

Fowey Rivers Association

Newsletter 2015

It's nice to start the newsletter with some good news. Many of you will have been aware of the joint proposal by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) and the Crown Estates for an open cage fish farm off the coast of South Cornwall. This project has now been shelved following intense opposition from numerous organisations, including the South West Rivers Association, the Cornish Confederation of Sea Anglers, the Angling Trust and other angling organisations. Enormous thanks must go to Roger Furniss for mobilising the opposition and for coordinating the successful campaign.

I recently visited the coppicing work done on the Liskeard water below Trago. This was carried out by Liskeard members and Chris Janes, partially sponsored by the FRA. Hopefully future fry surveys will show improved juvenile numbers in this excellent nursery water. Thanks to everyone who helped with the work.

Improvement to fish passage at Ladyvale Bridge is ongoing. Plans have been drawn up to improve the water depth through the culvert and Giles Rickard and WRT are currently trying to find further funds for the work. The FRA has committed £5000 to the project.

We remain hopeful that we will achieve South West Water support for a hatchery to reintroduce salmon into the St Neot. Funding needs to be signed off by OFWAT and we are hopeful that the project will start after April 2015.

The seatrout run held up well this year although they were rather elusive. The main run of over 6500 fish occurred in June and July. The salmon and large seatrout run is down on last year, although better than 2011 and there are still 2 months of data to come. Counter data, usually 2 months in arrears is available on the web site. This has been completely revamped by Richard Grieve and can be accessed on www.riverfowey.org. There is information on the river and fishing together with some useful links. Give it a go. Thanks to Richard for his help.

As always can I please remind you all to stick to the recommended catch limits and please handle all fish with care when returning them. Finally I would like to thank everyone who gives their time supporting the FRA. Any help is always much appreciated. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it informative and readable. Many thanks to all the contributors and to Jon Evans without whom it wouldn't happen.

Dr Bill Smith Chairman

FISH FARM THREAT ABANDONED

Local and national angling and fisheries organisations are celebrating news that plans for a fish farm off the Cornish coast have been abandoned. This follows robust criticism of the initiative, which would have posed serious threats to salmon, sea trout and marine fish stocks.

FRA Chairman, Bill Smith, and Committee members Roger Furniss and John Tisdale, led the South West Rivers Association's campaign against the proposal as it was felt that the Fowey was the river most threatened.

The idea, promoted by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), a Government agency, was to grow rainbow trout in an open net cage unit. This would have been a similar system operated by the salmon farming industry off the west coast and Islands of Scotland, which has caused significant damage to wild salmon and sea trout, principally through the transfer of lethal parasitic sea lice and the interbreeding of wild and escapee farmed salmon, thereby diluting natural gene pools built up since the Ice Age.

The coalition opposed to the scheme includes the South West Rivers Association (SWRA), the Cornish Federation of Sea Anglers, the Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA), the Angling Trust (AT), the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST), Wild Trout Trust (WTT), Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) and the Rivers Trust. The coalition lobbied CEFAS, Defra and Fisheries Minister, George Eustice, to squash the project on the grounds that it would be wholly irresponsible to jeopardise wild Cornish salmon and sea trout, and the vital local economy and jobs they support.

The coalition now plans to write to George Eustice and his Defra Department outlining the lessons learnt from this exercise. It will reiterate its previously stated view that no open cage salmonid units should be authorised in English coastal and off-shore waters and that any future marine salmon or trout farms must be in closed containment units which impose an impenetrable barrier between wild and farmed fish, completely preventing the dispersal of disease, parasites, waste matter and escapee farmed fish.

Roger Furniss SWRA

FRA Website

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.

Find out more by logging on to <http://www.riverfowey.org/>

Treasurer's Report

This is my first report to you having assumed the Treasurer's role in April 2014 and I am glad to inform you that our finances are sound and we are in a position to fund all our current plans until the end of next year. This is important as the financial arrangement with South West Water (SWW) requires the FRA to self-fund all works and to claim back qualifying payments only on completion. FRA Ltd has also met its mandatory filings with HMRC and Companies House for the year to June 2013.

