/minute. The lower Ayr mean for 2024 is 2.4 fry/minute. The upper Ayr mean for 2024 is 9 fry/minute. The Lugar mean for 2024 is 5.2 fry/minute.

In 2024 all 3 sub-catchments of the River Ayr showed better fry/minute results than in 2023. The upper Ayr catchment continues to be the most productive section of the river and, with a result of 9 fry/minute, is the only section that is above the 10 year average of 7.1 fry/minute.

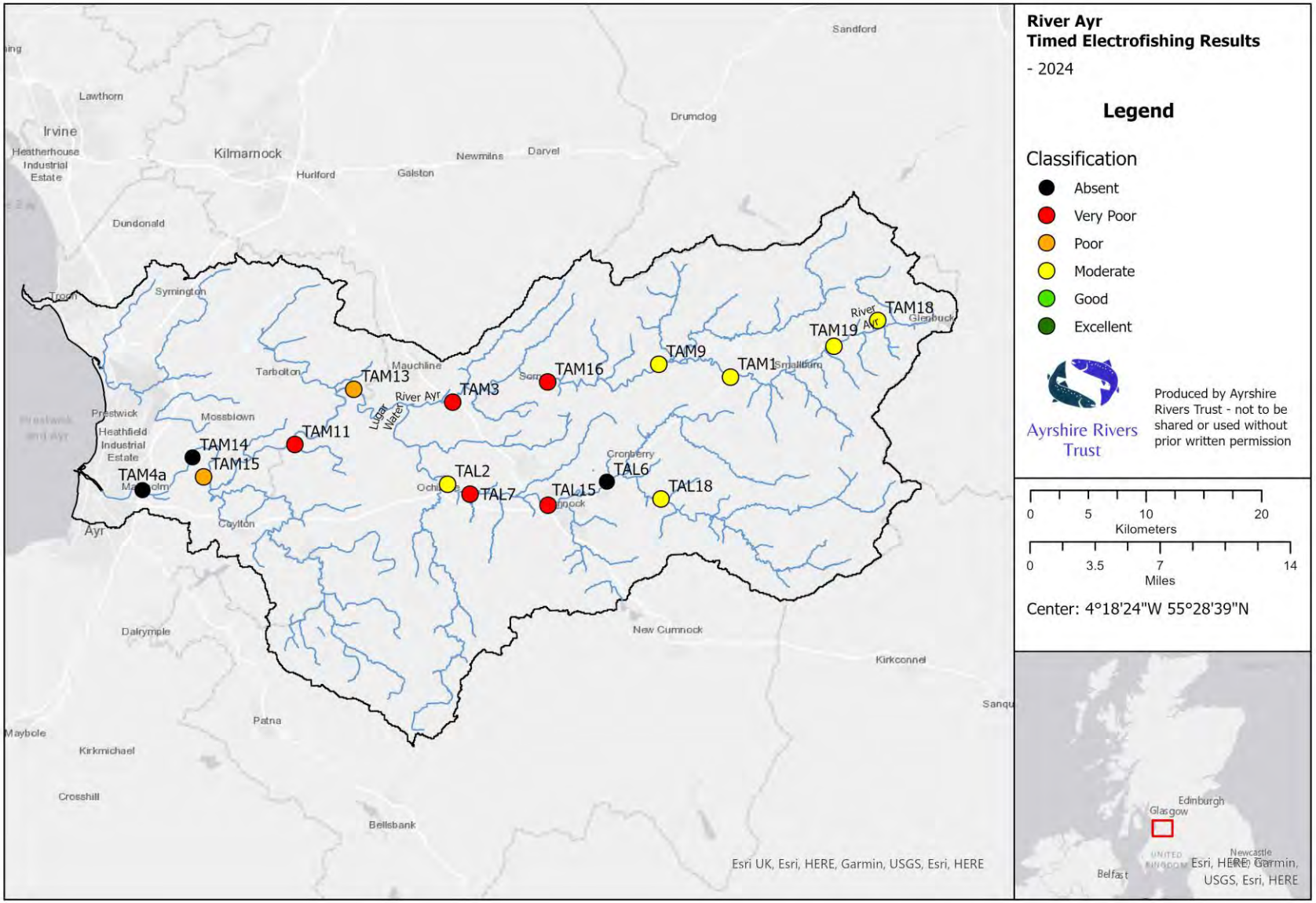

Figure 4: Map displaying location and classification of timed salmon fry surveys for the River Ayr catchment in 2024

Ayrshire Rivers Trust

Table 5: Colour coded salmon fry classification for 2004 - 2011

ART Timed Fry classification: (Black = Absent, Red = Very poor, Mustard = Poor, Yellow = Moderate, Light Green = Good, Dark Green = Excellent

