

February 2017

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Rods bend on the first day of the Season

As Anglers took up their position along the banks of the mighty River Spey eager to make their first cast of the year, the traditional Opening Ceremony was performed at Penny Bridge in Aberlour, where a blessing and a toast were offered to bring luck for the season ahead.



Above: Left to Right: 2016 Anniversary Quaich Winner, Graham Ritchie, Rev. Shuna Dicks, SFB Director Roger Knight, guest speaker, Angus Robertson MP and Piper, David Grant gathered at Penny Bridge, Aberlour to mark the Official Opening of the 2017 Salmon Fishing Season.

The river once again sprung to life with the first salmon of the season, weighing in at 7lb was landed by Evie Glass at Junction Pool, Rothes (pictured below) with attending ghillie, Robbie Stronach. (Photo courtesy of Robbie Stronach). Evie was also the 2011 Winner and landed the heaviest fish caught on Opening Day in 2009.



The heaviest salmon caught on Opening Day was caught by Arty McKerron, weighing 8lbs assisted by Ghillie, Blair Banks on his first day working at Arndilly.

Top right: (Left to right) SFB Chairman Brian Doran, Evie Glass and Ghillie, Robbie Stronach.

Above right: (Left to right) Brian Doran, Arty McKerron and Ghillie, Blair Banks.

The Spey Fishery Board are most grateful to the Aberlour Distillery, Walkers Shortbread, Fishpal and Le Petit Gourmand for their continued generous sponsorship and also to Munro's of Aberlour for their raffle donations, which raised a total of £450 for the Spey Foundation.

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BRIEFING - February 2017

2016 SEASON REPORT

Salmon & Grilse

The declared catch from the 11th February to the 30th September 2016 has amounted to 7,632 salmon and grilse. This was 96 fish less than the number caught in 2015, however the catch from February to the end of June was 3,940, with the number caught during the month of June being the highest on record since 1955.

The river continued to fish well throughout July, but low water conditions prevailed throughout August and September and anglers reported pools full of fish which were reluctant to take the fly. There was also a noticeable lack of grilse last year. This situation was replicated on many other rivers around Scotland and there is speculation that we are in the midst of a changeover from summer to spring salmon.

Sea Trout

The sea trout catch from the 11th February to the end of September was also been disappointing; 1,318 sea trout were caught, which was 857 fish less than the 2,175 caught in 2015.

Conservation Policy

The Spey Fishery Board are very grateful for the continued support from Proprietors, Ghillies and Anglers who have continued to respond positively to the voluntary policies that are in place on the river. Throughout last year, 94% of all salmon and grilse caught were released, as in the previous year. The release rate for trout fell slightly from 81% in 2015 to 77% in 2016, although it should be noted that this had risen from the 70% reported for the earlier part of the year. The policy for 2017 is shown below.



Spey Conservation Policy 2017

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Scottish Legislation requires that all salmon caught before the 1st April must be released. In order to protect the integrity of the Spey stock and to maximise their spawning potential, the Spey Fishery Board's policy is that all fish caught up to and including the 31st May should be released alive. From the 1st June the policy set out below will apply.

SEA TROUT



Release all finnock of 16oz / 35cm / 14" or less



Release all Sea Trout of 3lb / 50cm / 20" or above



Retain only 1 Sea Trout of takeable size per calendar day. Anglers are also encouraged to release their first fish and keep the second that is of takeable size



Release all stale or coloured fish



Release all unseasonable fish (smolts, kelts, over-wintered finnock)

SALMON



Each angler must return the 1st, 3rd, 5th etc... cock fish caught



All hen salmon and hen grilse must be released



Throughout the season all stale or unseasonable fish must be released e.g. gravid, kelts



Escaped farmed salmon must be retained

Scottish Government U-Turn on Wild Fisheries Reform

On the 3rd February the Scottish Government issued a Press Release announcing a new approach to Wild Fisheries Reform. Following the consultation process to date, it had decided to focus on protecting the rights of anglers, rather than reforming the Boards and Trusts/Foundation that are involved in fishery management. The Government's announcement made clear that rod licences and a new wild fisheries levy would no longer be taken forward; nor would the criminalisation of freshwater fishing without permission; nor would an overhaul of the structure and remit of District Salmon Fishery Boards.

Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Rural Affairs & Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham said, *"It's important that we represent the interests of our anglers. That's why we have listened to the sector's concerns about increasing costs and restricting access to fisheries and are ruling out the introduction of rod licences and a freshwater levy. We've heard through the consultation that these steps would limit the opportunities for our anglers and potentially discourage young people from taking part."* The simple reality, though, is that extending the current (salmonid) remit of District Salmon Fishery Boards to one that is "all species" and rolling it out across Scotland needs extra money. With so many competing demands on the public purse, the Government can't justify central funding for

fishery management and the introduction of a rod licence is too difficult politically. Without the additional money, the Scottish Government's aspirations for Wild Fisheries Reform simply cannot be achieved and so the majority of the proposals have been thrown out.

