

# RFCANews

## No. 44

May 2018

The season is now under way and we trust all members will have a successful one. The big news is the consultation by the E.A. on proposals for mandatory catch and release, more on that later.

### Waddow/Locks Fish Counts 2017

	Waddow		Locks	
	Up	Down	Up	Down
January	4	2	6	2
February	3	9	2	2
March	17	5	5	2
April	27	0	25	5
May	167	31	61	33
June	815	35	102	18
July	447	18	53	28
August	264	6	23	1
September	769	24	72	11
October	785	28	111	8
November	106	16	112	34
December	15	22	22	55
Totals	<b>3419</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>199</b>

### Waddow/Locks Fish Counts 2018

	Waddow		Locks	
	Up	Down	Up	Down
January	2	18	1	5
February	4	1	1	2
March	9	2	7	1
April	12	5	18	9
May				
June				
July				
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
Totals				

### Pollution

There has been serious pollution on Stocks Beck with some fish kill. Our Pollution Officer for the Ribble and Hodder is keeping a watch. Given how few Fishery Officers and Pollution Officers there are it is crucial that all anglers keep their eyes open and report any pollution to the E.A. on 0800 80 70 60 and then to Fred Higham (Ribble and Hodder) on **01200 423314** and Graham Parkes (Calder) on **07861 696 813**.

**Put simply if we do not report pollution it will probably not get reported.**

## Poaching

Exactly the same advice applies for poaching. Use the same number for the E.A. and then contact the RFCA Anti-Poaching Officer Grant Hinks on **07930 807 980**. **Grant has all the contacts with the EA and the Police**. I will keep on saying this it is now the responsibility of anglers and clubs to report pollution and poaching since we can now no longer rely on the E.A. given the cuts they have had.

## RFCA 8 WEEKLY MEETING WITH E.A.

Despite all the cut backs and the somewhat fraught relationship nationally and regionally with the E.A. owing to the Consultation proposals the above still continue and is valued by both sides. It is a regular meeting and does not form part of a crisis agenda. The following items were discussed.

Settle Hydro- smolts going through the screw/Whalley Hydro, fish passage and associated flooding. E.A. monitoring or lack of it/Morecambe Bay discharges/Fraught relationships with EA and angler dissatisfaction/Fishery Officers deployment/Damage to Winckley fish pass wall and associated problem/Waddow Weir blockage and alleviation works/Club catch returns/Bird count figures for Jan-Cormorants and goosanders/Pollution/Dinckley Bridge developments-of which the EA seemed to know little?/Red Scar Weir proposals/ Hodder Gravels/ New farming rules for water.

As you can see an awful lot of area is covered in these meetings.

## Dinckley Bridge and Red Scar Weir

LCC are well advanced in their planning for the replacement of Dinckley Bridge, damaged in the 2015 floods. According to discussion that have taken place with LCC it is proposed that a pier will be erected on each bank with a 50m span lifted into place by a huge crane. In order to get the crane onto the site they will have to create an access on the left bank and a temporary island in the river. Such works are restricted to 1<sup>st</sup> May - the end of September. We also understand that E.A. Fisheries haven't yet been asked to comment or set provisions for these in river works. The trees on the right bank have already been chopped down in preparation, tenders have been received but no confirmation of a start date has been received.

Further information will be circulated as it becomes available.





The Ribble Rivers Trust have been approached about the removal of Red Scar Weir. A meeting was called involving interested parties, which resulted in further work being necessary.

It is unfortunate that both these schemes are planned for this year so there may be tow disruptions to migration for salmon and sea trout upstream but also for the migration of smolts.

**In both instances we would urge anglers to be on the alert for any traces of sedimentation or pollution from either of these schemes**

### **Avian Predation**

The Ribble Catchment has the largest area licence in the country and a pitiful allocation of birds from Natural England to shoot compared to how many there are. It is interesting that research on smolts is showing that up to 70% are lost in river and avian predation must be a major cause of this. We need to get higher allocations to shoot and we need to get smarter as to how we shoot and scare. The AT is pushing the case with DEFRA for an increased allowance but of course the RSPB IS AGAINST. It is interesting that the RSPB shoots on land it owns when required and keeps that quiet from members!

### **Angling Trust, North West Angling Trust Fisheries Consultative Council and the Consultation.**

I have put these altogether for ease of reporting. I will try and keep this simple but it is patently not. The AT negotiated with the E.A. and other NGOs to agree voluntary catch and release. It should be pointed out that all the other NGOs wanted mandatory catch and release(c/r). The NWATFCC, representing the major salmonid rivers in the NW, has long held firm views on the way forward and also on the E.A. Classification model which underpins the E.A. view. When the E.A. consultation came out we were all surprised to see no voluntary way forward but 100% mandatory c/r proposals for all river “at risk” and “probably at risk” according to the E.A.

The NWATFCC are totally opposed to mandatory c/r for a variety of reasons which are too long to go through here. In simple terms the imposition would save very few fish nationally and do nothing to save the salmon but cause great problems on clubs and riparian owners and almost certainly some financial repercussion. The 5 Point Approach to save salmon has now come down to a 1PA with it all falling on nets and rods.

