

Week Forty

Consultation documents

The RDT is often required to consult on various environmental policy documents, two such documents at present are the SEPA's new guidance documents on hydro scheme development and the Forestry Commissions revision Forest and Water Guidelines.

The RDT has recently been involved in the consultation of over 6 hydro schemes over the past 9mths. Our input identifies the impacts these schemes may have on all freshwater fishes and not just migratory species such as salmon or sea trout. The information we provide enables the developer to identify potential conflicts between the development and the various species highlighted in our consultation document. It is then the developer's responsibility to include appropriate surveys to identify the possible impacts of the scheme, should the proposed scheme be approved mitigation and long term surveys may be a condition of the licence. To date the guidance from SEPA has been incomplete and this new document will allow the RDT and others to ascertain the viability of the proposed schemes, understand the initial survey requirements and outline the long term monitoring requirements for the approved SEPA abstraction licence should it be granted.

The document can be found at http://sepa.org.uk/about_us/consultations.aspx

Consultations are welcome until the deadline of April 31st 2010.

The FC revised Forest and Water guidelines are also out for consultation at present, this document outlines the legislative requirements for planting, and harvesting trees in relation to any watercourse and the impacts of and measures used to reduce these operations. The guidelines describe what is required of those managing forests and woodlands to meet the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard - the UK approach to sustainable forest management.

Fortunately the Don catchment is not too heavily impacted by forest operations at present whilst others such as the Deveron to a lesser extent but in particular the Dumfries and Galloway area have suffered from acidification issues due to the poor buffering ability of the soils combined with intense planting processes of commercial forestry. The actual effects of surface water acidification on fish vary with each species. Salmon and trout populations are considered particularly sensitive and are often used as an indicator species. Effects of acidification on fish will depend on many factors, but research has shown that if the pH falls below 5.5, long term damage will occur to fish populations. Juvenile life stages (principally eggs and alevins) of salmonids are particularly sensitive and exposure to low pH may lead to total recruitment failure.

Understanding these guidelines and their potential impacts/benefits to the Don Catchment is paramount and it would be nonsensical to not comment on this document, at this stage.

Trust Directors Meeting

On Wednesday evening the directors met at the RDT office to discuss the various events of the past three months, items on the agenda include; Biologist update, Open Day and New Director.

Duncan Mackay is our new director for the Trust. Duncan has a wealth of experience in project management and PR and has come to the Trust to fulfil the position of Public Relations and Fundraising guru from his background in the oil industry. Duncan is passionate about the River Don and is a keen angler often found searching for salmon on his days off. If you have any fundraising proposals or opportunities for the Trust feel free to get in touch with Duncan at duncan@riverdon.org.uk.

The meeting was very successful although quite heavy again on content interesting issues were raised in the AOCB including the stepping down of present Chairman Dave Gordon. Dave was the Trusts first Chairman and wrote the trusts constitution, and in that he stipulated that the Chair must step down every year, though may be re elected. Dave has decided that having had an excellent year of achievements for the trust, and having met all the trusts FMP milestones, that it was time to ease back a little, and perhaps even get a day or two clear to go fishing!

Dave said "I have really enjoyed the first year of the River Don Trust. I have had a very intense year as Chair, very ably supported by my fellow Directors but I have decided to ease back my workload. I recognise that as a Director I would never be able to slow down properly or to let go the reigns, so I have decided to resign as a director of the Trust as well. The Directors very kindly asked me to continue to assist the trust so I can ease back my workload and at the same time continue to enjoy the areas of trust work I get most satisfaction from."

Dave will now be the River Don Trust's unpaid River Manager responsible for line managing the Trust Biologist and driving the Fishery Management Plan forward

Trust stalwart, Iain Morrison, who has the drive and vision to take over the demanding role of RDT chair, was voted in by unanimous vote of his fellow directors. Iain is a driving force within the trust, and is looking forward to the challenge, and to continuing the teamwork of working with Dave in delivering the trusts objectives.