River Ayr main stem timed salmon fry survey results 2004-2011

SITE	LOCATION	Salmon /min	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
TAM4a	A77 Stepping stones main channel	FRY					2.8	3.2	1.4	0.2
TAM14	Oswald's Bridge	FRY				2.2	3.6	0.8	0.4	0.4
TAM15	Tarholm Bridge	FRY					13.4	5.6	4	1.2
TAM11	Downstream Stair Dam	FRY			0	1.4	3.8	1.6	2	1.2
TAM13	Stairaird, Priest's Weel pool	FRY				5.2	6.4	11	3.2	2.4
TAM3	Downstream Howford Bridge	FRY	1.6	1.6	2	3	3.4	9		3.4
TAM17	Catrine, at bonded warehouse	FRY								
TAM16	Glenlogan Bridge	FRY							1.4	0.8
TAM9	Downstream of swinging bridge	FRY			13.6	14.6	28	29.8	14.6	8.8
TAM1	Netherwellwood Bridge	FRY	7.8	9.2	10.6	9.6	20.4	28.2	8.4	6.8
TAM18	Mainstem, d/s of Ponesk	FRY								
TAM19	River Ayr at Crossflatt	FRY								
TAL2	Downstream Ochiltree Weir	FRY	2.6	12	20.2	10.4	3.2	6.2	6.2	4.8
TAL7	Mill Affleck, upper	FRY			3	1.6	2.8	5.2	3.4	0
TAL15	Cumnock Rugby Club, d/s foot bridge	FRY								0.2
TAL18	Lugar Gravel Extraction	FRY								
TAL6	Lugar Village	FRY		5.2	10.8	10.2	5.6	7.4	5	6.2
MEAN		**FRY**	**4.0**	**7.0**	**8.6**	**6.5**	**8.5**	**9.8**	**4.5**	**2.8**

Table 6: Colour coded salmon fry classification for 2012 – 2024

ART Timed Fry classification: (Black = Absent, Red = Very poor, Mustard = Poor, Yellow = Moderate, Light Green = Good, Dark Green = Excellent

River Ayr main stem timed salmon fry survey results 2012-2024															
SITE	**LOCATION**	**Salmon / min**	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TAM4a	A77 Stepping stones main channel	FRY	1.2	0.2	0.8	0.4	0.2	10	0.8	1.7	0	2	0.2	0	0
TAM14	Oswald's Bridge	FRY	3	2	0.2	0.4	0	3.6	0.8	1	1.4	3.4	0.6	0	0
TAM15	Tarholm Bridge	FRY	1.4	3.6	0.8	4.4	4	20.2	6.4	4.4	6.8	43.4	6	3.8	3.8
TAM11	Downstream Stair Dam	FRY	0.6	2.2	0.4	0.4	0	4	0	0.4	2.4	0	1.6	0	3.6
TAM13	Stairaird, Priest's Weel pool	FRY	3	11.8	4	4.6	1.4	10.8	4.8	3.6	4.4	2	1.4	0.8	4.4
TAM3	Downstream Howford Bridge	FRY	2.2	8.2	2.4	1.6	0.2	11.4	0.8	2.3	1.6	0.4	0.2	0	2.8
TAM17	Catrine, at bonded warehouse	FRY		7.2	1.2	0.2	2.2	9.8							
TAM16	Glenlogan Bridge	FRY	4.4	2.6	1.6	0.6	0.6	18.6	4	1.8	7	3.2		0.2	1.4
TAM9	Downstream of swinging bridge	FRY	17.8	18.8	31	25.2	13.6	33.4	26.8	20	8	28	17.8	13	12.2
TAM1	Netherwellwood Bridge	FRY	11.2	24.6	17	16.4	8	10.4	16.8	5.2	12	23.8	6.4	10.2	10.2
TAM18	Mainstem, d/s of Ponesk	FRY		16.8	34.4	28.4	11.4	10.8	4.8	2.6	3	11.4	5.6	6.4	9.2
TAM19	River Ayr at Crossflatt	FRY										18.2	23.4	9.8	12.2
TAL2	Downstream Ochiltree Weir	FRY	4.4	32.2	9	16.2	9.6	31.6	55.2	22		26	16.6	9.8	10.2
TAL7	Mill Affleck, upper	FRY	3		5	0.8	1.4	17.6	4.8	2		6.6	10	3.6	3.4
TAL15	Cumnock Rugby Club, d/s foot bridge	FRY	0.4	4.1	2.8	0.6	0.2	9.2	0	0.4	0.4	2.8	0.4	0.2	0.4
TAL18	Lugar Gravel Extraction	FRY											15		12.2
TAL6	Lugar Village	FRY	5	0	1.2	1.2	0.4	11.4	13	0.4		0.2	1.6	0	0
MEAN		**FRY**	**4.4**	**9.6**	**7.5**	**6.8**	**3.5**	**14.2**	**9.9**	**4.8**	**4.3**	**11.4**	**7.1**	**3.9**	**5.4**

