

## CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

### ELECTRIC FISHING POLICY

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The Board is charged with issuing permissions to carry out electric fishing in the rivers and streams within its area, usually to local proprietors, public bodies or developers. The Board also regularly carries out its own electric fishing surveys.

#### **General Policy Statement**

The Board is keen to eliminate repeat fishing of the same sites and, particularly, inadvertent repetition which is expected to compromise the findings of later survey work. The Board is also keen to encourage uniform working methods in order that all the available data can be considered on the same basis in order to increase overall understanding of salmonid populations in the Caithness.

In its own work, the Board uses the best available methods for its purpose – repeated annual surveys of the same set of key sites (> 100m<sup>2</sup>) using depletion fishing techniques (3-pass or more). Standard Board practice is based on a bankside generator (rather than a battery-powered backpack apparatus) and stop-nets are deployed to limit fish movement into and out of the site during fishing operations. Stop-nets are positioned accurately at each site by reference to photographs used to define each site's limits on the first occasion it is fished.

After capture fish are counted and body length is measured. Only the current year's fry are identified based on body length. Age is determined by scale reading for all parr since discontinuities in the length-frequency relationship are not always/ often an accurate guide to true age (and therefore spawning or hatch year). This is because the lengths of the parr age-classes generally overlap and the effect varies among both sites and years. When the work is complete, all fish are returned to the lower central section of the fishing area to facilitate their return upstream to their home areas.

Full details of the Board's approach are given in the survey reports posted on its web site at <http://caithness.dsfb.org.uk/publications/>.

The Board recognises that surveys proposed by different bodies differ in their aims and in the methods required to achieve these aims. In some case, continuity of methods may also be desirable. However, the Board recommends that depletion methods should always be used whether fishing is by backpack or generator because efficiency can be estimated from depletion data and knowing efficiency the results generated by either method can be compared. The Board also recommends that stop nets should always be deployed in order to prevent fish moving out of, or into, the area whilst fishing is in progress.

The Board asks that copies of all survey results should be lodged with the Board for archiving and expects to be able to use the data with the owner's prior permission.

For the Board's part, it will institute an archiving arrangement and a new inventory of electric fishing sites defined by operator, location, grid reference, stream measurements and photographs, including positional photographs for upper and lower stop-net positions. The Board will expect others to lodge definitive information on site location as a condition of receiving permission to carry out the work.

The Board possesses stop-nets and will make them available on request for operators who do not. Nets must be cleaned and sterilised before return or before moving between catchments (to minimise the risk of inter-catchment transfer of biological material). More generally, and for the same reasons, operators moving into the Board's area after working in rivers elsewhere must sterilise all wet field equipment (eg. boots, nets and containers).

### **Electric Fishing Consent**

Requests to carry out electric fishing should be submitted to the Clerk in writing, giving as much notice as possible. Proposed survey dates, locations and methods should be provided as indicated above. Confirmation should be given that stop-nets will be used and a copy of the results supplied on conclusion of the exercise.

River proprietors and local landowners should be contacted independently with regard to access and survey results made available to them as required.

In the event of queries please contact the Clerk: Telephone 01955 631325 or Email [cdsfb@outlook.com](mailto:cdsfb@outlook.com).