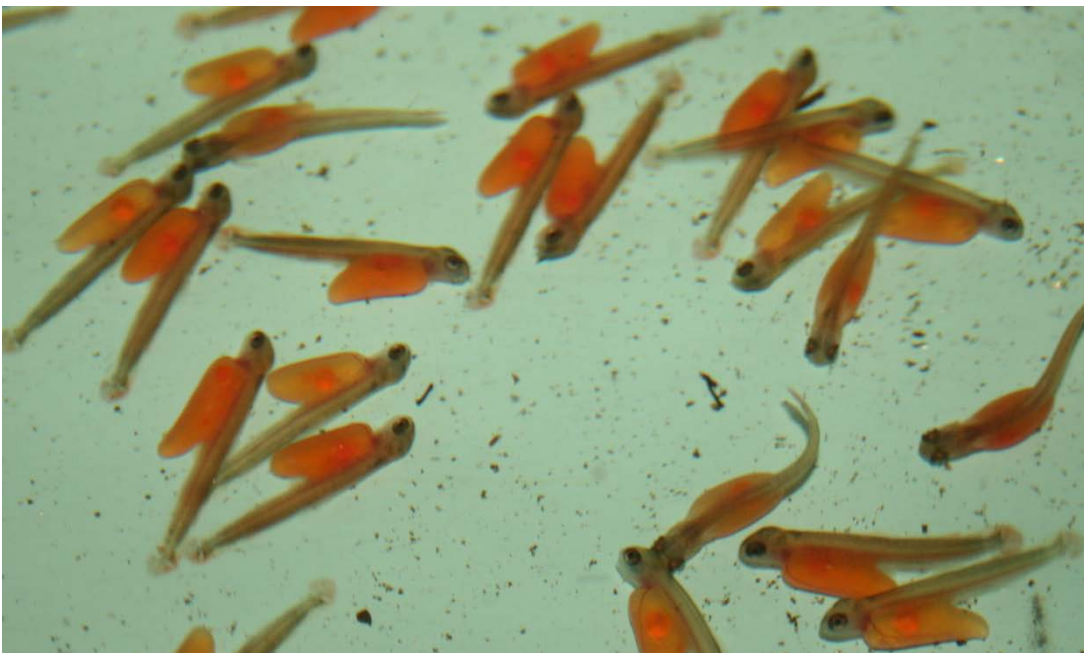
Iain noted "we have a great team within the RDT, and have made excellent progress. Dave and I will continue to work together, and I am sure we will be able to continue to make good progress against the FMP and to further develop the Trust"

Hatchery visit

This Wednesday and Thursday saw the bailiff attend their annual seminar, this year hosted by the Nith DSFB. River Superintendent Jim Kerr asked if I would be able to carry out and hatchery inspection on their absence. Given the recent high water conditions it's vital that the water supply is checked and maintained to ensure that there is an adequate oxygen supply for the eggs and fish. I headed up to the catchment having a look around the catchment on the way.



Over wintering cattle have caused heavy poaching in the upper catchment, resulting in increased sediment and faecal matter being transported to the water course, a concern for spawning beds downstream.



Recently hatched Alevin greeted me upon my visit to the hatchery.



A large ball of a few hundred Alevin in one of the troughs at the hatchery, the recent mild weather has resulted in several hatches in the troughs.

Everything up at the hatchery was fine it was nice to see the Alevin out of the eggs I've taken some videos which can be viewed at this address. www.youtube.....

I also spent a couple of lunchtimes on the search for March Browns and other invertebrates, I was not successful in finding any but have since heard that there are a few large dark olives on the go, any info on sightings would be welcome. biologist@riverdon.org.uk

Next week I'll be attending an Invasive meeting on Tuesday held by the Cairngorm National Park with the other fisheries trusts within the Park. I'll also be attending a first aid training course and having a look around the schools to see how the eggs are progressing prior to the Easter break.

Cheers Jamie