

Fowey Rivers Association

Newsletter 2016

Last year I started my report with some good news, this year it's sad news. You will all have heard about the sad untimely death of our President, Anthony Fortescue. Anthony was immensely supportive of the FRA and took a keen interest in everything that was going on. Providing Boconnoc for our AGM was one example. Anthony will be sorely missed and our thoughts are with his family.

On a more cheerful note you will find several accounts of our achievements over the year in this newsletter. The main one of these is the progress towards establishing a St Neot hatchery. This should be up and running by this time next year with Richard Grieve as the manager. Thanks must go to SWW and the EA for their support and to Roger Furniss for the huge amount of expertise, time and effort he has put in to the project on our behalf. As I write monitoring of fish movements in the lower St Neot is being undertaken in conjunction with releases from Colliford to assess any upstream migration. The data will then be used to assess the feasibility of a fish trap for catching broodstock next year.

Another major achievement is the modifying of Ladyvale bridge on the Cardinham Stream. This will allow migrating salmon access to extensive spawning habitat above the bridge, and hopefully our ongoing fry surveys will demonstrate success of this in subsequent years. The project was part funded by the FRA and supported by Westcountry Rivers Trust. Special thanks to Giles Rickard of WRT without whom this would not have succeeded.

Your committee has agreed new recommendations for bag limits and catch and release. It is up to the clubs to decide whether to implement them or not. However, I would urge anyone who catches a seatrout of over 24ins to return it. These fish are usually hens and contribute disproportionately to egg deposition.

Data from the fish counter shows that we had an average run of both salmon and seatrout, although, like many other rivers there was a better run of early salmon. Last year showed 186 large fish running in November and December, well down on the 10 year average, perhaps confirming that our fabled late run is no more. There are certainly not many fresh fish being caught in the dying days of this season.

Finally I would like to thank our committee members for their help and support, and big thanks to Paul Jordan and Jon Evans.

Bill Smith. Chairman

A NEW HATCHERY FOR THE FOWEY

Your Committee of the Fowey Rivers Association (FRA) has succeeded in its bid to replace Wainsford Hatchery with one dedicated to overcoming the permanent loss of salmon from the St Neot. The absence of salmon in the St Neot results from the unnatural flow regime, with high summer flows and low winter flows caused by the operation of the Colliford-Restormel water supply arrangement. This was not foreseen when the reservoir was built but it was expected that such unforeseen effects would be dealt with.

The Environment Agency (EA) and South West Water (SWW) have accepted that the permanent loss of salmon has to be overcome. SWW have succeeded in their bid to secure funding for a hatchery to be run by FRA. After careful consideration of the options, the EA, SWW and FRA agreed that a total refurbishment of the mothballed Colliford hatchery is the best way forward as it has:

- A guaranteed water supply which matches the water the fish will be stocked into, i.e. the St Neot;
- Plenty of capacity to rear 40,000 fish to be stocked at the end of their first summer, i.e. after the heavy summer releases to Restormel;
- Room for broodstock holding;
- A ready-made secure permanent building;
- A track record of successful sea trout rearing which was replaced by buying out the estuary nets in 2007;
- The continued involvement of SWW as site owners.

Plans for the necessary refurbishment are already well advanced and include:

- Replacement of any necessary pipework and filters;
- Installation of UV sterilisation on the water supply to prevent any disease input;
- Installation of alarms with telephone links to warn of any water supply interruptions;
- Gravity-fed water storage and emergency pumps to overcome any supply interruptions;
- Re-use of existing SWW and FRA equipment which is fit for purpose and purchase of any new requirements;
- An annual operating programme from Autumn broodstock collection through to stocking the following September.

The hatchery will come online in the Autumn of 2016 with first stocking in 2017. Broodstock collection will be by trapping, rod and line, or a combination of both.

Richard Grieve has agreed to manage the hatchery on behalf of FRA and will lead on :

- Ensuring that the hatchery is fit for purpose by September 2016;
- All operations connected to the hatchery programme;
- Coordinating a team of volunteers to support the project.

