

Moray Firth Trout Initiative

Evaluation Report

Marcus Walters
25th November 2015

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The MFTI is supported by local Fisheries Trusts, Boards and Angling Associations and funded by:



Executive Summary

The Moray Firth Trout Initiative is now complete and has successfully achieved the aims, objectives and key targets set out in the original proposal. The project has improved the conservation of Moray Firth Trout through the practical work of the project and generally raising awareness about trout. It has improved education and knowledge of trout ecology and the freshwater environment through the education programme and outreach work. Volunteers have helped with in the delivery of the work and have established the beginnings of a network of river ambassadors who will care for their local river and the trout they support. The project has indirectly raised awareness about the quality of trout angling around the Moray Firth and worked with anglers and managers to improve management. Through research, data collection and monitoring we have improved our knowledge and understanding of trout populations. The project has been successful and well managed while two areas have been identified for improvement; the recruitment of volunteers through community engagement and the planning and delivery of habitat restoration projects.

What we wanted to happen:

The MFTI purpose was to protect the future of Moray Firth Trout and the communities that rely on them through education, conservation and restoration. Trout around the Moray Firth are a very important resource for the local community angling associations and as the rod and line catch has been declining over the last 15-20 years there has been a need to conserve the populations and increase awareness of their value and need for improved management and conservation. The following aims of the project were to be delivered by 2 programmes of work: Environmental Education and Conservation.

Aims:

1. The conservation of Moray Firth trout populations
2. Improved education and awareness of trout ecology, freshwater environments and associated threats in the local community.
3. A network of community volunteers and river ambassadors.
4. A sustainable and locally managed Moray Firth rod and line fishery for trout.
5. The improved understanding and management of Moray Firth trout populations

Two programmes of work:

Programme 1 – Environmental Education – was to be delivered local with the local Fisheries Trust network to provide both school aged children (primary and secondary) and adults with a better understanding of freshwater ecology and a sense of ownership of their local environment through education and involvement in fishing activities. This will encourage them to take care of their surroundings and appreciate the value of natural resources both as an angler and conservationist. The project manager was to deliver a series of school classroom and river visits as well as public talks, walks and workshops aimed at the wider community.

Programme 2 – Conservation – The MFTI was to lead the conservation of trout coordinating electrofishing and habitat surveys as well as survey work to improve our understanding of different trout populations and their associated life histories leading to improved management and restoration of habitat. This work was to include; survey work, habitat restoration, scale collection, loch sampling, seine netting and research projects.

What actually happened:

Under the two programmes of work a very specific delivery breakdown was agreed (see table below) detailing the number of each activity / survey and the number of volunteers or school children involved. All targets were achieved bar being slightly short on events delivered but this was compensated for by total size of audience reached. Likewise the newsletters were a few short but with additional reports we achieved the target number of publications.

What we aimed to do	What we did	Comments
Creation of a network of volunteers & ambassadors	135 individuals have volunteered, 23 have helped with surveys, 60 on habitat projects, 16 with seine netting, 30 loch and river sampling and 71 collected scales. All learning more about trout and gaining new skills.	We achieved our target but would like more volunteers to be actively involved and take part in multiple activities and become more active in the community.
20 volunteer survey days	Volunteers conducted 75 volunteer days mainly helping with electrofishing surveys and learning new skills in the process.	Exceeded target and some have gone on to become qualified and are regular volunteers. Would still like more volunteers.
45 school classroom visits reaching 900 children	49 classroom visits delivered reaching a total of 1230 pupils.	Achieved our targets but would like to have more secondary schools involved (one took part).
15 school river visits reaching 300 children	26 river visits were delivered for 632 pupils.	Far exceeded our target but could do more with more funding for school transport. Again need more secondary schools involved.
36 educational events targeting 360 adults	22 talks delivered to various community and fishery groups, 3 river electrofishing demos and 9 public events = 34 events to a direct audience of 570 plus many	Although 2 short on total number of events delivered we far exceeded the target audience. Towards the end of the project There was some saturation with groups

