

RFC NEWS No 10

May 2009.

2009 is proving to be a very busy year. There are consultations coming thick and fast and usual there are always problems to deal with. Looking after the Ribble environment and fishery interests is our focus and there is no question they need defending against a multitude of issues.

If you are an individual member and you have not received the 2009 Annual Report please let the RFC Secretary know so that one can be provided (Reports were posted out on 26th May). The report is 64 pages long and is packed with information about what we have done in 2008 and the state of the Ribble.

ENTREPOSE.

Entrepose did finally come to court for sentencing and what a bitter disappointment it was. Remember they had pleaded guilty to 18 charges but the judge decided there was no negligence on Entrepose's part. Instead the weather was an act of God for which they could not be held responsible? They received a conditional discharge for two years. They are not allowed to tender for National Grid work for two years and if asked must declare the offences. They will also pay the EA's costs and it was claimed that they had lost £1m on the project. The fact that they messed up the Ribble over two years with great masses of sediment coming down river is unpunished. Those individual clubs and riparian owners who are part of a separate action against Entrepose have now to rethink. There is to be a meeting with Fish Legal but it looks like little can now be done to compensate for all the inconvenience and lost fishing time. We have no idea either of the long term affects all the sediment will have on the ecology. The E.A., ourselves, clubs and individual anglers spent a lot of time reporting and monitoring and it seems to little effect.

SETTLE WEIR HYDROPOWER PROJECT

This has been reported at length in previous Newsletters. This project has now received planning permission and has an abstraction licence from the E.A. Is this another example of a lot of time and effort leading to yet another disappointment? I suppose it depends upon your point of view. Speaking as one who was involved throughout all the long battle I think we achieved what we set out to do. There was no realistic chance of getting the project stopped dead in its tracks with current thinking on so called green energy. We laid out our thinking in the paper we produced "Concerns with small hydro power schemes on migratory rivers". This was well received and has been taken up throughout the country. The fact we failed to get the essential points of a migratory river over to the Settle Project people was not through want of trying. We delayed the process for twelve months and made them rethink aspects of the design. E.A. Fisheries were excellent throughout and there was close liaison on all sides. This was very much a test case since it was the first one in the area and we wanted to establish the right of being consulted and the rights of migratory fish. We think we achieved both these ends. We also pointed out the absurdities of a planning process, which is separate from the permitting process. We communicated this to the North West RFERAC and asked for clarity in the process. We believe we have achieved the best deal we could have done and hopefully safeguarded the river and the passage of fish.

Lets look in detail at what was achieved. In terms of the design they agreed to change and align the outflow from the Archimedean screw with the bottom of the fish pass in line with current good practice. An initial retaining wall has also been removed from the plans. It was in water flow and in particular residual flow that the biggest arguments took place. In simple terms they wanted the maximum amount of water they could get to work the Archimedean Screw, which would directly affect the amount going down the fish pass and also over the weir. We on the other hand were adamant that the fish pass had to take priority. I won't detail the technical discussions/arguments that went on around this issue but they were

long and at times fierce. Again I must pay tribute to E.A. Fisheries for sticking to their guns. The essentials of the abstraction are as follows:

- Residual Flow - No water shall be abstracted unless the rate of flow in the River Ribble immediately downstream of the authorised point of abstraction is equal to or greater than 900 litres/second and the abstraction does not cause the flow immediately downstream to fall below such a rate. A minimum of 800 litres/sec. must pass via the fish pass and a minimum of 100 litres/sec. via the remainder of the weir. On top of this there is the start up flow needed of approximately 300 litres/sec.
- There is no one who thinks that this is insufficient to work the pass.
- This flow has to be measured and the way of doing that is spelt out in detail in the licence. Daily records have to be kept and these records have to be available to the EA for inspection "during all reasonable hours". Arrangements are specified for records being sent to the E.A.
- No abstraction can take place until there are modifications to the leading edge of the screw with the fitting of rubber extrusions.
- Monitoring Conditions are laid down which give safe guards to the operation of the project. For example "if in the opinion of the EA survey results from juvenile salmonid surveys at salmonid spawning sites above and below Settle Weir indicate that a decline in the numbers of juvenile salmonids is attributable to the operation of the Archimedean Screw, the licence holder will contribute 50% of the cost of an investigation into fish passage at Settle Weir. The investigation will be carried out by an independent expert etc." Time limits are laid out for the investigation and any subsequent recommendations to be done. "In the event the expert is unable to recommend improvements but determines that the decline in numbers is attributable to the operation of the Archimedean screw, the licence holder shall immediately cease abstraction".
- The licence holder will install, at its cost, a fisheries counter at Locks Weir. This counter will be used to monitor the movement of fish and again if this gives cause for concern the same procedure as reported above will be triggered.