1. 2014 Income

Donations	£795.00
SWW Payment	£5,050.00
Total Income	£5,845.00

During 2014 the FRA received donations of **£795.00** from local angling associations, clubs and individuals. We are most grateful for these donations as they enable us to meet necessary expenses not covered by SWW grants.

For those new members who now wish to make a donation there is a Banking Form at the end of this newsletter – please fill one in and send it on to the Treasurer or mail a cheque made out the Fowey Rivers Association direct to the Treasurer. Any amount is important in helping to sustain the FRA and the work it does.

In addition to donations FRA 2014 income also includes SWW funding which this year amounts to **£5,050.00***

2. 2014 Expenditure

Training Courses (Chain Saw)	£450.00*
Coppicing	£2,000.00*
WRT Fry survey	£2,600.00*
Membership Dues (Angling Trust/Fish Legal, SWRA)	£713.00
Insurance	£415.50
FRA Expenses	£566.66
Total (year to date)	£6,745.16

*** claimed from SWW in October 2014**

FRA Ltd also has outstanding expenditures of **£1,600.00**** to West Rivers Trust (WRT) for the second tranche of fry surveys *and* **£500.00** for accountancy fees. FRA has promised a payment of **£5,000.00**** (for Ladyvale Bridge improvements) *if sufficient additional funding is forthcoming from other entities.*

**** To be reclaimed from SWW during 2015.**

Total outstanding FRA expenditures amount to **£7,100.00.**

3. FRA Reserves and Available Funds

Current reserves	£17,790.79	
SWW Payment	£5,050.00	
Cash Reserve	£22,840.79	
Remaining Expenditures	- £7,100.00	Total Available Reserve £15,740.79

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

FRA working in partnership with South West Water

When Colliford was impounded in the 1980's, the South West Water Authority was required to undertake and pay for mitigation for lost sea trout spawning area upstream of the dam site. This was initially achieved through a hatchery and then by buying out estuary nets. A Fowey Fisheries and Resources Group (FFRG) was established comprising representatives of SWW, the Environment Agency and the Fowey Rivers Association (FRA). This group is the forum at which discussions on mitigation measures take place and regular meetings are held.

Last year, as discussed at the FFRG meetings, in their Business Plan submission to OFWAT, SWW applied for funding for various projects on the Fowey in the 2015-2020 period. These projects are:-

- Salmon replacement by a hatchery now that it is agreed that the changed flows in the St Neot have virtually killed off the St Neot as a salmon river
- Habitat improvements at 2 instream sites downstream of Colliford
- A hydro-ecological investigation to consider ways of optimising the salmonid production within the St Neot post Colliford, through the use of fisheries water bank releases and the potential use of a pipeline for some of the water supply releases

A further option being considered is "banking" the compensation flow water from Colliford when water supply releases are being made. This "bank" of water could then be used at a different time of year for releases to benefit fisheries. SWW are waiting to hear from the Environment Agency whether this option is feasible.

Upstream Thinking has continued in 2014 in the Fowey catchment. A report on the innovative 'reverse auction' used to allocate SWW grant funding for on-farm infrastructure improvements to benefit water quality in this catchment was published and made available on the Defra website together with a short video 'the bid for clean water'.

Looking ahead to the period 2015-20, SWW have proposed a continuation of the Upstream Thinking programme in the Fowey catchment and Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) have been confirmed as the 'delivery partner' for this work with a budget of circa £800k.

Other news is that SWW, in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth and Natural Resources Wales have developed an existing innovative passive sampling device – the *Chemcatcher* – to monitor rivers for specific pesticides. The devices can be deployed at peak herbicide application periods at multiple locations in a catchment for up to 14 days and provide time weighted average concentrations for the target compounds allowing the identification of 'hot-spots' and therefore the targeting of interventions. WRT have carried out a deployment on the Fowey earlier this year to begin the process of prioritising work for 2015-20 and a short video of the deployment exercise is available on the WRT 'You-Tube' site.