	hundreds spoken to at events	having heard from the PM already.
A trout workshop day for 60 – 100 delegates	Workshop day delivered to 60 delegates from a range of backgrounds but a significant number of local community anglers.	Achieved our target audience and had excellent range of speakers and demos for a free event with excellent feedback.
9 loch angling days with 54 volunteer angler days	13 angling days with 51 volunteer days	Exceeded the number of days but struggled to get as many anglers as hoped to each session.
45 scale collecting angler volunteers	86 signed up to collect scales and 71 active	Exceeded our target with volunteers and have a collection of 1440 scales.
15 days seine netting with 45 volunteer days	16 days seine netting with 36 volunteer days	Achieved targeted number of days but fell short on volunteers due to midweek sampling and tide time limitations
9 habitat restoration projects using 180 volunteer days	8 projects completed addressing a range of issues. 9 th started but not completed by end of project.	Proved difficult to get enough projects started, relies on appropriate site, compliant landowner, licensing permission and extra funds.
12 quarterly newsletters	9 newsletters published, 3 specialist reports and 2 annual reports as well as external publications.	Although short on the newsletters this was compensated for by other reports.

A further expanded version of this summary is provided in the final [MFTI Newsletter](#) with a more detailed description of the projects and outputs. However, evaluation is not purely about the numbers achieved and targets met, it is about the difference made and the overall effect of the project. This will be evaluated in the following section looking at each aim and how these were achieved under the 2 programmes of work.

Meeting the aims of the project:

1. The conservation of Moray Firth trout populations

This broad aim can only be achieved over the long term as it is very hard to measure conservation over a 3 year project. Successful conservation will result in healthy breeding populations of trout but the only measure of adult trout abundance is angling data which is very variable and influenced by many factors and as result it is hard to quantify successful conservation. Juvenile numbers are too variable to show any reliable trend over 3 years.

The data collected by the components of the Conservation Programme are hugely valuable in the long term protection and conservation of trout populations. Electrofishing and habitat surveys have helped us learn about distribution and juvenile densities as an indication of

breeding success. This has helped us identify problems and implement solutions through the habitat restoration work. These projects have included (among others) the Davidston Burn barrier easement to help trout migrate to spawning grounds. The [Cromarty tree planting](#) that improved riparian habitat along the banks for the benefit of trout. Clearing blocked burns in the Beaully Firth to allow the upstream migration of adults to spawn and introducing [Large Woody Debris on the River Peffery](#) to improve habitat where historical dredging has left it straight and featureless.

On the River Lossie the electrofishing results have continually showed good numbers of juvenile trout but the anglers are reporting very few sea trout adults. This apparent anomaly, lead to the development of the River Lossie Stable Isotope Project with Napier University and Atlantic Salmon Trust to investigate whether the juvenile trout are of sea or brown trout origin.

The Coastal netting programme has enabled us to catch sea trout in the sea and collect more scales. This has not only begun to give us an insight into their behaviour at sea but also to catch other species that can provide some indication of the inshore environment they use.

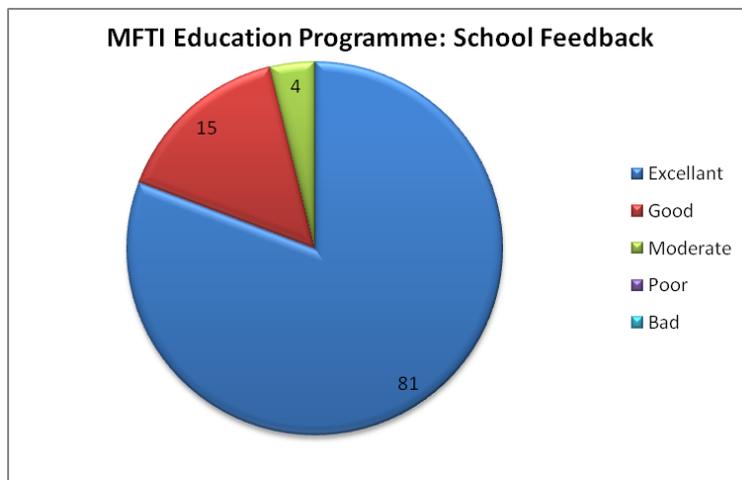
The loch sampling has proved a ground breaking technique in collecting brown trout data where there is currently none and provides an insight into different brown trout populations and is hugely valuable in ensuring the protection of these populations. Scale collection has proved effective for both sea and brown trout although has been limited by angler's perceived lack of fish and reduced enthusiasm to go angling. The data is a hugely valuable resource which has been summarised in the [MFTI Spring Newsletter 2015](#) and in the award winning poster presented at the 2nd Sea Trout Symposium. This information is very important in understanding the different populations and helping us identify threats and improve management.