Table 7: Comparison of timed results for each DSFB river catchment across Ayrshire during 2024 fry/min

River Ayr Results	
Site	**2024**
TAM4a	0
TAM14	0
TAM15	3.8
TAM11	3.6
TAM13	4.4
TAM3	2.8
Lower Ayr Average	2.4
TAM16	1.4
TAM9	12.2
TAM1	10.2
TAM18	9.2
TAM19	12.2
Upper Ayr Average	9
TAL2	10.2
TAL7	3.4
TAL15	0.4
TAL18	12.2
TAL6	0
Lugar Average	5.2
Overall Ayr Average	**5.4**

River Doon Results	
Site	**2024**
TDM9	3.6
TDM4	10.8
TDM25	13.2
TDM23	28.8
TDM8	12.4
Lower Doon Average	13.8
TDM13	8.2
TDM15	13.8
TDM20	9.4
TDM27	29.2
TDM24	22.2
Upper Doon Average	16.6
Overall Doon Average	**15.2**

Water of Girvan Results	
Site	**2024**
TGM13	2
TGM14	4.8
TGM20	9.6
TGM11	11.6
TGM15	8.2
Lower Girvan Average	7.2
TGM17	21.4
TGM3/3a	18.6
TGM9	37.8
TGM2	20.2
TGM8	22.8
Upper Girvan Average	24.2
Overall Girvan Average	**15.7**

River Stinchar Results	
Site	**2024**
TSM18	3.2
TSM17	25.8
TSM15	14.4
TSM3	22.6
Lower Stinchar Average	16.5
TSM12	12
TSM4	12.4
TSM6	16.8
TSM11	15.2
TSM7	28
TSM16	9.6
Upper Stinchar Average	15.7
Overall Stinchar Average	**16**

The results in table 7 show that more salmon fry per minute were caught in 2024 across all four catchments when compared to 2023. The overall mean fry/minute for the River Ayr was 5.4 in 2024 compared to 3.5 in 2023, 15.2 fry per minute in the Doon in 2024 compared to 12.3 in 2023, 15.7 fry per minute in 2024 for the Water of Girvan compared to 8.1 in 2023 and 16 fry per minute in the River Stinchar in 2024 compared to 8.2 in 2023. Upper sites across all areas continue to display higher productivity than lower sites which is to be expected as habitat and water quality are better in these areas.