Five years of electrofishing surveys: what it means for fisheries management

The Westcountry Rivers Trust on behalf of the Fowey Rivers Association, have been able to undertake semi-quantitative electrofishing on the Fowey catchment for the fifth year since 2010. On average, around 40 sites are surveyed across the catchment to assess the number and distribution of salmon and trout fry.

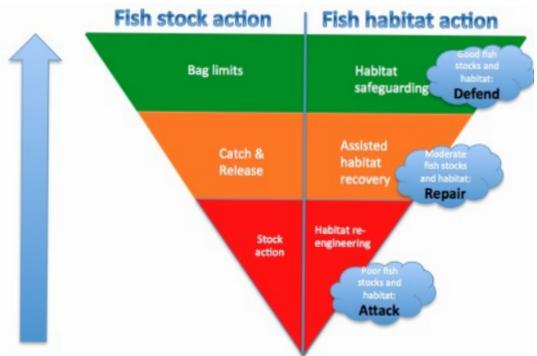
It is important to gain data from several years as this helps to elucidate the level of variation between years. Surveying over an extended period also allows us to observe trends in population numbers and whether they are stable, increasing or decreasing. Having a robust baseline of data will also help us to monitor any impacts from habitat works and interventions, such as gravel cleaning or coppicing and may importantly provide a strong case for work to be undertaken or provide evidence for its funding.

The General trends are that salmon fry dominate the lower and middle regions of the Fowey and the lower end of major tributaries such as the Cardinham and Warleggan, with trout fry more abundant in the headwaters of the river, tributaries and smaller side streams.

The survey for 2014 and previous surveys suggest that trout/sea trout fry numbers have been quite stable year to year with moderate levels of variation, however salmon numbers can be more changeable with some classifications often changing year to year, indicating that their numbers and success in spawning has more influencing factors.

The data suggests that some reaches of the river are sub-optimum compared to the predicted, or when compared to other similar sized tributaries. These can be areas that we 'attack' or 'repair' in terms of habitat, water quality and access improvements. For example the St Neot performs poorly for salmon fry, indicating that significant research and improvements in water flow/quality would be required to improve salmon fry numbers. Whereas on the middle Fowey and lower Warleggan, salmon fry are present but in low densities, suggesting habitat actions such as coppicing, in-stream habitat creation and improving access would improve fry numbers.

Goal: to move from poor fish stocks and habitat (bottom) to good fish stocks and habitat (top) based on evidence



The 2014 fry survey has unusually shown poor numbers of fry in the lower end of the river, which is in contrast to previous years data. At present the only obvious explanation would be the flood conditions experienced in late winter this year, which may have washed out maturing eggs and fry in the gravels. It will be important next year to establish whether this is one off occurrence, or whether other factors may be impacting on them.

Together with the fish counter data and catch records these surveys give us an excellent grounding to identify any bottlenecks in the salmonid's life cycle and to target improvement works and ensure that we get the best value for money from interventions.

SOUTH WEST RIVERS ASSOCIATION – VOICE OF THE RIVERS

This is a brief summary of the key matters in 2014 of direct interest to the Fowey.

The Secretary led the fisheries representatives on the Environment Agency's National **Hydro-power** Working Group - they achieved significant improvements in the flow protection conditions in the revised Good Practice Guideline following a long-winded and bureaucratic process.

SWRA provided the bulk of the evidence of illegal **canoeing** in a dossier produced by Angling Trust/Fish Legal entitled 'Conflict on the Riverbank' which has gone to Ministers and forms the basis of a legal action to prevent Canoe England making misleading public statements about access.

The Association made a major response to the public consultation on priorities for the next **Water Framework Directive** Plan 2015-2021, and coordinated responses from many individual associations, including the Fowey. The Secretary is actively involved in advising the Environment Agency on delivery of the current and future Plans and supports many rivers, including the Fowey, on their own voluntary activities.

We wish to see the end of all **licensed netting** in support of our ambition to see abundant stocks supporting good angling. The Marine Act 2009 provides an opportunity to reduce netting through lower Net Limitation Orders and, possibly, shorter seasons and catch quotas.