Perhaps some of the biggest effects of the Conservation Programme were from the wider engagement in the angling community. Through the scale collection, loch sampling and tracking work we have managed to catch the imagination of local anglers who have begun to value trout and change their behaviour on the river bank. This is illustrated by the email from the Conon Water Bailiff, Edward Rush, who describes how through collecting scales and sharing the results with the anglers have begun to change their attitudes (Annex 1) and valuing of trout as a target species and not a pest.

2. Improved education and awareness of trout ecology, freshwater environments and associated threats in the local community.

The purpose of the Education Programme was to achieve long term conservation through raising awareness. In this we were certainly effective with a huge number of children (see table 1) learning about trout, their habitat and the freshwater ecosystem. This learning will be passed onto their parents and the wider community as well as lasting with them as they become a new working generation with a greater awareness of their local environment and the value of trout. In this salmon dominated region trout have historically been considered vermin and persecuted as such. Changing this attitude takes time and requires engagement and education on the value of trout, their diversity and vulnerability. This was achieved through the talks and events given by the Project Manager talking directly to anglers, managers and families and slowly dispelling long held beliefs.

To measure the success of the education Programme with the schools we asked the teachers to complete a feedback form after the visit. Of the schools visited 90% completed a feedback sheet that included a success score, comments on the activity and notes for next time. The below illustrates the feedback with 81% thinking the activity delivered was excellent, 15% Good and only 4% of responses felt the feedback was moderate.



There was some excellent feedback on the sheets similar to this one from the teacher at Dingwall Primary: "Excellent resources, Expert Knowledge, Great follow up and teacher feels happy to contact for further details". The only improvements suggested for next time were from the classroom only sessions where some teachers wanted more interactive activities to keep the attention of the children. We have had thank you letters from some of the children and there are some examples of their collage artwork done with Lynn Brydon from Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust in (Annex 2)

3. A network of community volunteers and river ambassadors.

The volunteer network has been developed through all aspects of the project including the education programme although to a lesser extent than the conservation programme. Through the conservation programme volunteers have had the opportunity to use their own angling skills in sampling lochs and collecting scales and also to learn new skills in electrofishing surveys, habitat surveys, species identification, trout ecology and scale reading principles. These skills not only improve their understanding of their local rivers and freshwater ecology but also give them skills that will be of use in the future and are a valuable resource to local Fisheries Trust that are charitable organisations and rely on volunteers to help with their annual survey work. A total of 86 anglers have volunteered to collect scales (71 have done so), 23 volunteers have helped with habitat and electrofishing surveys, a further 60 have worked on habitat restoration, 16 coastal seine netting and 30 on loch and river sampling. Two particular volunteers have really identified with the project, Allan Liddle and Neil Gordon. Allan is a keen local angler, blogger and fly tyer who has got engaged in all aspects of the project; sampling days, scales collection, fly tying demonstrations at local events as well as writing various articles about the project (Annex 3 FFFT blog). He fly fishes for Scotland and is well respected in the community and his email (Annex 4) is a very positive reflection on the project. Neil Gordon is an angler who fishes a tributary of the River Findhorn and who has really got involved in the project, collecting scales and acting as a guardian for the Muckle Burn. He was the winner of the scale

collection prize draw in 2014 and has expressed his support for the project in an email (Annex 5).

4. A sustainable and locally managed Moray Firth rod and line fishery for trout.

Trout angling around the Moray Firth is very important to local anglers and associations however it is not well known further afield and does not attract much angling tourism. Although angling promotion is not within the remit of this project the work of the MFTI has had a positive effect on the reputation of trout angling in the area. On the River Deveron, previously only valued for salmon and sea trout, an increasing recognition of the excellent trout angling has resulted in two articles in the Trout & Salmon highlighting the Deveron as a large brown trout destination (Annex 6). This has filtered through to the fishing beat owners who have shifted from purely selling week long salmon fishing weeks to selling day tickets for trout. Once trout have a financial value they become much easier to protect and conserve.