In this he has the full support of the Directors of FRA Ltd and we thank him for stepping up.

Later on we will be asking for volunteers to help with this exciting development to help the Fowey salmon fishery.

Bill Smith – Chairman

FRA Website <http://www.riverfowey.org/>

The FRA website has been upgraded recently.

There is all sorts of information there - Counter figures, Fry survey results, River development plans, Newsletters, AGM and committee minutes, as well as news pieces with all the latest information.

FRA Treasurer's Report

Our finances are sound and we are in a position to fund all our future commitments. FRA Ltd has met its mandatory filings with HMRC and Companies House for the financial year to June 2014. Accounts for the year to June 2015 have been prepared and sent to the Company Accountants (Keen Dicey Grover) for approval and filing at HMRC and Companies house before the March 2016 deadline.

With the onset of hatchery operations in 2016 FRA Ltd will establish a new account to manage operating expenditures as a separate activity stream.

1. 2015 Income (1st January – 1st December 2015)

The FRA remains solely dependent upon the grant scheme from SWW and donations from Clubs and private individuals for the income to fund its work. Income from donations were £680.00 and SWW payments amounted to £10,467.00. **Total Income was £11,147.00.**

Donations shrank 15% *year-on-year*. It is important to note that donations, whilst not the largest part of our income, are key in sustaining the FRA - grant money from SWW *only* covers direct costs associated with river improvement projects. Overheads must be funded from other income streams. For those members who can make a donation there is a Banking Form to fill in at this newsletter. Any amount is important in helping to sustain the FRA and the work it does.

2. 2015 Expenditure (1st January 2105 – 1st December 2015)

Total expenditure was £9,887.13 and included part payment for Ladyvale Bridge salmon pass, WRT Fry Survey (I) work, coppicing and overheads for the Company and Association (Insurance, Angling Trust Membership, NASF donation, accountancy fees and other expenses).

3. Outstanding Commitments (1st December 2015)

FRA Ltd has outstanding commitments for the WRT Fry Survey (II)* (£2,600.00) and Accountancy Fees (£600.00). **Total commitments amount to £3,200.00.**

(*To be reclaimed from SWW during 2016).

4. FRA Reserves (1st December 2015)

Cash balance stands at £21,537.16. The SWW Payment Grant Reserve balance is £7,215.00. **Total Reserve is £28,752.16**, but after deducting commitments (-£3,200.00) **Total Available Reserve is £25,552.16**.

Paul Jordan
Treasurer

BANKER'S ORDER FORM

To the Manager

.....Bank

.....

.....

Account Name.....

Account No.....

Sort Code.....

Please pay on the(day)
of.....(month).....(year)

and each month/year, thereafter, the sum of £....., until further notice.

To: Fowey Rivers Association Limited

At: Barclays Bank plc
 Saltash Branch

Account No: 93991415.

Sort Code: 20-74-20

This cancels any previous standing order paid under the same reference.

SIGNED.....

DATE.....

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO:

Paul Jordan, Treasurer, Fowey Rivers Association Limited
Lower Hollycombe, Drift Lane, Twowatersfoot, Liskeard, PL14 6HH

Anthony Fortescue

Anthony Fortescue sadly died at Boconnoc on Monday 9th November 2015.

Anthony had been our President since 2008 when he took over the role from Sir Michael Thompson. He made a number of very helpful contributions to our discussions over the years, and we were very pleased when he offered us the use of his family home, Boconnoc, for our AGM each year since 2010. We have been pleased to go to Boconnoc each year and see the progress Anthony and Elizabeth had made with the restoration of the house and grounds.

When Wainsford hatchery closed, Anthony not only offered us the use of the barn at Bagstone Farm for storing the equipment from Wainsford, but also helped us to evaluate the potential of the use of the river Lerryn as an alternative to Wainsford. During this time he also gave freely of his time and that of his staff in preparing the site at Couch's Mill for our potential use. We have subsequently started the process of setting up the new hatchery at Colliford but the help we received gives the measure of the man.

The officers and committee of the FRA have been much saddened by Anthony's death. He was a strong supporter of the FRA and we remember him fondly.