Sea Fisheries Committees, dominated by commercial fishing interests, have been replaced by **Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities** (IFCA's) with a wider remit including conservation. All IFCA's, including Cornwall, have been told by Defra to review all byelaws in their area. In some areas, including inshore waters off South Cornwall, there are byelaws to protect salmon and sea trout – these we will lobby to keep. We will work closely with sea anglers to campaign for the end of all netting in estuaries, with the possible exception of sand eel netting for bait.

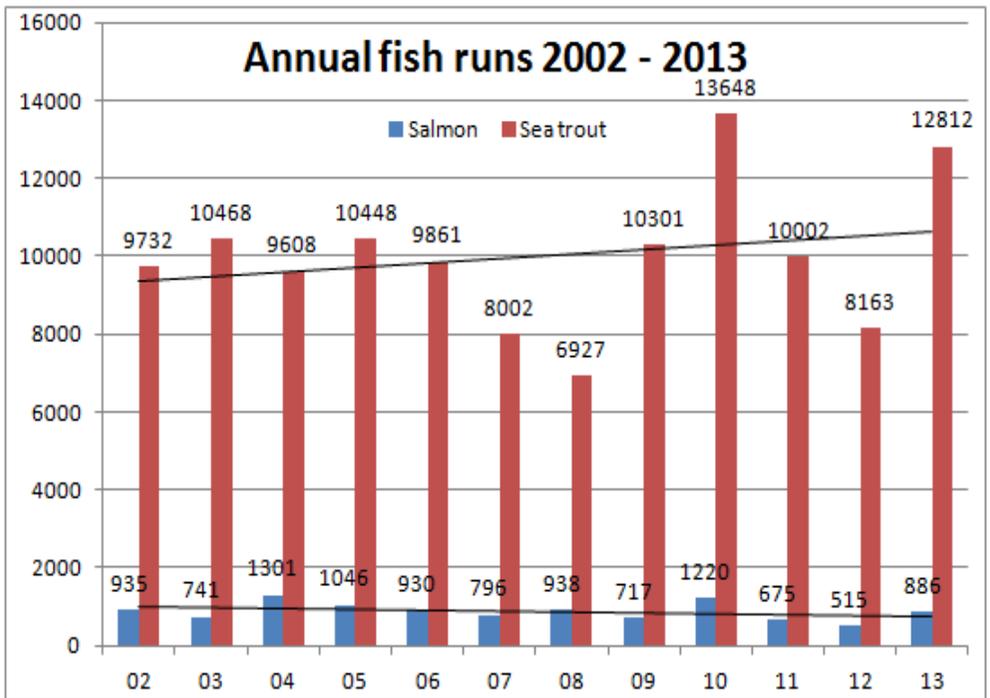
We also anticipate a **review of all fishery byelaws** on rivers by the EA as part of the Government's drive to reduce regulation. One of the objectives will be to replace regulation with voluntary codes – a step towards our desire for more direct control over the fisheries we enjoy and manage.

With growing pressure against **hatcheries**, SWRA supports those which meet certain criteria – long-term restoration of the St Neot salmon population fits the criteria.

SWRA is contributing to **Defra's Review of Abstraction Control** – with climate change and increasing demand for water, protection of river flows is increasingly important.

SWRA has a biannual liaison meeting with the EA. Using this connection with the EA is now more important than ever since the abolition of all statutory advisory bodies.

Roger Furniss SWRA furniss740@btinternet.com



Environment Agency counter figures can be obtained from

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/130617.aspx>

FRA recommended catch limits

Salmon 1/day; 2/week; 5/season

Sea Trout 4/day;

All sea trout to be returned from 1st September

**Salmon season: 1st April to 15th December - all salmon to be returned
before 16th June**

Sea trout season: 1st April to 31st September

Fowey Rivers Association officers

Chairman: Dr Bill Smith

Treasurer: Paul Jordan

Secretary: Jon Evans

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Website www.riverfowey.org

The 2015 FRA AGM will be held on 15th April 2014 at 7.30 p.m. Our thanks go to Anthony Fortescue for again letting us use Boconnoc for our meeting. Beer and pasties will be available and everyone is welcome.