Working with local Fisheries Trusts and District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs) the MFTI has been centrally placed in the Moray Firth fishery management structure and has had the opportunity to be involved in influencing and improving management. Providing input to Boards on conservation plans and reviewing annual catch data has been a core role for the project and is an important part of management. This role has been highlighted by an email of support from Malcolm Hay the Chairman of the District Salmon Fishery Board (Annex 7)

5. The improved understanding and management of Moray Firth trout population

We have improved our understanding of trout populations through conservation programme and the specific projects deployed, however, as discussed at the recent Sea Trout Symposium they are a very adaptable species and vary their behaviour and ecology to take advantage of different opportunities and habitats. This makes them very diverse and hence we are always going to have more to learn about their ecology, life history and consequently management. The positive role of the project has been highlighted by an email (Annex 8) from Shaun Leonard, the Director of the Wild Trout Trust, who have provided advice on restoration issues, published some of our articles in their publications and awarded us the Wild Trout Hero Award for the work on the River Peffery.

Outreach throughout the project has enabled us to engage with the angling and fisheries management community and not only share our knowledge but bring in their experience as well. We have shared our knowledge by giving two talks to significant Fisheries meetings in Scotland; a talk on habitat restoration and the Peffery Project to the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts (RAFTS) Annual Conference in Perth and 2 talks to the annual Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC) annual meeting on the Deveron trout tracking project and Sea Trout Monitoring. We have also attended many local Trust and DSFB meetings where we have been able to influence and improve management. We have also learnt a lot about Moray Firth trout from local anglers like Allan Liddle who are an endless source of knowledge on local loch populations, historical management and changes over time. Where possible we have also brought in the expertise of external specialists like consultant Dr Andy Walker a retired government scientist who reads our scales and has limitless scientific advice. The [All About Trout Day](#) was the perfect platform to bring together and learn from a range of experts on trout biology, genetics, habitat and management.

Seine netting on the coast is a new skill to us locally and although 3 years is a very short time to develop this kind of technique as a research and monitoring tool we have begun to establish the sites and tides that do and don't work. In the process we have succeeded in catching trout at sea which is a crucial first step in understanding how they use the marine environment which is still a significant gap in our knowledge. The project has been successful enough that we are looking to develop this technique as part of the local Trust annual monitoring and survey work.

Loch sampling has proved a fantastic tool for getting volunteer anglers involved sampling while also providing us with very basic but valuable data on individual loch populations of trout where we previously knew nothing. This is important for individual sites in ensuring their protection in the face of many developments like wind power schemes and invasive non native species. It is also a crucial step in understanding the range of behaviours and characteristics exhibited by different trout populations. We have struggled to sometimes get the number of anglers involved as planned in loch angling. The initial plan had been that angling clubs would have organised their own mini expeditions to go and fish any given loch, however, it has required the Project Manager to organise the events partly due to issues arranging access to the lochs. One exception was on the River Deveron, where following the interest in the large brown trout the Turiff AA secretary, Brian Arnold, organised a sampling day on the river in both 2014 and 2015. These days were hugely successful in both raising the profile of trout and in collecting many sets of scales and they are planned to repeat in 2016.

Scale collection with volunteer anglers has proved very successful for getting anglers involved and an effective route for education with the scale reading results being fed directly back to the anglers responsible. We now have significant collections of sea trout scales from the Deveron, Spey, Cromarty and Kyle catchments and have been able to summarise the broad characteristics of those populations in the [MFTI Newsletter](#) and poster that highlights changes since the last similar survey in the 1930s. More sea trout scales from the other rivers around the Moray Firth are needed but the current perceived poor status of the fishery has resulted in fewer and less motivated anglers to collect scales. We have also now got a collection of brown trout scales from a range of rivers and lochs that before the MFTI did not exist at all. Again this is a significant step in understanding these different populations. As noted in Ed Rush's email (Annex 1) the scale reading has revealed how old some of the large brown trout are and it has surprised many managers and anglers and helped change their attitude towards their protection.