The whole classification system the E.A. uses is so flawed as to be well-nigh useless. The NWATFCC has paid two eminent statisticians to look at the model and their findings back up what we have always believed. Finally the bulk of the data going into the model comes from rod licence holders yet by the E.A. own admission they only average a 50% return!! Add to that its predictability success rate is only 25% hence the NWATFCC view it is not fit for purpose. See the comments on Ribble rod returns later.

We are now at the point of awaiting the result of the “consultation”. Nationally and regionally the E.A. are very reluctant to meet fishery representatives? The National Resources Wales (NRW) has postponed the implementation 100% mandatory c/r in Wales until the 2019 season. The E.A.’s timetable was to have measures in place by the end of the Spring Salmon Bye laws - June 16<sup>th</sup> 2018. Given the large number of objections, we understand over 1100, it is difficult to see this happening. All of you who wrote objecting must be contacted by the E.A. asking you to withdraw your objection. **I stress you must not withdraw your objection**, which means it must go to the Minister and be considered alongside the E.A proposals.

The NWATFCC has asked the Minister for an inquiry citing a whole host of reasons. We wait and see.

### **Angler Concerns**

I have heard a number of anglers complaining that their response/objection hasn’t been acknowledged, whilst other have and so they are concerned that it hasn’t been registered. To those of you in this position we would urge you to write to the Agency and contact your MP seeking their assistance in guaranteeing your objection is registered

Equally, there are still anglers, who are salmon licence holders, who never received anything about the consultation from the E.A. In this instance we would give the same advice as above because as licence holder you have the right to be consulted.

Yet another complaint has been the time taken to respond and the fact that some anglers lost their response and had to start again because the direction on the completion webpage were not clear.

More worrying is the fact that where copies of the objection were sent to the Minister the civil servants took this as a misdirection and sent them direct to the E.A. and DEFRA and so compromised our efforts to directly forewarn the Minister. People who copied in their local MP have, in the main, received acknowledgements and offers of support.

There remain real concerns about the proposed byelaws regarding how to deal with Pink Salmon as it is an alien species, which according to past advice, from both DEFRA and the E.A., should not be returned. We had a response from Heidi Stone, the Salmon Programme Manager, which stated:

**“Pink salmon** - Have given us no end of problems here and, as you rightly flagged, we did exclude them from an initial draft of these byelaws. But then we reflected on this with the immortal words “what could possibly go wrong?”

If we exclude pink salmon, the good news is that we do not then prevent people removing them or, indeed for a nets man keeping them as part of a sea trout fishery by-catch.

**But** by excluding them we leave ourselves with a large loophole from an enforcement perspective. You could claim you are fishing for or netting for pink salmon and not our native salmon and there would be very little we could do about it. Yes, you could not legally remove one of you caught it.

Could I specifically specify a different set of rules for pink salmon? I also need to consider that many fishermen may not be able to identify such a creature as easily as you or I. And, this once again sets up an unenforceable excuse to fish for these creatures. At the end of the day, if you did not remove it, what could happen? It might spawn but, to date successful development of the fry has not been proven in our warmer rivers. I felt the bigger risk was unregulated fishing in the guise of catching pink salmon.”

Today, I have been informed that NRW (Wales) have postponed the implementation of their byelaw proposals and have issued an instruction that pink salmon have to be removed from the river.

Similarly the hook byelaws create two problems. Firstly, they only apply to salmon and sea trout, so anyone fishing with a trout or coarse licence can ignore them. Secondly, the fact that lures are singled out for only singles is discriminatory it is likely that anglers will reduce their spinning effort and render a perfectly justifiable method illegal in higher water. Add to that the reduction in likelihood of actually hooking a fish and again anglers are denied the opportunity to fish in flood water which will reduce the numbers of fish caught.

This proposal; was suggested to prevent salmon being damaged by large hooks – why then will it be allowed to use a 13mm gape single? It is illogical.

**Such proposals hardly fill anglers with the confidence in the people who are charged with setting the byelaws!!**

**The current concerns are fuelling many conspiracy theories, which is not serving to reassure anglers or fishery owners.**

### **Ribble Catchment Rod Returns 2017**

The RFCA each year asks clubs and riparian owners for their catch returns which come to David Hinks. They are held in confidence and only the aggregated totals used. The returns we get are always higher than the E.A. rod returns, not surprising with only a 50% return. Any angler who does not send a return in is basically cutting their own throat since these are crucial in determining the stock assessment for that river.

The Ribble is consistently in the top 6 salmon rivers in England and Wales. It hasn't failed its Conservation Limit for 11 years, yet according to the E.A. it is "probably at risk" now and "at risk" in 2021. In 2017 we successfully completed our Netting Limitation Order (NLO) where we were not "probably at risk". Yet at a meeting of the NWATFCC, AT and E.A. prior to the NW Conference at Penrith Jan 26<sup>th</sup> Brian Shields E.A. said in response to the fact of the above that "he was .0083% (>1%) confident in the Ribble meeting its spawning target in 5 years". No wonder the statisticians who looked at the E.A. model believed it to be statistically inept.

