

Habitat Improvements Protect Fish Stocks

The Spey Fisheries Board in partnership with the Crown Estate, Highland Council, Moray Council and Scottish Natural Heritage have completed a series of major riparian habitat improvements to protect salmon and trout spawning areas along the River Conglass, near Tomintoul. This is an important tributary in the River Spey which has suffered from a range of man-made problems affecting the local fish populations. In particular the River Conglass has been affected by livestock overgrazing, river bank collapse, poorly sited forestry plantations and barriers to fish movements such as culverts. This project was funded through the EU Northern Periphery Programme, and was part of a much wider initiative involving similar projects in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Supervised by Andy Wells (Crown Estate) extensive fencing works were completed to exclude livestock from the river bank and allow woodland regeneration along a section of the Conglass upstream of Ruthven Farm. In addition extensive areas of conifers were removed from alongside the river and replaced with native broadleaves.

Improving fish access to spawning sites also featured highly in the project. The complete removal of two poorly constructed culverts from the Glenmulliach Burn, a small but important trout tributary, should enable fish to reach formerly inaccessible spawning beds in the future. The large culvert beneath the A939 Lecht road on



Fencing along both banks of the Conglass ensures livestock grazing is reduced and additional planting of native trees will allow a more varied riparian habitat to develop.

the Blair na Marrow Burn, was improved by the Moray Council through the installation of a series of baffles along its base. These help to deepen the water and slow the flow down to ease fish passage. Monitoring work through electro-fishing to assess the impact of the works on the fish populations has also been initiated.

The project provided valuable information on practical ways of improving fish habitat and has been combined with experiences from the Scandinavian partners into a "Best Practice Manual" which will shortly be published.

Andy Wells (Crown Estate) commented "The project has made a significant difference to the riparian habitat within the Conglass watercourse and should safeguard the favourable status of Atlantic salmon and sea trout stocks in the burn which are central to the maintenance of an economically important rod fishery. We are delighted to have undertaken this work, which has been made possible with NPP/Norwat European funding assistance.



Exchange visits were an important part of the Norwat projects. Andy Wells (Crown Estate) describes land management practices along the Conglass Burn to project partners from Sweden.



SPEY FISHERY BOARD RESEARCH OFFICE

1 NETHER BORLUM COTTAGE, KNOCKANDO, MORAYSHIRE, AB38 7SD

TEL: 01340 810841 FAX: 01340 810842 E-MAIL: research@speyfisheryboard.com

Bridge and Culvert Improvements



Graeme Dunlop (Moray Council) inspects the newly installed baffles on the Blair na Marrow culvert.

By deepening and slowing the water flow the baffles on the Blair na Marrow culvert have improved upstream fish passage to spawning sites.



A forestry road culvert on the Glenmulliach Burn prior to removal. This type of river crossing is commonplace in Scotland (and Scandanavia) and can cause extensive problems for fish access. Electro-fishing surveys confirmed that this particular example prevented upstream access for trout due to the height the pipe was placed above the water level.

Access for forestry vehicles was no longer required so the culvert was removed and replaced with a footbridge. Access for trout is ensured for the future.