Research has not been a large part of the project outside of the survey work and sampling done under the Conservation Programme, however, we have been keen to use the project as an opportunity to collaborate with local Trusts and other agencies to improve our knowledge and understanding of trout. The [Deveron large trout tracking](#) project collaboration with Marine Scotland Science has taught us a huge amount about the potential for trout to use a whole catchment and the implications for catchment scale management to protect them. Through the [Deveron Trout stable Isotope Project](#) we have worked with Napier University and funded by the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) to develop a new technique for determining if trout fry are of brown or sea trout origin. This has the

potential to be an important tool to help us understand whether trout in any given catchment are dominated by the migratory sea run form or residents. This will have significant benefits and implications for the management of any given trout population or stock.

Project Management

As laid out in the MFTI proposal the project was administered by the Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust (KSFT) but managed by a management team formed from the partnership Trusts. The Management team included Dr Keith Williams, Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust & DSFB; Simon McKelvey, Cromarty Fisheries Trust & DSFB; Nick Barker, Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust; Chris Conroy, Ness DSFB; Bob Laughton, Findhorn Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust and Richard Miller Deveron Bogie & Isla Rivers Trust. Additionally, Dr Andy Walker provided professional advice on biological and scientific issues. Twelve management meetings were planned for the duration of the project but we only held 9 meetings. This reduction in number was due to the challenge of getting all the management team together. The management team are all in senior positions in their respective organisations and it proved difficult to find a time when all were available. However, 3 a year proved adequate in providing guidance and project management. When specific issues came up that need management input the Project Manager either arranged individual meetings or spoke to them on the phone.

Marcus Walters was employed as the Project Manager and has stayed for the duration of the project. The project has been delivered to budget and achieved its objectives and key goals. Funding has been secured for the key work and additional funds for restoration and research projects. This success has been reflected in the desire of the Management Group to try and continue the project beyond the HLF funded period. The project has received two awards; Wild Trout Hero Award at the 2014 Wild Trout Trust Conservation Awards and winner of the Institute of Fisheries Management Poster award at the 2nd Sea Trout Symposium.

Review

The project has proved very successful in delivering its aims and objectives and fulfilling the specific project targets as summarised by Simon McKelvey, Cromarty Fisheries Trust Director, in his letter (Annex 9). We have furthered our knowledge of trout in the Moray Firth that will ultimately improve our conservation and management. We have, to some degree, begun to change the attitude towards trout both in the angling community and the fishery managers through Fisheries Trusts and District Salmon Fishery Boards. Improving conservation of trout and the changing of attitudes will take time though and still needs further work. As demonstrated by the changing attitude on the Deveron, where trout are now valued as target fishery, this change has to come from the bottom up and this means the anglers. The next step in continuing this change is to develop a trout angling development project that not only raises awareness about the fantastic trout fishing available in this part of Scotland but also gets more young people involved in angling. There is huge potential for this kind of work and with the support of the local angling clubs and key individuals like Allan Liddle a project of this type could be very successful.

The Education Programme has been very successful in achieving its targets in terms of

number of schools and pupils reached. Children that would not otherwise have had the opportunity have been able to learn about their local river and ecology and many have gained firsthand experience. It would have been better if we could have given every school a river visit but this is not always possible due to transport costs, time with the school and funding. The schools that have been involved are very keen to continue this working partnership and are looking for new activities that they can be involved with. We are currently working on combining this with a Trout Angling Development Project which would give school children the opportunity to try angling and a clear pathway for them to join their local angling club as a junior member. We would also like to have had more secondary schools involved in the project but before recent changes to the curriculum there was very little time available in their timetable for field visits and alternative activities. Furthermore activities need to be more closely planned according to the relevant curriculum.

Some things did not work as well as we had hoped; volunteer involvement and restoration projects. Although we achieved all of our volunteer targets we considered these to be the minimum required for a successful project. Although the Associations were supportive in principle they typically did not put up many volunteers or anglers to get involved in the project. This appeared primarily to be because the Associations are dominated by salmon anglers while the trout anglers, although members, are on the periphery and hard to target. When we managed to engage with trout anglers directly we were more successful in identifying volunteers who wanted to actively participate in many aspects of the project. This proved true with the volunteer scale collection project where broad general appeals for anglers produced little success compared to the specific targeting of key individual anglers who really embraced the project and got involved. Over a longer period of time more of these keen individuals would hopefully begin to embrace the project.