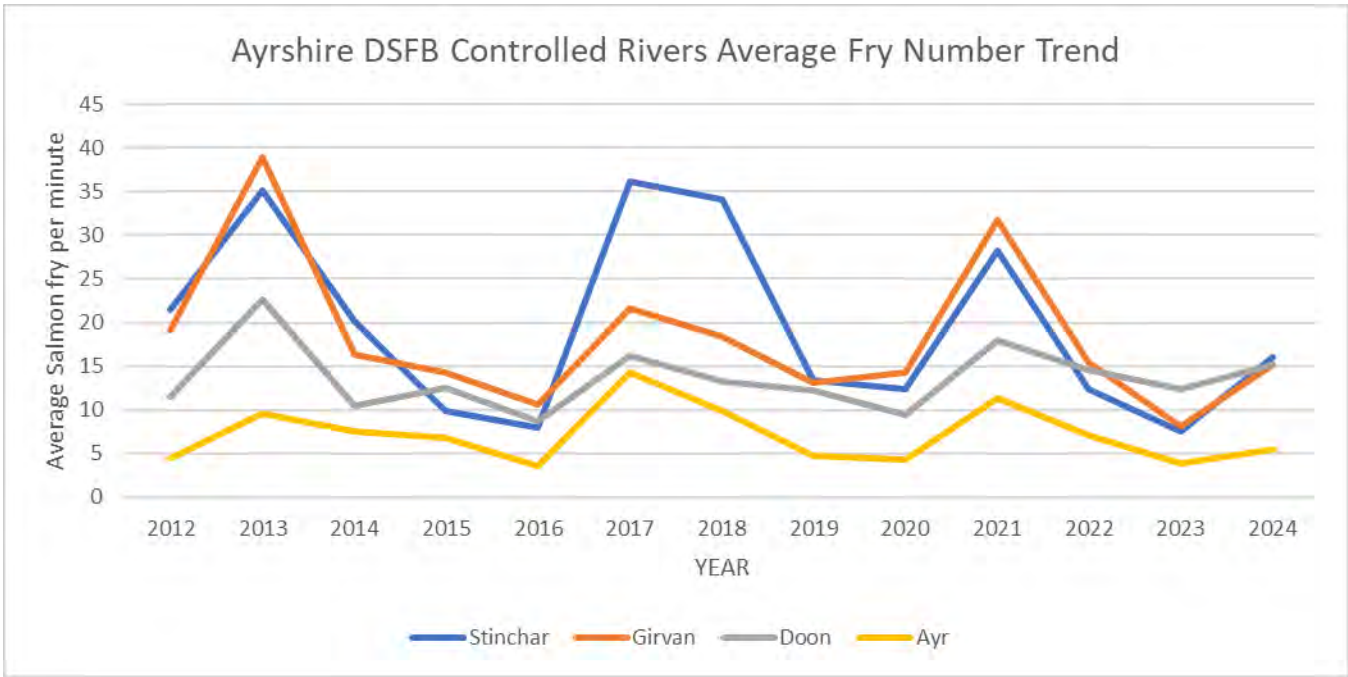

Figure 5: DSFB Rivers: Timed results 2012 - 2024 trends.

4.2 Density (Quantitative) sites

A total of 9 quantitative surveys were completed in 2024 (Table 8). Site AMAUB3 was surveyed as part of the ART Chalk Burn restoration project and the remaining 8 sites were surveyed as part of North Kyle wind farm development. The fish density estimations per 100m^2 for each site are shown in Table 7, where densities could not be calculated minimum densities have been provided.

Table 8: Results from the 2024 River Ayr catchment electrofishing surveys including SFCC classifications.
Where available, calculations of absolute densities are given, along with confidence limits, otherwise minimum densities are supplied and denoted by #. *Codes for salmon and trout 0+ = fry (less than one year old), 1++ = parr (one-year older fish and older)
**Codes for other species are, E = European eel, M = Minnow, SL=Stoneloach, SB= 3 spined stickleback, L = Lamprey. Numbers in brackets indicate number category for each species.

Site code	Date	Watercourse	Fish densities (Number/100m^2)				Other fish species**
			Salmon*		Trout*		
			0+	1++	0+	1++	
AMAUB3	03/07/2024	Chalk Burn	0	0	0	0	SB (1-10)
ABON2	20/08/2024	Burn O'Need	0	0	36.2 (+/- 2.9)	8.2 (+/- 19)	SL (11-100)
ABWBLB2	04/09/2024	Blueboots burn	0	0	0	3(#)	-
ABWBW3	04/09/2024	Black Water	0	0	23.2 (+/- 5.2)	4.5#	-
ABWBW5	04/09/2024	Black Water	0	0	0	1(#)	M (1-10) SL (1-10)
ABWBLB1	05/09/2024	Blueboots burn	0	0	4.8(#)	1.2(#)	M (1-10) SL (1-10)
ABWBW2	05/09/2024	Black Water	0	0	13.6 (+/- 2.5)	14.5 (+/- 15.5)	SL (1-10)
AWC18	06/09/2024	Water of Coyle	0	0	6.9(#)	0	-
ABW6	09/10/2024	Burnock Water	0	0	9.7 (+/- 0.8)	6.2 (+/- 0.1)	SB (1-10) M (1-10)
#Minimum density estimate used, insufficient data to generate confidence limits							

Site AMAUB3 was surveyed in advance of ART's Mauchline Burn restoration project. Though no salmon or trout were found, it is hoped that the habitat improvement works that have subsequently been undertaken will create suitable habitat for fish in the future.

At site ABON2 no juvenile Atlantic salmon were recorded at the time of the survey in 2023 or 2024. However, historic electrofishing data from multiple years shows that this site has previously supported juvenile salmon. Trout fry numbers increased from 2.5 per 100m^2 in 2022 and 20.3 per 100m^2 in 2023 to 36.2 per 100m^2 in 2024. Over the period of this monitoring work, the classification of trout fry has moved from poor to excellent. ART are unaware of any improvement or restoration work within this sub-catchment that would explain this increase and therefore it may be due to natural fluctuations or favorable spawning and over winter conditions.

During the 2023 electrofishing surveys, Ayrshire Rivers Trust noted damage to the instream habitat and riverbanks of the Blueboots burn at site ABWBLB2 following recent forestry felling operations. Fresh brash had

been left within and along the riverbanks of Blueboots burn, with large areas adjacent covered in brash. Though there were no fry of either salmon or trout recorded in 2024, there was a 'poor' number of trout parr, which is an increase on previous years.

Site ABWBW3 is on the Black Water and has moderate instream cover and habitat that would favor trout fry. Trout fry numbers were classed as good for the third year and have improved from 13.4 per 100m^2 in 2022 to 23.2 per 100m^2 in 2024. Trout parr numbers remained stable with a minimum density of 4.5 produced for 2024.

