

Category 1 Conservation Policy 2018

Atlantic Salmon are classified as an endangered species - if they were mammals or birds they would be protected and fishing would be banned.

The Scottish Government review of the conservation status for the 2018 season has proposed a downgrading many rivers throughout Scotland. There is therefore an overwhelming incentive for all anglers to act responsibly. This will allow the Board and Fishery Management Scotland to bring a clear focus on issues other than angling pressure which are much more important in conserving salmon stocks. Spring fish are sufficiently scarce for it to be foolish to kill any of them. The long term trend of grilse returning from sea appears to be declining in numbers and in size. The sex ratio has changed from being two-thirds female as recently as 2000 to being less than a third female in 2017. (Only half as many female fish as male fish were recorded at the Blackwater trap). Female grilse are now the most endangered stock component and it is the reduction in their numbers that is the critical factor limiting egg deposition.

ENFORCEMENT

- Proprietors and clubs are urged to make compliance with this policy a condition of their leases and permits

SALMON UP TO 30TH JUNE

- All salmon and grilse to be returned i.e. 100% Catch and Release.

SALMON AFTER 30TH JUNE

- **Whilst it is an aspiration of the Board that 100% catch and release is achieved**, a maximum of two fish (salmon/grilse under 30"/75cm about 10lbs) may be killed per angler during the season. This will allow for any fish which are injured to be kept but we would encourage the careful release of all healthy fish.
- The firth is regarded as a mixed stock fishery due to the other rivers flowing into it, therefore it is categorised as graded 3 which is 100% catch and release and it will be a criminal offence to kill a salmon.
- No female fish should be killed.
- All fish over 30" / 75cm long (about 10lbs) should be released.
- No salmon are to be caught on coastal netting stations for the 2018 season.
- Week ticket guests can retain one fish per week but not more than two in a season.
- Day ticket guests will be permitted to retain one fish per season.

SEA TROUT

- Sea Trout over 1½lbs are particularly valuable and should be released. A maximum of one sea trout over 1½lbs per angler per week may be killed but it would be preferable to kill only smaller fish, preferably Finnock.

GENERAL

- All coloured fish must be released
- Use barbless hooks
- Do not use treble hooks
- The board is concerned that fish caught by worming may be difficult to release unharmed. Where worming is permitted only circle hooks should be used
- An angler's first ever fish may be retained if desired
- When releasing fish, try to keep the fish in the water at all times and use knotless mesh landing nets.

PINK SALMON

Subject to further Government advice any pink salmon caught should be killed and passed to Fishery Board staff for analysis.

FIN CLIPPED FISH

If an angler catches a fish that has had the adipose fin removed, please retain it and inform Simon McKelvey (07887 845648). It will have been PIT tagged and the information contained in the tag is important to the operation of the Board's stocking programme. The fish simply needs to be scanned to retrieve the tag number. The angler can keep the fish, will be given a £5 reward and, in due course, the life history of the fish.