In 2016 the RFCA rod returns gave 525 salmon caught, 30 killed, a c/r 94.3%.

The E.A. figures were 432 salmon caught, 49 killed, c/r 88.6%. These by the way were the closest the 2 figures have ever been, since there is usually up to a third difference.

**In 2017 the RFCA figures are 860 salmon caught, 40 killed, c/r 95.34%. Most significantly of all is the fact of a 64% increase on 2016.** The answer almost certainly is water and anglers actually fishing. What price the E.A. prediction above? We have yet to see the E.A. figures for 2017 but I am confident they will be a lot lower. The E.A. classification methodology is not fit for purpose. To coin a phrase "garbage in, garbage out" yet that is all they have got.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual IFM Conference '*Fisheries Management in Estuarine and Coastal Waters*' will be held at Lancaster University in late May and NWATFCC will be sending a representative.

### **Hodder Consultative**

The Hodder Consultative has elected a new Chairman who is Judge Jeremy Rawkins and we wish him well in the post. We trust that we will be able to forge a positive working relationship with him in the years ahead.

John Rawlinson, John Whitham, David Hinks

# Stop Press

**Just received this from Heidi Stone - Salmon Programme Manager**

## **Proposed National Salmon and Sea Trout protection Byelaws**

I am writing to all owners, managers and representatives of fisheries on rivers where our proposed byelaws would have required anglers to release all salmon from 16 June 2018.

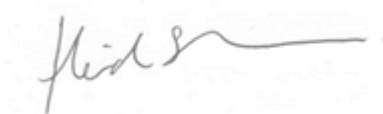
These proposed byelaws will not now be confirmed before 16 June 2018. Anglers fishing these rivers will not be subject to further restrictions on taking salmon this season. Existing byelaws or local agreements and codes of practice will continue to apply. The lists of the rivers that would have been affected by these byelaws can be found here: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fisheries/proposed-national-salmon-byelaws/>.

We will be informing anglers directly, principally through our electronic fisheries newsletter later this month. However, I would be most grateful if you could pass this information onto the anglers who fish the waters that you manage or represent.

I recognise the uncertainty the proposed byelaws have caused, and I am sorry that we have not been able to confirm sooner how the byelaws would affect these rivers in 2018. We intend to seek government confirmation and implement the byelaws for the 2019 fishing season.

If you objected to the advertised byelaws, we will be responding shortly.

Yours faithfully



Heidi Stone

Salmon Programme Manager

## **Letter sent by NWATFCC to Angling Trust following announcement:**

Mark

Welcome news to relieve the uncertainty for 2018. it was certainly not a foregone conclusion in the NW, but has been a long battle by NW fisheries for recognition that we have a failing stock reporting system. What is perhaps expected was that no explanation has been made as to why the Byelaw confirmation has been delayed and further concerns that the EA will seek confirmation and implement the byelaws for the 2019 fishing season.

NWATFCC actions amongst other objections forced the delay of 2018 mandatory C & R measures by providing evidence that the River Classifications system cannot be used to frame statutory measures and voluntary C & R targets where its model principles and applications are statistically incorrect and provide inconsistent individual river stock status classifications.

This is a position that the Angling Trust were able to support this week when a request was made by NWATFCC to the EFG at Thursday's meeting calling for suspension of the byelaw proposals. This followed earlier requests to the Defra and the Welsh Assembly Ministers that you communicated on our behalf on the 9th April. These requests were backed by Objections to the Consultation and further

correspondence to the Defra Minister calling for an Inquiry should the E.A. recommend implementation of the proposed measures.

You will understand that NWATFCC and CFPWF (Campaign for Protection of Welsh Fisheries) will not let the same measure proposals slip through the backdoor for implementation in 2019.

The onus is very much with the EA & NRW to engage with rod fisheries over the framing of these proposals and we hope the Angling Trust through the AAG will play a role and support the original recommendations made to the Ministers for:-

- Implementation of Interim (voluntary) proposals for conserving stocks for a three year period, during which a full review of the stock reporting system takes place and Measures/C&R targets are reviewed and finalised
- Adoption of a harmonised England and Wales approach and consideration of the new Scottish CL procedures

The contribution made by Rod Fisheries in conserving and protecting fish stocks has been completely overlooked as part of the Byelaw Consultation proposals, as with what we understand to be a requirement for assessing the impact to angling (financial etc.) and its related businesses and communities.

NWATFCC will be looking to see how the 5PP actually develops as a rounded strategy to restore stocks in key areas (marine threats and avian predation) where actions do not feature in the plan.

This is only the first step in a process where rod fisheries are properly represented in decisions taken over managing stocks, so that the science and reported data used is fit for purpose and something we all have greater confidence in.

Thank you again for working with us towards this goal. It will be interesting to see which other parties can acknowledge and adapt to meaningful engagement in the future.

All the best

Mike Ashwin  
Chairman