Site ABWBW5 is the most upstream site on the Black Water. This site has experienced a significant decline in the trout fry numbers, with no trout fry recorded in 2024. Before this trout fry were classed as moderate in 2022 and good in 2023. Similarly, the trout parr numbers have reduced to a minimum estimate of 1 and a classification of very poor. Upstream of this site, a large area of forestry adjacent to headmark lane, a tributary of the Black Water, was felled in 2023.

Site ABWBLB1 is one of two sites on the Blueboots burn, both of which are upstream of the Burnock weir. Juvenile Atlantic salmon have not been recorded at any sites upstream of the Burnock weir throughout the course of this monitoring programme. Trout fry numbers have dropped from the baseline value of 17.6 per 100m^2 and classification of good in 2022 to a minimum density estimate of 4.8 fry and classification of poor in 2024. Similarly, the trout parr numbers have also reduced from 4.5 per 100m^2 and a classification of moderate in 2022 down to a minimum density estimate of 1.2 and a classification of very poor in 2024.

Site ABWBW2 is on the Black Water and provides excellent parr habitat throughout the survey site. No salmon were recorded possibly due to the Burnock weir or other factors; however, trout numbers continue to be encouraging with good fry numbers and excellent parr numbers. Trout parr have reduced from 30.7 per 100m^2 in 2022 down to 14.6 per 100m^2 in 2024, however remain within the excellent classification.

Site AWC18 is on the Water of Coyle and is situated upstream of Ness Linn, a modified waterfall that currently prevents upstream migration by Atlantic salmon and sea trout. The concrete cap that increases the height of the Ness Linn waterfall has been targeted for removal by SEPA, and as such, Atlantic salmon may utilise the upper reaches of the Water of Coyle in the future. A semi quantitative 1-run survey was carried out at this site due to low numbers of fish caught in the first run. Minimum densities were calculated with trout fry improving on the densities recorded in 2022 and 2023. However, trout parr numbers dropped from poor in 2022, and good in 2023 to absent in 2024.

Site ABW6 is upstream of the Burnock weir and is presently accessible to brown trout and European eels but probably not Atlantic salmon. This site offers good instream habitat and during the time of our survey did not appear to suffer from siltation or compaction of the river substrate. In 2023, trout fry numbers dropped to 8.5 per 100m^2 from 18.6 per 100m^2 in 2022. In 2024, trout fry numbers increased slightly from 2023 to 9.7 per 100m^2, but remained within the moderate classification and much reduced when compared to the baseline densities. Trout parr numbers have dropped from 17.5 per 100m^2 and a classification of excellent in the 2022 to 6.2 per 100m^2 and a classification of good in 2024.

5. Summary and Conclusions

- Timed results cannot be accurately compared between rivers and care must be taken when comparing between sites in the same river. Although the Ayr had the lowest average salmon fry count, the 2024 numbers followed the trends found in other local catchments, with numbers higher than 2023 but lower than 2021 and 2022.

- Increasingly there appears to be a similar trend developing across all four DSFB controlled rivers with every fourth year displaying a peak in salmon fry numbers across all catchments. Further, where one river shows increases, all appear to follow that trend. This would indicate that there are common factors influencing juvenile recruitment and if so, then these are likely to be marine issues. Of course, there may be other common factors in the freshwater environment that affect survival but these are less obvious.

- The 2024 mean timed results (5.4 fry/minute) are higher than the 2023 results (3.9 fry/minute), but lower than the 2015-2024 10 year average of 7.1 fry/minute.

- There was an overall increase in classifications compared to 2023 with 11 sites staying the same category, 4 sites moving up a category and no site dropping a category. Lugar Gravel Extraction (TAL18) was not surveyed in 2023 so no clear comparison can be drawn.
- 3 sites had an equal highest fry/minute result of 12.2. These were Swinging Bridge at Limmerhaugh (TAM9), the River Ayr at Crossflat (TAM19) and at the Lugar Gravel Extraction (TAL18). All 3 sites were classed as 'moderate'.
- Results from the upper River Ayr main stem and middle reaches of the Lugar Water main stem show that these areas are important to juvenile production and continue play an important role for nursery habitat but are vulnerable to impacts from upstream.

- Productivity in the upper river appears to be higher overall with productivity remaining above the 10 year average.

- Productivity in the middle and lower river is consistently poor, in particular downstream of Catrine. Lower river sites are subject to the accumulation of all upstream inputs resulting in poorer water quality and substrate conditions for spawning adults and incubating eggs. These cumulative impacts effectively reduce the potential for recruitment across a substantial area within the catchment and some may only be addressed by considerable improvement in agricultural practices. Other's result from historic and more recent mining influences and may never be resolved adequately.

