

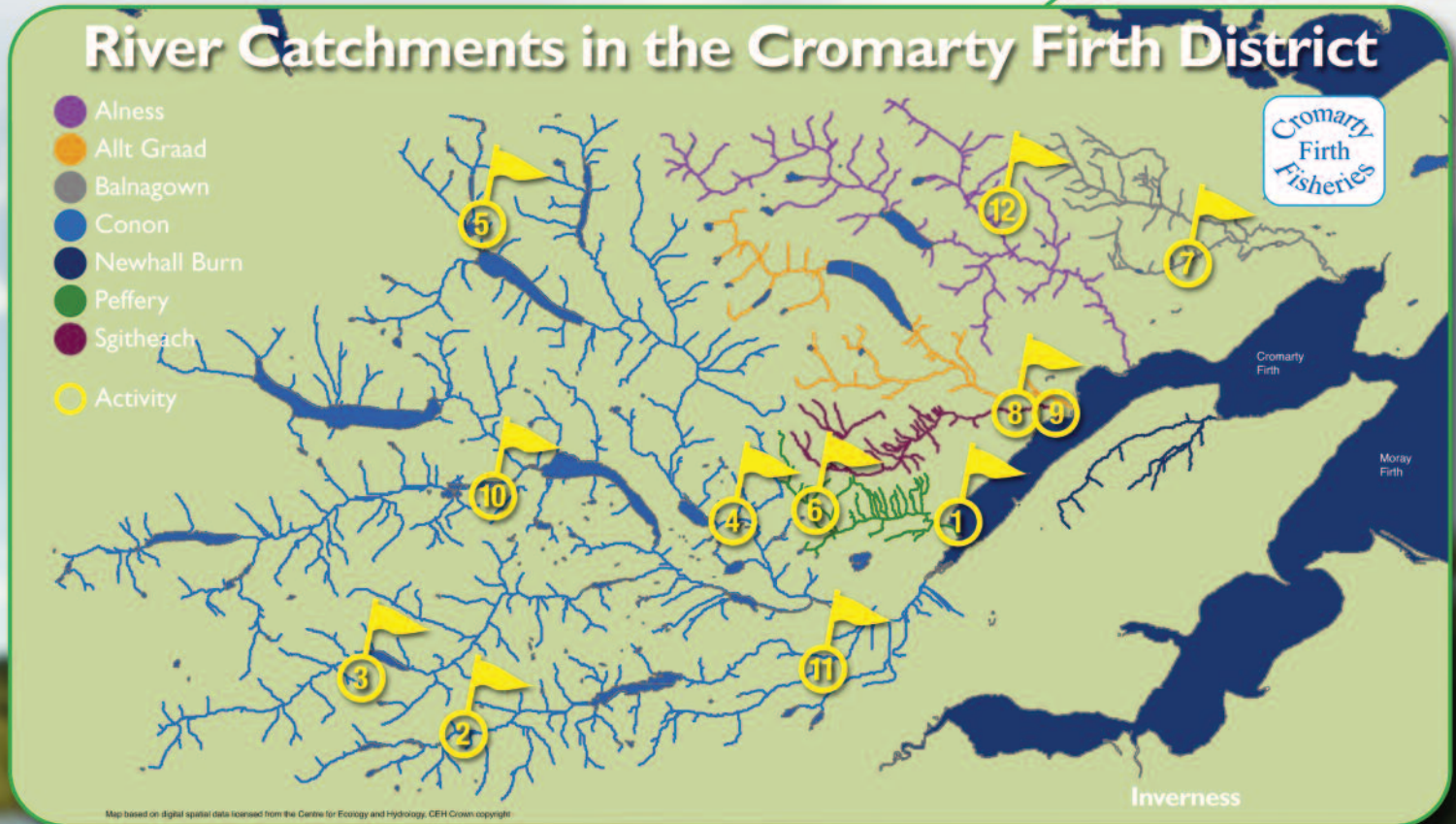
Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust

The Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust was formed in 1999 and works closely with the Cromarty Firth Fishery Board to manage wild fish stocks in the Cromarty Firth Region. The Trust area covers all the rivers and lochs draining into the Cromarty Firth, the largest of these is the River Conon, which is extensively developed for hydro-electric generation.

Both Trust and Board work together, to deliver the aims of the Cromarty Firth Fishery Management and Biosecurity Plans. The Trust supports a research programme, which underpins all management activities ensuring that decisions are made on the best evidence available.

The Trust has developed community and volunteer involvement in management and research projects. The Trust also has an important role in education through a programme of open days, guided walks, talks and school visits.

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A very successful collaboration has been formed by the Trust and volunteers from both the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and from local community environment groups. Working alongside fishery staff, volunteers are essential for invasive species, river clean up and tree planting projects.



Hydro-electric development in the region means that a hatchery operation is necessary to mitigate for hydro impacts. Research and monitoring guides the stocking programme. Stocking is designed to work with the biology of the salmon. This exposes young salmon to natural selection for as long as possible and ensures that the resulting smolts are produced by their natural stream habitat.



The Trust supported the assessment of man-made barriers to migration and the design/construction of appropriate fish passes. We also work with Scottish and Southern Energy to improve the passage of fish at hydro-electric structures. This collaboration has been very effective, combining engineering and flow manipulation, monitored by tagging and trapping projects.

The Trust's programme of open days, talks, guided walks and school visits is essential to raise public awareness of freshwater conservation issues. It has also been effective in recruiting community and volunteer involvement in restoration works.



Anglers can support the Trust by recording catch data from hill loch and sea trout fishing trips. Data can be recorded online using the Scottish Fishery Coordination Centre angling diary. In 2012 an Angler's Monitoring Initiative is being set up so that anglers can help monitor the health of fly life in our rivers. We are working with the Moray Firth Sea Trout Project and Wild Trout Trust to conserve sea trout in the region.



The Trust is working with other members of the SEPA Area Advisory Group to deliver catchment scale restoration works on the River Peffery. This project was instigated by the Trust, supported by SEPA, and provides a model for collaborative working between public and private sectors to deliver the aims of the Water Framework Directive.

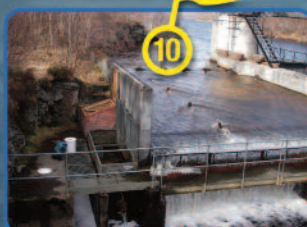


The Trust is helping to eradicate American Mink from the North Highlands by its involvement in the RAFTS Scottish Mink Initiative project. A network of mink monitoring rafts, tunnels and traps is operated with the support of the Trust and RAFTS.



Working to a programme set out in the Cromarty Firth Biosecurity Plan the Trust is managing projects to eradicate Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and Rhododendron. With funding from SEPA and labour from volunteers and bailiffs, the banks of some of the regions rivers are being transformed.

The Trust works closely with Marine Scotland Science and Scottish and Southern Energy to monitor the survival of salmon smolts from the River Bran. Smolts leaving the Bran are trapped and transported by road around the dam. Some smolts are electronically tagged and when they return to the river as adults, they are recorded automatically.



The Trust carries out a programme of research and monitoring of fish stocks and their habitats. This work provides the evidence for management decisions and monitors the effectiveness of these actions. When planning restoration projects, barrier removal and stocking works – this evidence based approach is essential. The habitat and fish data gathered by the Trust allows informed responses to an ever increasing number of development consultations.



With help from volunteers, Forestry Commission Scotland and SEPA – native trees have been planted along the riverbanks of three catchments in the region. Native riverside trees are important to maintain healthy natural rivers.



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