We had hoped and anticipated that habitat restoration projects would be a larger part of the project and provide a broad range of activities for volunteers to be involved in practical conservation. However, despite the success of the Peffery Project, it soon became apparent that it was very difficult to bring together all the components to replicate this type of project. For habitat restoration to be achievable you need a site that is restorable, the landowner and tenants to be supportive, the licensing authority (SEPA) to permit the work and be able to secure the additional extra funding. Getting all these components together is not only very difficult it can also take a very long time and a lot of resources in planning and assessment. Many of the projects we planned and hoped to achieve did not come off and as result we very reliant on the Cromarty Tree planting project along aside smaller community projects to deliver the project outputs. This does not take away from the value of these other projects that delivered a broad range of restoration techniques an involved the community and volunteers.

Summary of lesson learnt

- Dedicated volunteers were harder to recruit than expected and to be successful you need to know the community and target the specific individuals who will identify with the project and actively participate.
- Habitat restoration projects rely on a lot of factors coming together and are demanding on time and funding to be successful. Plans should account for this and be realistic in terms of the targets set.

- To get more schools out to visit rivers and doing activities in the field requires funding for transport which is often the limiting factor.
- Secondary schools are very limited in the time they have available for field based activities and there is a greater need for the lesson plan to be more closely designed to fit the curriculum.
- Activities like seine netting that rely on good weather and specific tide states can be hard to fit with volunteer availability.
- A trout angling development component to the project would help engage with the angling community ultimately improving local and visitor awareness and perception of Moray Firth trout angling.
- Making trout valuable through angling is probably the most effective way of ensuring their long term conservation.

Annex 1 - Conon Bailiff Ed Rush's Email

From: E RUSH [mailto:doned1@btinternet.com]
Sent: 14 November 2015 20:12
To: walters.mfstp@googlemail.com
Subject: MFTI Evaluation

Hi Marcus,

It wasn't that long ago that some viewed brown trout as something that ate salmon and sea trout smolts. They were seen as something that should be removed from the river instead of something that should be conserved.

Since the MFTI scale collection started I have been able to show ghillies and fishermen through scale reading of samples collected that the brown trout within my district are slow growing as well as in some cases very old, with fish up to 12 years in age being recorded. Some of these individuals had spawned multiple times and contributed over many years to the trout stocks of the Conon. This has raised awareness with all those who I have come into contact with about the importance of trout conservation. I have been able to demonstrate to people that by removing these fish it does take a long time to replace them and as such they should be conserved.

Without the efforts of the MFTI initiative this would not have been possible.

Edward

Annex 2 - School Art work by Tarradale Primary and Strathgarve Primary.



Annex 3 - Alan's Fly Fishing & Fly Tying Piece – “Keeping the Initiative Going”

Allan Liddle underlines the value in surveying and sampling your local water's trout population.

Still working with Marcus Walters and the Moray Firth Trout Initiative with the most recent venture being a scale sample weekend on the fantastic River Deveron, as a continuation of all the recent trout studies here and a chance to collect and collate more valuable data on the resident wild brown trout.

Thing is, the more answers you try to get the more questions it generates, anyone who thought they knew all about our native wild brown trout, think again as there's simply loads we don't know, or simply take for granted about this remarkable and fantastic game species.

Humble the 'Broonie' might be in some respects but highly adaptable and successful it also most certainly is, however we can't become complacent and overlook the fact that abundant as this fish may be in these parts, it still needs our care and attention. A few issues I highlighted recently in my article about the work on the Deveron browns (Taking the Initiative, February issue) and said there that there is a need to continue and study not only the fish in this water, but all waters where our wild browns can be found. Ok I admit this would take several lifetimes but even to continue and study a sample of waters over a cross reference of trout sizes will give us an insight we perhaps don't really have.

I could list a range of questions here but I'd simply be repeating the content of the article, besides I'd also be adding yet more queries I'd thought of since, best try and get through what we have on our plate already.