- The Burnock weir downstream of the B7046 presently limits upstream migration of adult Atlantic salmon and subsequently the utilisation of all watercourses and sites upstream of this point. However, SEPA is investigating the possibility of removing or easing the Burnock weir to improve upstream migration of Atlantic salmon and sea trout. The trout results from these sites indicate these watercourses are important areas for recruitment and may be sensitive to changes that are currently taking place. We will continue to monitor and assess these developments.

- Many of the survey sites for windfarm developments are outwith the range that salmon can access which is why there are many sites showing salmon as being absent.

- Juvenile salmon numbers can be subject to greater fluctuations than trout due to their more complex lifecycle involving an oceanic phase, whereas resident brown trout reside in these watercourses year-round and aren't subject to the same range of environmental variables that Atlantic salmon are. This can make brown trout a better indicator of water quality issues/variations over the course of a year. Returning numbers of adult salmon can be highly variable as is egg deposition and resulting numbers of fry produced.

- ART monitor macroinvertebrates as these are long term indicators of water quality. High scoring taxons of invertebrates such as stoneflies indicate that water quality is high whereas species such as snails and hoglouse indicate the long-term degradation of water quality. We monitor spring and autumn communities annually for invertebrates across the areas that have the potential to be impacted by developments such as windfarms. The details of these surveys have not been detailed in this report and if anyone is interested in learning more about this please get in touch with the Biologists.

- Unfortunately, due to a lack of available resources, the Scottish Government did not run the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) in 2024 and there are no concrete plans to run the programme in 2025.

6. References

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Hendry, K. & D Cragg-Hine (2003). Ecology of the Atlantic salmon. Conserving Natura 2000 rivers. Ecology series No.7. LIFE in UK Rivers, English Nature, Peterbrough.

Schnute, J.T., and J. Sibert (1983). The salmon terminal fishery: a practical, comprehensive timing model. Can.J. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 40: 835-853.

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Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (2007). Habitat survey training course manual. FRS, Pitlochry, pp 1-64.

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Wentworth, C.K. (1922). A scale of grade and class terms for clastic sediments. Journal of Geology. 30:377-392.

(h) Annual Catch Returns

Summary of Data Collection

Once again, the Board used the Annual Catch Return Form introduced in October 2022. This was in addition to the statutory requirement upon all Riparian Owners to submit the full Rod and Catch Return Form to Marine Scotland.

Number of Beats

In total we have 79 beats on the River Ayr. 16 of the beats (Nos 280, 300, 340, 350, 360, 370, 380, 390, 400, 410, 415, 430, 440, 450, 510 and 550) previously used by Cumnock & District Angling Association have not currently made returns.

Number of Annual Catch Returns

Some beats report collectively, or are grouped together.

We were therefore expecting Annual Catch Returns from 63 beats this year.

After Reminders were sent for outstanding Annual Catch Returns on 19 February 2025 and 7 March 2025, we received 50 out of 63 Annual Catch Returns (79%).

Salmon Caught, Released and Killed

In term of the numbers of Salmon caught, 389 salmon were reported as caught.

389 were released and 0 killed. That is 100% Catch and Release.

Salmon Rod Effort

In terms of Salmon Rod Effort, 38 out of the 50 Annual Catch Returns received (76%) reported on Rod Effort, with 20 of those (40% of the total) reporting nil Rod Effort.

In terms of Rod Effort Days, the total sum reported was 856 days.

Monthly Salmon Rod Effort and Salmon Caught

Monthly Salmon Rod Effort was reported from March to November, increasing to the end of the season, with Salmon being caught from May to October, increasing as the season progressed, with the last three months of the season being the most successful.

(i) Audited Statement of Accounts

The Audited Statement of Accounts to 28 February 2025 are produced here:

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2025

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

We have examined the financial statements on pages 2 to 4.

Respective responsibilities of Boards and examiner
The Board's members consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1)(a) to (c) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the financial statements as required under section 44(1)(c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement
My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Board and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeks explanations from the members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the financial statements.

Independent examiner's statement
In connection with my examination, no other matter except that referred to in the previous paragraph has come to my attention:

(a) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
(i) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; and
(ii) to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; have not been met or

(b) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Azets
3 Wellington Square
Ayr
KA7 1EN

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2025

	Year to 28.02.25	Year to 28.02.24
	£	£
INCOME		
Assessments	25,852	20,622
Bank and Building Society Interest	1,075	867
	26,927	21,489
EXPENDITURE		
Fisheries Management Scotland Annual Membership	562	536
Fishery Management Plan	1,500	1,500
Ayrshire Rivers Trust Admin Fee	-	1,625
Ayrshire Rivers Trust Annual Contribution	6,789	6,789
Correction of Accruals	-	(6,078)
Hogweed Control	4,000	4,000
Repairs and Maintenance	1,943	-
Clerk's Fee	7,700	4,208
Attending Conference Costs	-	338
Accountancy Fee	822	750
Bad Debts (2014 – 2020)	-	14,474
Postage & Stationery	-	224
Reconciliation - Disposal of Assets	-	1,195
Sundry	342	164
	23,658	29,725
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	3,269	(8,236)
Surplus brought forward	30,558	38,794
Surplus carried forward	33,827	30,558

