

Monthly Report – January & February 2023

Contin Hatchery & Stocking

Throughout January and February the team continued to monitor the condition of the eggs at our flow through hatchery in Contin, removing any mortalities as the eggs developed. The eggs began to 'eye up' at around 225-degree days, when the eyes of the developing ova become visible through the membrane. For the first eggs stripped, this was around mid-January.

The team then commenced shocking the eggs in batches early February as each batch reached 280-degree days. This process involves giving the eggs a mild mechanical shock to remove any unfertilised, or "blind", eggs prior to planting out. Post shocking numbers are sitting at around 775,000 eggs which are all destined for the Blackwater.

Planting commenced on the 27th February with the first 75,000 eggs being planted in Strathrannoch in redds manually excavated by staff. With favourable weather conditions and water levels we hope to have stocking completed by mid-march.



SSE Liaison Meeting

Members of the Board, SSE and the Biology team met in mid-January to discuss all manner of issues for the coming year. It has been confirmed that the fish counters at Tor Achilty and Meig dams, which have been undercounting for some time, will be replaced in late spring 2023. Tor Achilty will receive an upgraded resistivity counter and the Meig will have a new AI unit installed. Loch Luichart will be upgraded in 2024. This will give us a far clearer picture of the numbers of fish currently ascending the dams.

SSE have also confirmed the continuation of the Day/Night smolt release trial. This study seeks to improve the survivability of smolts on their downstream migration through releasing transported smolts at night-time as opposed to during day light, when they are more susceptible to predation. If conclusive, this study will inform best practice across any district where smolt trap and truck operations are required.

River Meig Rotary Screw Traps

The two traps deployed on the Meig last year suffered some damage during high flows and have been sent to Global (Evanton) for repairs. The traps were collected in good time for deployment this spring and are currently sitting on the riverbank in Strathconon awaiting construction and the commencement of smolt trapping operations in the catchment.



Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI)

We are pleased to announce that the SISI project has been granted extension funding for a further 3 years through the Nature Restoration Fund. The CFDSB will share a full time Project Officer with the Ness and Beauly for the duration of the extension period. This will have a positive impact as the Project Officer will have more time to foster partnerships and train volunteers within the district which will drive efforts to further remove INNS from our district.

Bailiff Report

Regular patrols have been carried out during the off-season to ensure no illegal fishing is taking place within the district. These patrols also extend to the various fish passes across the rivers to ensure fish passage is maintained.

With the opening of the salmon fishing season in the district, fishery officers have increased the number of patrols across all rivers in the area.