So a group of us gathered and spread throughout the Deveron in a bid to collect and collate as many scale samples as we could from a wide cross section of trout, wee ones, big ones and anything in between. Cracking conditions prevailed and we were lucky to get a great range of fish, although the two estimated 5lb plus and 6lb plus lost during the event would have been real icing on the cake.

One thing that is clear; we have a valuable resource not only on the Deveron, but throughout Scotland, our wild trout offer some of the finest fishing anywhere on the planet from diversity and challenge of location, fish quality and size, fishing methods required to catch them, weather, midges all against a back drop of bite the back of your hand beautiful scenery (often not always) something we should be proud of, something we should care about and something we should never take for granted. And what better way to appreciate these fish than to simply get out there and enjoy it all, exactly what I plan to do, only trouble is, like the wee boy in the sweet shop, where do I head next?

Annex 4 – Local trout angler, fly tyer, & blogger Allan Liddle's Email

From: Allan Liddle [mailto:ajlgonefishing@hotmail.com]

Sent: 09 November 2015 11:38

To: Marcus Walters

Subject: MFTI Evaluation

Hi Marcus

As a first of it's kind the survey of our resident trout populations throughout the Moray Firth Area has produces some very surprising results.

My personal involvement has highlighted a number of waters where trout populations would be regarded as vulnerable and where even a moderate fish kill would have potentially devastating consequences for the water in question.

Waters with high populations of fish have also been identified as not without some degree of risk to

the resident trout either by potential alteration / damage to feeder streams or by introduction of non-native species (e.g. Lochindorb –

pike, Nairn - Signal Crayfish). The work completed by MFTI has indicated that 'taking for granted current trout populations' can result in detrimental effects (potentially disastrous) on current trout stocks.

The possibility and effects on 'in-loch' spawning were considered and initially found to have a potential to be more far reaching / common than previously considered with possibility of 'seeded' waters having potential to produce a self sustaining trout population (although generally these waters would be considered as vulnerable given general low trout numbers etc. with some successes, e.g. Park)

The overall lack of advertising and publicising of the high quality wild trout fishing throughout the extremely diverse and far reaching Moray Firth catchment (as well as through Scotland generally) is an item that could be addressed and an area where this valuable resource could be carefully and thoughtfully promoted, enhanced and managed.

In summary more questions than answers have arisen, however the awareness towards promotion, management and enhancement on our extremely diverse wild trout resident populations has been brought into focus by MFTI and proves that this deserves and requires a more substantial, sustained and co-ordinated future programme.

Regards

Allan

Annex 5 - Neil Gordon's email.

From: Neil Gordon <ngordon361@icloud.com>

Date: 15 November 2015 19:42:48 GMT

To: "Marcus@morayfirhtrout.org" <Marcus@morayfirhtrout.org>

Subject: MFTI

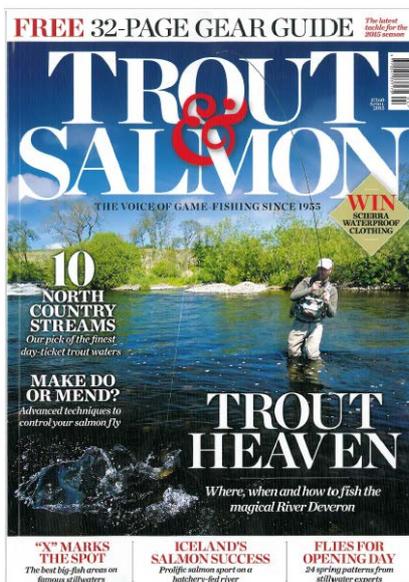
In my view the project has been a great success .As a volunteer which collects scale sample for the project on the Muckle burn which had little none about the Seatrout and Brown trout ecology apart from here say .It has inspired me to promote conservation ,and I now understand the need for scientific data to truly get the whole picture of the ecology of our water courses.

Regards

Neil Gordon

Sent from my iPhone

Annex 6 – Front cover of Trout & Salmon - Article by Paul Procter promoting trout fishing on the Deveron.