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

STATEMENT OF FUNDS ON HAND

AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 2025

	As at 28.02.25	As at 28.02.24
	£	£
ASSETS		
Deposit Account	31,636	30,832
Debtors – unpaid assessments	4,847	1,476
	36,483	32,308
LIABILITIES		
Accruals	(2,656)	(1,750)
	33,827	30,558
Represented by:		
Retained surplus	33,827	30,558

The financial statements were approved by the board on 26 March 2025

.....
Alan Hill, Chairman

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL

STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR

ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2025

1. **ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

- Except to the extent noted below, the financial statements include cash income and expenditure received and paid during the period.

- Liabilities and income outstanding at 28 February 2025 have been incorporated in the Financial Statements.

6. Future Work of the Board

(a) Updated Budget

BALANCE HELD AT 2 APRIL 2025	**£31,315.68**
ANTICIPATED REGULAR EXPENDITURE TO 28 FEBRUARY 2026	
Ayrshire Rivers Trust – Annual Donation 2025/2026	£6,789.20
Gilson Gray LLP – Clerk to the Board Services	£7,200.00
Information Commissioner's Office – Renewal Fee	£40.00
Azets – Preparation of Boards accounts for the year ended 28 February 2026	£822.00
Fisheries Management Scotland – Membership 2025/2026	£590.00
Ayrshire Rivers Trust - Web hosting for ayrfishing.co.uk	£150.00
ANTICIPATED (BUDGETED) EXPENDITURE TO 28 FEBRUARY 2026	
Ayrshire Rivers Trust – Contribution towards Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed Control on River Ayr	£6,000.00
Ayrshire Rivers Trust - Contribution towards Nether Wellwood Green Engineering	£3,000.00
Gilson Gray LLP – Work setting up River Watch Scheme	£1,200.00
River Watch Scheme Expenditure - Remuneration, Phone, Publicity, signs, wind cheaters, contingency etc	£1,500.00
TOTAL ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURE TO 28 FEBRUARY 2026	**-£27,291.20**
SURPLUS OF CURRENT FUNDS RE ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURE	**£4,024.48**
PLUS ANTICIPATED INCOME TO 28 FEBRUARY 2026	
FUNDS FROM FISHERY ASSESSMENTS 2025/2026	**£25,092.00**
NET ARREARS OF FISHERY ASSESSMENTS (ESTIMATED)	**£ 1,700.00**
INTEREST ON FUNDS IN DEPOSIT ACCOUNT (ESTIMATED)	**£ 1,000.00**
TOTAL	**£31,816.48**
LESS	

Agreed Minimum Retention for Reserves	**- £10,000.00**
AVAILABLE BALANCE FOR ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE:	**£21,817.48**

Iain K Clark
Clerk to River Ayr DSFB

2 April 2025

(b) Proposed Works for Discussion/Agreement

Ayrshire Rivers Trust
working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

Recommendations to the DSFB for the coming season

Giant Hogweed and Japanese knotweed control.

We recommend a contribution of **£5000** towards GHW and JK control across the catchment to support the long-term strategy that is in place.

Chalk River Restoration Project

The DSFB agreed to contribute match funding (**£1500**) towards the restoration of the Chalk River, A.K.A The Mauchline Burn. This burn is responsible for continual silt deposits reaching the River Ayr. The Trust secured around £17,500 to allow fencing and bank stabilisation to take place with the aim of reducing silt inputs.

Figure 7: The Chalk River confluence with the Ayr. This silt deposit has built up since the last spate. It is a continual problem.

This project is now almost complete with only tree planting being required to finish the work. Jon Gibb who manages the finance for The Wild Fisheries Fund visited the site last December to see what has been achieved and left very impressed with the work that has been delivered. Here is a video that was shot on that day by their content creator: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MosLpt9xVhc

Nether Wellwood Green Engineering and Wild Fisheries Fund Grant.

The Board agreed to spend £1200 on green engineering upstream of Nether Wellwood Bridge, we are working on securing permission from RSPB to deliver further works that would include fencing and tree planting. Having prepared the application we recommend that the Board allocate **£3000 (**this would include the £1200 already allocated) of match funding towards the Wild Fisheries Grant application to allow the installation of green engineering at a key location to reduce erosion directly above some of the most prolific spawning grounds on the river. This application to the Wild Fisheries Fund is due on the 28th March and we are hopeful that this work will be looked on favourably. We have an excellent track record with this funder and this project would be incredibly valuable.

SPEN Funding.

We continue to work with multiple landowners/stakeholders on the catchment to design projects to utilise SPEN's 'use it or lose it' biodiversity fund. This fund has huge potential as it would fully fund fencing, tree planting, livestock watering systems, wetland creation etc. The fund has been built to offset biodiversity loss and could be worth many millions over the coming years if there is sufficient uptake of the funding – hence the name! We are working on several projects across the upper Ayr and Lugar to bring what could be huge benefits to the catchment. As ever it does require the support of landowners/stakeholders.

Garpel Water Barrier Easements

We recommend that approximately **£8000** is allocated towards the easement of a barrier on the Garpel Water (tributary of the River Ayr, downstream of Muirkirk). We are working towards a larger tree planting and fencing project on the Garpel Water through SPEN however SPEN won't fund the removal of barriers and as such we need to find another source of funding to allow salmon and trout to access the entirety of the Garpel Water which has excellent water quality and fish habitat throughout its catchment.

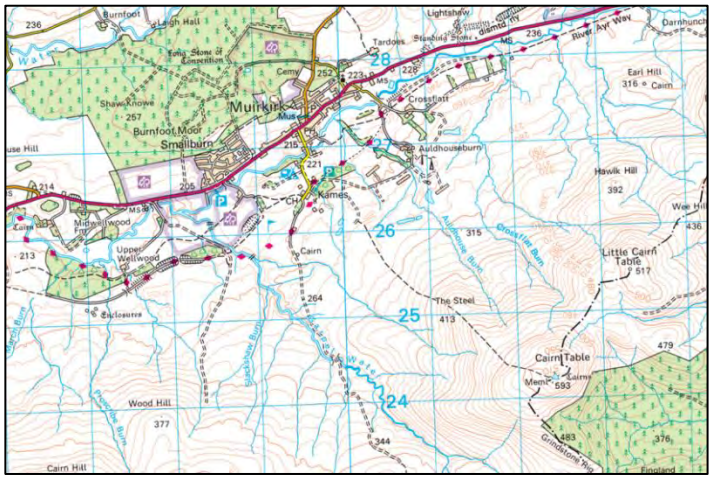

Figure 8: Garpel Water location

Fencing

The Board could fund fencing to exclude livestock, perhaps at 50% contributions towards the costs with landowners providing the other 50%, this is a scheme the Doon DSFB have ran successfully for several years now. There are currently no better grants available anywhere.

The Bogend Burn at Catrine and the Glenstang Burn at Stair are two burns that would benefit from such investment. There are other areas at Wellwood Bridge that would benefit too we are however working towards a project at this site.

The Glenstang Burn at Stair where livestock access leads to pollution and destroys habitat. A burn of this size should be an important salmon spawning habitat however, salmon are rarely ever produced here.

However, with livestock fencing costing around £15/m (depending on the number of strainers/gates etc), the cost is prohibitive and the Board may wish to accrue reserves before embarking on such actions. Nevertheless, fencing can quickly transform habitat and improve water quality and we have achieved great success with this approach on the River Doon catchment with support from the River Doon DSFB.

A Doon burn transforming after fencing was erected just 8 months ago. The substrates are clearing of silt and the bankside vegetation is recovering. SEPA failed to achieve any significant improvements despite many complaints from the Trust over several years.

Tree Planting

Tree planting along spawning burns and south banks will help defend against anticipated impacts of climate change by providing shade and cooling water temperatures. They also stabilise river banks but do require protection from livestock. Combining tree planting with fencing is sensible. Again, the cost can be prohibitive but ART has several thousand trees and second-hand guards available to plant next winter where trees are lacking. The Board could organise a volunteer event and the Trust would provide equipment and secure landowner agreements in advance. There would be a small cost for the staff time involved and for stakes but this would deliver actions identified within the two FMPs.

The Board would have to set some reserves aside to deliver this.

7. Acknowledgements

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

Thanks the following for their support in its work:

Ayrshire Rivers Trust
working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

Stuart Brabbs, Trust Manager
Struan Candlish, Fisheries Biologist
Jennifer Garland, Office Manager
Carolyn Bryce, Biologist

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www.facebook.com/AyrshireRiversTrust
www.youtube.com/user/ayrshireriverstrust

Funders and partners:

- All River Ayr District Salmon Proprietors and Tenants
- Fishery Managers, Ghillies, Club and Association Committee Members
- Fisheries Management Scotland
- Accountants: Azets, Ayr
- Solicitors: Gilson Gray LLP, Glasgow
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Ayr Joint Valuation Board
- Peter Scanlan, Assistant to the Clerk
- The many landowners who allow access and work to be undertaken
- And other volunteers who give up their time to support our efforts

Clerk to the Board: Iain K Clark, LLB (Hons), Dip LP, NP
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