“Salmonids west” project proposal meeting (for submission to EU Northern Periphery Programme)

22-24 October 2013. Inland fisheries Ireland, Swords, Co. Dublin

Report to MASTS

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Summary

Paddy Gargan at Inland Fisheries Ireland was coordinating a proposal for submission to the European Union Northern Periphery Programme, for a project entitled “Salmonids West”. The project aimed to cover all key issues affecting wild salmonids, in the context of sustainable development of the Northern Periphery region (as defined by the EU). Potential partners from Ireland, Scotland and Norway were invited to attend an initial kick-off meeting in Swords, Co. Dublin.

I was initially contacted by Neil Hazon at St. Andrews, and obtained a travel and subsistence grant from MASTS to attend the meeting to investigate our potential involvement. The meeting was a useful opportunity to discuss issues relating to wild salmonids, but it was ultimately determined that SAMS would not have a direct involvement in the onward development of the project

Attendees

Paddy Gargan – Inland Fisheries Ireland
Cathal Gallagher – Inland Fisheries Ireland
Robert Rosell - Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland
Chris Horrill – Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland
Neil Hazon – St. Andrews
Bjorn Pal Arne – Institute of Marine Research Norway
Bengt Finstad - Norsk institutt for naturforskning (Norway)
Debbie Park – Nith Districts Fisheries Trust
Bryan Deegan – Altemar

Overview of discussions

The overarching goal of the project would be to develop best practice strategies for managing the sustainable development of the region, to ensure minimal negative impact (or positive impact) on wild salmonid populations. This would ultimately result in the creation of a “sustainable development toolbox”, offering processes applicable to any planned development. To determine how this might be done, several questions required answering. Firstly, what types of developments must be focussed on? Secondly, what knowledge gaps exist that must be filled in order to satisfy requirements of making recommendations? Finally the question of balance between desk based and field work was raised.

Issues affecting salmonids were divided between fresh, marine, and transitional environments, including activities such as agriculture, forestry, hydropower generation, aquaculture, barriers to movement and habitat restoration.

It was determined that a successful project would have certain key deliverables. Desktop studies would involve synthesis of previous work, leading to guidelines and also data to feed into later stages. Stakeholder engagement was also considered key (developers, aquaculture, forest, renewables), and a stakeholder meeting was planned for early in the project. A GIS tool would be created, to allow reviewed, collected and generated data to be presented in a single interface. This would be region specific, and would include the possibility of impact analysis for potential developments. Testing and comparison of existing hydrodynamic based models (between regions) was proposed.

The generation of guidelines for restoration of salmonid fisheries and also for development/practices in salmonid areas was planned. These would feed into tools that assist in locating developments to minimise transitional and coastal environmental impacts.

In order to achieve these goals, the project would require enhanced understanding of wild salmonid migration patterns and potential impacts of developments and other human activities on these. Acoustic tagging, and genetic analysis are potential tools that might be applied here. Case studies investigating the impact of small-scale restoration projects, and catchment-scale assessments were planned (two catchments in each country).

The discussions concluded with the definition of six work packages aiming to incorporate all such deliverables. Each work package would be managed by a single institute. Firstly, project management would be performed by IFI. Second, desktop studies and development best practice recommendations would be managed by AFBI. Third, IMR would manage a coastal/transitional waters case study. Fourth, further work on wild fish migration routes would be managed by NINA. Fifth, IFI and RAFTS would manage construction of the Sustainable Development Toolbox, and assessment of the socio-economics of salmonid industry expansion. Sixth, and finally, Nith and IFI would work with stakeholders to investigate impacts of catchment restoration.

The involvement of bodies such as SAMS, who are primarily engaged in sea lice dispersal modelling, would be requested by IMR at a later stage if required/appropriate. In Norway, the science (modelling and data collection) and its impact on policy are more developed than in other countries. The Norwegian approach may represent a model for future development of Scottish and Irish studies and policy development. However, increased scientific effort and financial support (particularly for wild fish tracking) would be required to achieve this.