I have gone into some detail to assure individual anglers and clubs that we did achieve significant concessions in the long process and that this does lay down a marker for any future projects because there will be plenty. These concessions should allow the passage of fish at Settle Weir without hindrance. The abstraction licence is 11 pages long and copies have gone to all clubs.

POLLUTION

Since our last Newsletter there has not been any major pollution of the Catchment but the usual small case pollutions, which can do significant damage if they are not picked up and reported. Clubs, through their Council, representative, get a regular pollution report which not only says what pollutions have been reported to us and the E.A. but also what the E.A. has done. The relationship between the RFCA and the E.A. Ribble pollution team is excellent and they do a lot of unseen work. May we remind you of procedures? First ring the E.A. hotline **0800 80 70 60**, then ring Fred Higham for the Ribble and Hodder on **01200 423314**, and **Grahame Parkes for the Calder 07861 696813**. They will follow it up. It's up to everyone who cares about the environment and especially the Ribble Catchment to keep their eyes open and do their bit.

POACHING AND RIVER WATCH

Keeping ones eyes open applies equally with this topic. River Watch was launched last year but it is not a one- year project. All anglers should have received via their clubs last year a laminated plastic card telling you what to do if you think poaching is taking place. Signs were erected along the Ribble way giving the same information to walkers and some CCTV cameras were deployed. The E.A. have invested in some very small CCTV with good infra-red qualities for night-time and these will be deployed at selected spots. Since they are very mobile they will be moved around. Please report anything suspicious via the EA hotline 0800 80 70 60 and then let our poaching officer, Bruce Spedding, know on **07766441952**

SMOLT TRAP

In past years the trap has been late and so a good number of fish had already descended the river prior to its introduction. This year however, the smolt trap was put into the river earlier this year and it is hoped that a much clearer indication of smolt numbers will be achieved as a result.

NLO AND TAGS

Anglers should not need reminding that there is a 2 fish kill bylaw on the Ribble. The 2009 season is the last for the voluntary pilot tagging scheme. Tags are now out and can be obtained on the showing of a licence at Carters in Preston, Vareys in Clitheroe, Anglers All in Colne, Complete Fisherman in Colne, N.W. Angling Centre, Hindley, Wigan, and the E.A. office at Lutra House. It is also understood that a new outlet in the Accrington / Blackburn area has also been agreed.

On production of your new style licence a counterfoil will be produced, which will give the tag numbers allocated to that licence – **this should then be carried with the licence**. To prevent a second set of tags being issued to a particular licence the licence itself will be punched as well.

Built into the NLO was a three yearly review period rather than the normal five. It has always been our view that the monitoring /review should be as transparent as it can be. At the end of this year the first review will take place. Indications so far are that the Ribble is improving but this could all change unless we all continue to show restraint and maintain the catch and release rate in the Ribble catchment.

BEAVERS

Lib Dem Euro MEP Chris Davies has called for a public consultation on the reintroduction of beavers into Bowland rivers. This is a totally daft idea and we have formally objected. At a time when we are finally getting the powers that be to consider removing obstructions to fish passage the last thing we want are more barriers, something beavers are very good at. They do not do much for trees either but why should we expect Mr Davies to know better. While we are at it why not introduce wolves and bears?

DIPLOIDS v TRIPLOIDS

Clubs on the Ribble are no nearer accepting triploids than when the scheme was first proposed. We feel it has been badly handled from start to finish by the EA. Making clubs accept 25% triploids in stocking this year has merely exacerbated the situation. It is interesting that in Germany they do not allow triploid stocking. A totally unproven scheme been fostered on England and Wales without any real scientific evidence.