FOWEY CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATION

For conservation of Fowey salmon

- Two out of three salmon caught should be released resulting in a catch/release target of 66% for each season
- The catch limits remain at one per day, two per week and five for the season

For conservation of Fowey sea trout

- That all unharmed sea trout over 24" shall be returned
- That a daily limit of two sea trout shall apply until 1 June
- That a daily limit of four sea trout shall apply after 1 June

The rationale for these conservation measures is:

- For salmon: The FRA will be lobbying the EA and DEFRA to reduce netting effort on the Fowey through the upcoming Net Limitation Order (NLO) Review in 2016/17. For effective lobbying it will be important that the FRA is seen to be leading on voluntary conservation measures.
- For sea trout: Large/early-run sea trout are mostly female fish and therefore the major contributors to annual egg deposition. Protecting these fish will enhance future stocks.

Busy year for the river Fowey catchment

By Giles Rickard, Westcountry Rivers Trust- Senior Land and Fisheries Officer

2015 has been a busy year for fisheries improvements on the Fowey catchment with the on-going fisheries surveys, fish easement at Ladyvale Bridge, removal of Couch's Mill weir and the start of Upstream thinking 2 in the Fowey catchment.

Fisheries surveys: Initial results from the 2015 survey suggest slightly improved spawning and fry survival for salmon compared to 2014, which was generally considered a poor year. There was one excellent site found for salmon on the Cardinham water and a very low number of salmon found at the bottom of the St Neot.

The fisheries survey site at Lewarne which was coppiced in winter 2014/2015 produced a similar number of salmon to the long term average, however there was marked rise in trout fry numbers, suggesting that the increase in dappled light on the riffle may be providing improved habitat for juvenile fish. Salmon are also known to be sensitive (statistically more so) to long corridors of heavy shading, so these coppicing works should provide improved habitat for all salmonids in the long term.

Fish Access: 2015 saw the removal of Couch's Mill weir on the Lerryn river (lower Fowey tributary), which was acting as a significant barrier to fish moving up and down stream. Salmon are regularly found immediately downstream but seldom upstream. Although simple in appearance, such works require significant time and preparatory work including gaining land owner and tenant permissions, Cornwall Council historic environment consultation, full topographic survey, water flow modelling to calculate potential flood risk, Land drainage consent from Cornwall Council, Environment Agency approval and full planning permission.

Before weir removal



Re-naturalising After weir removal



Fish easement works at Ladyvale bridge were also completed late in the season thanks to some good weather and it is hoped that the easement will help speed up and improve fish passage, so more salmon and sea trout can access the upper Cardinham water which provides good habitat. A pre-barrage was installed with a low flow notch which helps to increase water depth in the culvert and slow the speed of flow.



Water Quality: Steps to reduce diffuse pollution predominantly from agriculture will also see action for improvement by the Upstream Thinking project in the Fowey catchment over the next 4 years. The aim is to improve the raw water quality of the Fowey before it is treated for consumption. This involves working with farmers and landowners by providing tailored advice, costs saving as capital grants such as dung/slurry storage and watercourse fencing to reduce inputs into the river.

SOUTH WEST RIVERS ASSOCIATION – THE VOICE OF THE RIVERS

Along with the other 19 river associations in the region FRA both supports and relies on the work of SWRA – a key player at local, regional and national level. SWRA's work is increasingly important with reductions in Environment Agency staff and fisheries funding, and a diminishing number of salmon and sea trout anglers to influence political decisions affecting our interests.

This is a short summary of our work. Much of the Association's work is in support of the 20 individual member river associations, especially fighting developments potentially damaging to their interests - a sort of insurance scheme – a good example is the successful fight against the proposed rainbow trout farm off South Cornwall. Increasingly initiatives and best practice on each river are being transferred to other rivers. In addition to giving direct support to FRA on the hatchery and local netting, SWRA has been active in the following areas:

Canoeing

The British Canoe Union continues to promote uncertainty about the legal position on access to rivers and navigation rights. This effectively promotes illegal canoeing. Fish Legal has sent the BCU a 'letter before action' demanding that they stop publishing misinformation. No formal response has been forthcoming, and Fish Legal is seeking 'Declaratory Relief' through the courts.