The Government still aspires to producing a Wild Fisheries Bill, but rather than creating Fishery Management Organisations, it will focus instead on consolidating the existing legislation and empowering the voluntary mergers of Boards, rather than making it compulsory. The development of Conservation Limits and the categorisation of rivers according to their conservation status will also continue. This was an international requirement from NASCO (the inter-governmental body, North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation), rather than just a Scottish Government requirement and one which Scotland has needed to develop for some time. The Spey Fishery Board will continue to contribute to this important work and we will update you on developments in due course. In the meantime, fishery management areas and their accompanying Fishery Management Organisations are dead; long live District Salmon Fishery Boards!

The analysis of the consultation is available to view at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform/billanalysis>

And we have lift off

At last our drone is airborne. Following a successful application to the HDH Wills Charitable Trust, the Spey Foundation purchased a drone at the end of last year. On the 13th February we took the first steps into the world of aerial surveying with the maiden flight of the Phantom Four drone. Drones have a number of potential applications in the world of fishery/river management including ranunculus surveys, invasive terrestrial plants surveying, river morphology studies, predator monitoring, wetted area calculations, redd counts, marketing and promotions etc.

We look forward to showcasing the results of this work in the next year or two.

Pictured Right: Assistant Biologist, Steve Burns takes control of the Drone under the watchful eye of his trainer, Steve Gardiner.



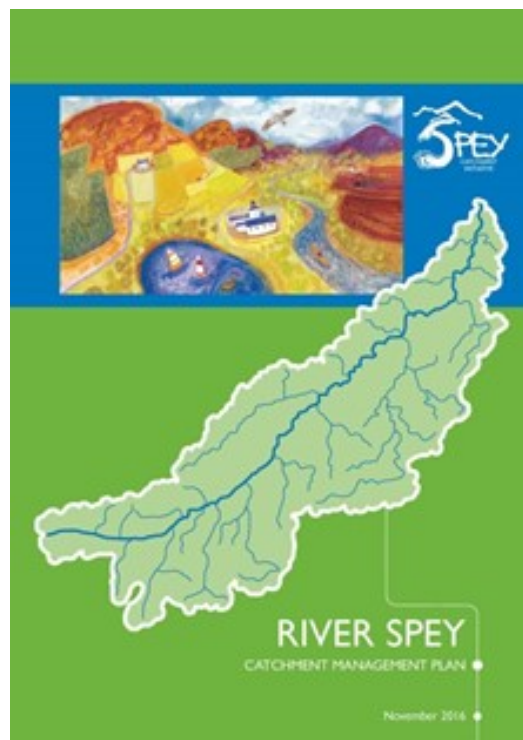
2016 River Spey Catchment Management Plan

A new River Spey Catchment Management Plan has recently been launched, replacing the original 2003 plan. It sets out a broad strategic framework for the wise and sustainable use of the water resource for the next five years, and for the protection and enhancement of the water quality and natural heritage throughout the whole River Spey catchment. The 2016 Plan summarises in one document all the key issues, pressures and opportunities that currently exist as they relate to the local environment. It has been designed as a 'one stop shop' providing a wealth of information on flood management, water quality, economic development, protected species and habitats, fisheries, forestry and woodland. By recognising the links between the health of the river and associated land use, this Plan aims to enable all those with an interest in the river environment to communicate, liaise and work together more effectively.

Grant Moir, Chief Executive of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) said: "It's fantastic to see the launch of the new Spey Catchment Management Plan, a key document which aims to maximise the benefits the river can provide for local communities, industry and tourism while maintaining habitat for internationally important species like the Freshwater Pearl Mussel. Partnership working is crucial for the delivery of the Plan and I know that the widespread contributions from all sectors such as farming, fisheries and outdoor recreation groups will contribute to its success."

The Spey Catchment Management Plan is available on line to view or download at: www.speyfisheryboard.com/spey-catchment-initiative-publications.

[catchment-initiative-publications](http://www.speyfisheryboard.com/spey-catchment-initiative-publications). The new 2016 plan is the culmination of a process that included a detailed review of the original 2003 CMP and a large stakeholder event in the Spring. The Review document which was published in June can also be found at: www.speyfisheryboard.com/spey-catchment-initiative-publications. Many of the objectives and actions that have emerged in the new plan will require the continuation of the SCI to enable their progression and delivery over the next 5 years.



Dates for the Diary

Spey Fishery Board Meetings

To be held at 9:30 am at the Craigellachie Hotel, Victoria Street, Craigellachie, AB38 9SR on the following dates:

Friday 19th May, Friday 18th August and Friday 24th November 2017.

Members of the public are invited to attend as observers, but are requested to give notice to the Board's Administrator, Sally Gross, by telephone on 01340-810841, or by email at admin@speyfisheryboard.com