CANATXX

Once again Canatxx have put an application in to store gas in the salt caverns beneath the Wyre. This time they would be creating new caverns instead of using old ones. Some 45 million tonnes of mined salt waste would end up in the sea off Rossall school. How many times is this company going to come back with proposals to ruin the environment. Once again the Protect Wyre Group needs everyone's help and we have written in support and formally objecting to the proposal.

STATE OF THE RIVER AND COUNTER FIGURES.

There is a very detailed analysis in the RFCA annual report of the 2008 season by the EA and we thank them. We now know that 2008 saw 5460 fish verified going through the Waddow counter. This is the best movement of fish since 2002. Regrettably the Winckley Counter on the Hodder malfunctioned for much of the year. Add to this the state of the weir which fish can cross at virtually any height owing to its general dilapidation and we cannot place much credence on the figures. The figures were 2439 up?

The figures so far this season are as follows:

Waddow	Up	Down	Winckley	Up	Down
January	5	17		95	4
February	5	2		23	4
March	18	9		42	12
April	37	2		84	30

Now for some very good news. In the Performance of Principal Salmon Rivers in England and Wales 2008 and Prediction to 2013 the Ribble has moved into the top category - that is rivers Predicted to be not at risk in 2013. There is a management target placed on all the 63 principal salmon rivers which is that the river should meet or exceed conservation limits four years out of five. Only 13 rivers are in this category in England and Wales and the Ribble being there is testimony to all the hard work done by a lot of people. The NLO and the imposition of a 2 fish bag limit was not greeted with universal approval. Consider the plight facing those rivers predicted to be at risk. Here it is proposed a zero exploitation although a 100% catch and release is acceptable if it is observed. Among the larger catch rivers in this situation are the Tees in the North East, the Wye, Taff and Ely, Ogmere, and Mawddoch in Wales. The second category of Probably at risk are also being suggested for 100% catch and release. Its not that long ago the Ribble was in this second category and the trick now is to keep it in the top category. Please do not confuse the number of fish caught on a river with the conservation limit. The Ribble has long been in the top six salmon and sea trout rivers in England and Wales but this is different from management targets.

There are numerous factors which have helped the Ribble meet its targets but if I had to pick one it would be the catch and release % on the Ribble. If you look at the graph over the last ten years this has gone from being very small to around 80%. That means on average 800 fish per year being put back by anglers. That is a lot of fish but when you multiply by several years it becomes a very major figure. There is some evidence in the national figures of a decrease in catch and release and this would be a disaster if we saw this on the Ribble. We do not want to see the Ribble slip back down the categories and end up with a mandatory 100% catch and release or even worse.

Appendix 3 - Probability of the Principal Salmon Rivers in England and Wales failing their Management Targets in 2013 is printed in full at the end of this Newsletter.

WEBCAM

I am delighted to say that our first webcam has been installed at Waddow Weir. This provides a live feed back to the RFCA website and gives the state of play of the river and the height. All anglers know these are crucial facts when hoping to fish. All individual members can access the webcam via the website by the use of a password. We intend putting further webcams at Winckley Weir on the Hodder and Jumbles New Rock on the Ribble just below the confluence of the Calder. It all depends upon money since they are expensive to install and to run but we believe they will provide a service to members.

Currently, individual subscriptions are £15 unless they are part of a whole club block subscription when they are £7.50. Applications can be made via the RFCA website: www.ribbonfisheriesca.co.uk

TROUT IN THE TOWN

If you link to the Trout in the Town Blog you will find some examples of practical work that is being done to improve the environment and the river and its ecology.

Please use the link below to view short Cleanup film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6zodhK_uVA

RCCT - CATCH & RELEASE BADGE SCHEME

Although the catch and release rate for salmon within the Ribble catchment is very good it is recognised that we cannot be complacent. To this end the RCCT have suggested that they might operate a catch and release badge scheme to further promote catch and release and will cover both salmon and sea trout. To this end they have had preliminary talks with RFCA officers about this and the possibility of using our contact network to promote the scheme.