Annex 7 - Malcolm Hay, Deveron DSFB Chairman

From: MALCOLM HAY [mailto:malcolm.hay@btinternet.com]
Sent: 11 November 2015 10:33
To: Richie Miller; Marcus Walters
Subject: MFTI

On behalf of the Deveron Board, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the work done by Marcus Walters in studying trout populations within our catchment. This project has greatly increased our knowledge of the behaviour of large brown trout and sea trout within the Deveron catchment and, as such, will add significantly to our efforts in species conservation and habitat protection. The process involved in the research project has enthused a large number of those involved with the river, whether as professionals, volunteer workers or anglers, and has greatly improved our knowledge and awareness of trout ecology and the freshwater environment. This should all aid the maintenance of a sustainably and locally managed rod and line fishery within the Deveron system as well as inform other river managers in the wider Moray Firth area leading to improved management and conservation of trout populations through out the area.

Malcolm Hay
Chairman, The River Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board
Tel: 01466 700 274
Mobile: 0789 999 0900
Email: malcolm.hay@mcinroy-wood.co.uk

Annex 8 – Email from Shaun Leonard, Director Wild Trout Trust

From: Director [mailto:director@wildtrout.org]

Sent: 09 November 2015 12:14

To: Marcus Walters

Cc: D Ashton

Subject: MFTI Evaluation

Dear Marcus,

Thank you for the opportunity to feedback on the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI).

As you know, the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) is a conservation charity that works across Britain and Ireland to make life better for our native brown trout, its associated plants and animals, and the people that enjoy the places where they live. We do this by providing expert advice and practical help, working with landowners, fishing clubs and other community groups, Rivers and Wildlife Trusts and government agencies on sensitive and sustainable management options for rivers and lakes. Our aims and objectives align well with several of those of MFTI; indeed, MFTI and WTT have collaborated on a number of projects – WTT has provided technical advice through advisory visits and a practical demonstration event and MFTI has disseminated results of some of its work in our publications e.g. the trout tracking study in our annual journal and a piece on loch spawning in trout for our newsletter.

I very much commend MFTI for raising awareness of the value and need for conservation of trout populations within the Moray Firth. It is especially pertinent, as Scotland moves into its reform of wild fisheries management and an all-species remit of its regulatory agencies, that the status of trout is identified and headlined, alongside the traditionally more esteemed (in Scotland) salmon; MFTI has been very successful in this regard. I believe too that, in partnership with the fisheries trusts and District Salmon Fishery Boards in the Firth, MFTI has developed a strong network of local volunteers working for the benefit of trout and their rivers and lochs.

The success of MFTI has been recognised by its partners in the UK conservation sector: the Wild Trout Trust's *Wild Trout Hero* award in 2014 and the Institute of Fisheries Management's best poster at the 2nd International Sea Trout Symposium in Ireland in November 2015.

Congratulations on your efforts and the success of MFTI to date.

Yours sincerely,

Shaun Leonard

Director, Wild Trout Trust

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Annex 9 - Simon McKelvey, Director Cromarty Firth Fisheries Trust & DSFB



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10/11/2015

Moray Firth Trout Initiative

Dear Marcus

The Cromarty Firth Fishery Board and Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust have both supported the Moray Firth Trout Initiative and have seen great benefits within our region from the project.

The Moray Firth Trout Initiative has been very successful in achieving all its original aims and has exceeded our expectations in the extent of its influence. Its work on the River Peffery has restored access and habitats for sea trout. The effects of this can be seen by the presence of spawning sea trout in areas they could not previously use and the increased juvenile densities found during electro-fishing monitoring in areas where habitats have been restored. Both the Peffery work and the extensive planting of riparian trees in our region have developed excellent partnership working with both with government agencies such as Forestry Commission Scotland and SEPA as well as the voluntary sector. Volunteers have been an essential part of delivery of these works some of which have been carried out by The Conservation Volunteers whilst others have been undertaken by local conservation groups and individuals. The project has been successful in encouraging anglers to become involved in fishery research and management particularly through scale collection works.

The Mayfly in the Classroom has proved enormously popular with local schools and was demonstrated to Princess Anne when she visited the Conon in April to see some of the work of the Cromarty Firth Fishery Board and Moray Firth Trout Initiative.

Yours sincerely

S. A. McKelvey

Director Cromarty Firth Fishery Board

& Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust