



Working With Aquaculture; Stresses & Strains From A Wild Fish Perspective

RAFTS Conference – 10'th Mar 2010

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21 Years Of Success!

- **Aquaculture industry about to expand by up to 60,000t (1/3'rd)**
- **Unswerving political support for the industry**
- **Failure by all agencies to publicly and clearly accept that aquaculture presents a significant challenge to wild fisheries**
- **Planning and regulatory system heavily reliant on industry CoGP compliance**
- **Escapes in 2009, worst in last 5 years**
- **Serial escape problems in freshwater systems (smolts/rainbows)**
- **Lice control improved but possibly not to acceptable levels for wild fish management – 2'nd yr production issues**

Planning Problems

- **Planners receive applications – not experts in fish farming and strong economic development imperatives. Seek advice from:**
- **SNH – do not object to developments unless SAC issues and seek to see compliance with industry CoGP**
- **SEPA – claim sea-lice / escape issues are ultra vires**
- **MSS – claim that if industry CoGP is being complied with then insufficient evidence to challenge application**
- **Planning and development of fish farming in sensitive wild fish sites therefore largely comes down to local political activity – Annat Bay / Broad Bay etc.**
- **Either: failure of science OR failure to understand what science can tell us OR bar has been set too high**

Glimmers Of Hope?

- **Some emerging evidence that industry reorganisation may result in wild fish benefits – Loch Fyne / Loch Roag (Lighthouse)**
- **Industry ownership much less complex and more sophisticated – opportunities to do be better neighbours if so minded**
- **Relocation options being considered by Govt – win/win solutions may emerge whereby sensitive sites could be given up if production opportunities were created elsewhere**
- **New regulatory measures on escapes/lice/area management potentially more robust but yet to be proven**

What Next?

- **2 successful out of court settlements on escapes (Devon/Howieton)**
- **Legal action pending against Dawnfresh in Loch Awe/Etive for repeated escape problems**
- **Options for sea-lice case being considered**
- **Re-configuration of TWG required to ensure continued dialogue at local level + refocussing TWG efforts on solutions (relocation?)**
- **Pursue relocation opportunities where they might exist**
- **Explore mitigation measures (prophylactic treatment of wild smolts)**

The Case For Relocation

- **Industry expansion proposals create opportunities for a few sensitive wild fish sites to be removed whilst allowing industry to continue to expand**
- **Monitoring of significant relocations could generate useful information on impacts**
- **Focus on sites where wild fisheries have high socio-economic value will result in positive benefits to Scotland plc which should be politically attractive**
- **Proposal to create a relocation list and start discussions with Scottish Government and Industry**
- **Understandable concerns about precedent setting however precedents are long overdue!**

Where Will We Be In 5 Yrs?

- **Much bigger, possibly better managed/regulated industry. Sheer size of industry could scale up problems yet further**
- **Some signs of recovery or stabilisation of wild stocks in areas where significant industry reorganisation has occurred**
- **Lice control in many areas will not be at levels sufficient to allow recovery of wild fish populations**
- **Escapes in marine cage farms will still be a source of alarm but possibly not biologically significant. Concerns will remain about freshwater escapes until closed containment technology is developed**
- **Legal actions may have started to set precedents for conduct of industry where regulation has failed**

Where Will We Be In 5 Yrs?

- Relocations of some significant farms a remote possibility. If so we may have learnt something from that
- Lice control technology may have advanced some way to give cause for encouragement – equally resistance issues + warmer water temperatures may be creating serious lice management problems
- There will still be claims that the science is still not good enough for Government/Industry to publicly recognise the problem
- Some systems may have adopted management measures to partially overcome some of these problems – stocking/ treatments etc
- West coast migratory salmonid stocks will continue to be as fragile as they are now if not more so