RFCA have indicated that they will support the scheme and have made some additional suggestions which have been taken back to the Trust board for consideration.

Watch this space for developments.

The RFCA

The aims of the Association are best summed up as:

"To safeguard and promote the interests of owners, lessees of fishing, and anglers, by developing sustainable fisheries and maximising the riverine environment through consultation with the environment Agency and other bodies with similar aims and objectives."

This is done through providing anglers and riparian owners with an opportunity, either individually or through their clubs to express their views on a range of angling issues. We publish regular newsletters so that members are kept up to date with developments within the Ribble catchment and further afield. Similarly, we operate a website providing information and access for members to a webcam (provided in conjunction with the Environment Agency) so that anglers can check the river conditions on their own computer.

We, the RFCA are fighting for the Ribble and fighting for the individual angler.

Come and join us we need your support.

Tight lines from the RFCA for 2009.

STOP PRESS

We have just been informed that our Fisheries Officer Richard McIlwain is to be moved for 6 months. We wish him success in his new role we are once again faced with a new face in Fisheries. Whilst it is flattering that the E.A. see the Ribble as a training ground for those destined for higher things it would be nice to have continuity in our area, especially when there are so many changes envisaged, or are already in the pipeline.

Richard's place will be taken by Jackie Swire, who currently leads the Environmental Crime Team. Also, we are told that she knows about fish! - which is a change from the previous 2 incumbents.

Appendix 3 - The probability of the principal salmon rivers in England and Wales failing their management target¹ in 2013

(Based on data to 2008)

Key:

Those in **underlined red text** have slipped down a predicted "risk" category from the previous year's predictions (i.e. are getting worse)

Those in **italic green text** have moved up a predicted "risk" category from the previous year's predictions (i.e. are improving)

Those with an upward trend are marked with an * and those with a downward trend[°]

SSSI rivers are marked ⁺ and those that are also SACs are marked ^{\$}

☹/☹ Predicted to be "At Risk" in 2013 (95% ≤ p)

The "Decision Structure"² requires zero exploitation for rivers in this category.

NE: Tees*

SW: Avon-Hants^{\$}, Stour, Piddle, Axe, Erme^{\$},

Wales: Wye^{\$}, Taff & Ely, Ogmore, Dysinni, Dwyfawr, Mawddach^{\$}

☹/☺ Predicted to be "Probably at Risk" in 2013 (50% ≤ p < 95%)

The "Decision Structure" asks you to identify the range of options to ensure sufficient spawning escapement to move to "Probably not at risk category" within five years – look to maintain socio-economic benefits where possible.

NW: *Wyre*

Southern: Test⁺

SW: Dart^{\$}, Yealm^{\$}, *Plym*, Tavy^{\$} Tamar, Torridge

Wales: Taf, *E&W Cleddau*, *Rheidol*, *Clwyd*, Dee^{\$}

☺/☺ Predicted to be "Probably not at risk" in 2013 (5% < p < 50%)

The "Decision Structure" asks you to determine if anything more needs to be done.

NW: *Kent*, *Leven*, Cumbrian Esk, Irt*, Ehen^{\$}, Eden*^{\$}, Border Esk*

Midlands: Severn

Southern: *Itchen*^{\$*}

SW: *Frome*⁺, *Exe*, *Teign*^{\$}, *Taw*^{\$}, Lynher, Lyn

Wales: Usk^{\$}, Tawe*, Teifi^{\$}, Nevern*, *Dyfi*, Dwyryd, *Glaslyn*^{*}, *Seiont*⁺, *Ogwen*

☺ Predicted to be "Not at Risk" in 2013 (p ≤ 5%)

The "Decision Structure" asks you to determine if any changes (i.e. relaxation) in exploitation controls should be considered for any of these.

NE: Coquet*⁺, Tyne*, Wear*, Yorkshire Esk*

NW: *Ribble*^{*}, Lune*, *Duddon*^{*}, Derwent^{\$}

SW: Devon Avon*, Fowey, Camel^{\$*}

Wales: *Tywi*^{*}, Conwy

¹ The management target is to meet or exceed CL four years out of five.

² See Appendix 2