The evidence underlying this action is contained in a 42-page dossier 'Conflict on the Riverbank', much of which was contributed by SWRA members, including the possibility of harmonious relations such as exist on the Fowey.

Water Framework Directive

The Association continues to lobby for more ambition in the Environment Agency and Defra's approach to the Directive. SWRA contributed evidence of continuing concerns to Angling Trust/WWF who are pursuing Defra through the courts to improve the delivery of WFD which requires all waters to be of Good Ecological Status.

Licensed netting

We wish to see the end of all licensed netting in support of our ambition to see abundant stocks supporting good angling. SWRA is lobbying the EA and Defra to take the opportunity afforded by the 2009 Marine Act to reduce netting in favour of the socio-economic benefits of better rod fishing. Our Secretary has met Fisheries Minister, George Eustice MP, three times on this subject and has supported the Dart and Teign Associations on their Net Limitation Order reviews.

Protecting Flows

Abstraction poses an increasing threat to our rivers and their fisheries. Good flows are essential for fish migration, juvenile production, pollution dilution, and summer cooling. A number of factors are combining to increase pressure on water resources and hence river flows, including:

- climate change with the prediction of lower summer rainfall and higher temperatures;
- increased demand for water resulting from economic growth;
- increased demand for water resulting from population growth;
- the continuing pressure for hydropower development.

Government is planning to reform water resources law by the early 2020's to 'enable more flexible regulation by ... introducing a reformed water abstraction management system able to promote resilient economic growth while protecting the environment.'

SWRA's input is to:

- support the national fisheries bodies contributing to the abstraction reform process;
- press local EA management for a more rigorous approach to enforcement, including the use of volunteers to be 'eyes and ears' on suspected licence breaches; and,
- increase the focus on flow protection in the next round of WFD River Basin Plans.

Please contact me if you'd like further details:

Roger Furniss, Secretary, furniss740@btinternet.com

NETTING – TIME FOR A CHANGE

Sea Fisheries Byelaws

Under instruction from Defra, the Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) has to review all of its byelaws. IFCA's replaced the former Sea Fisheries Committees whose main focus was on commercial sea fisheries, to which has been added an equal duty on the conservation of fish stocks. They also have to take greater account of the social and economic value of fishing including recreational sea angling.

The old sea fisheries byelaws included some made to protect salmon and sea trout from accidental capture in sea fish nets. In several south coast inshore areas known to be frequented by salmonids, fixed nets with the headrope less than three metres from the surface are banned.

The FRA is working with South West Rivers Association to widen the coverage of the current byelaw to all areas where there is evidence of salmonids and to increase the headroom above the nets to five metres. We are also pressing for an end to any netting in estuaries to remove the risk of salmon and sea trout being a by-catch. We have the benefit of evidence from the Environment Agency in support of our position and liaise with the Cornwall Federation of Sea Anglers who have similar interests in relation to bass conservation.

Protection of salmon and sea trout at sea is vital as one of the major causes of reduced salmon numbers is losses at sea.

Licensed Netting

The current Net Limitation Order restricting the number of netting licences for salmon and sea trout in the Fowey estuary expires in 2017. Your Association will be pressing for an end to all licensed netting for two main reasons:

- To ensure that the maximum number of fish reach freshwater and contribute to the long term health of the stock;
- The social and economic value of rod caught fish is far greater than that of net caught fish, and anglers return a significant proportion of the fish they catch.

Fowey Rivers Association officers

Chairman: Dr Bill Smith

Treasurer: Paul Jordan

Secretary: Jon Evans

Polgeel, Polbrook, Washaway, Bodmin PL30 3AN

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We hope that the 2016 AGM will be held on 13th April 2016 at 7.30 p.m. at Boconnoc but this has not yet been confirmed with Mrs. Fortescue.

Beer and pasties will be available and everyone is welcome.