

HRH The Prince of Wales (patron of the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Salmon & Trout Association)
Duke of Westminster (president of the Atlantic Salmon Trust)
Duke of Northumberland (president of the Salmon & Trout Association)
Rivers & Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS)
Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB)
Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA)
Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST)
Fish Legal
Angling Trust

15 January 2013

Please Stand Up for Healthy Wild Fish Not Lice-Infested Salmon Farms!

We are writing to you in your positions as patrons, trustees, directors, employees and members of wild fish groups who are supposed to be lobbying on behalf of wild fish protection.

Your involvement with the '[Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project](#)' (MIAP) is compromising your integrity as guardians of wild salmon and sea trout. Indeed, your support of MIAP is effectively promoting the unsustainable further expansion of inshore salmon farms on the West coast of Scotland. The Locational Guidance within the project is based on very poor quality data, part of which is the ranking of rivers in order of priority thereby identifying some rivers as expendable.

The question is simple: do you support the protection of healthy wild salmon and sea trout populations or do you support yet more disease-ridden and sea lice-infested salmon farms in Scottish sea lochs?

The answer is simple too. All the scientific evidence including the recent Royal Society paper on sea lice infestation from salmon farms points to an incompatibility between healthy wild fish stocks and lice-infested salmon farms. You therefore have to make a choice – you cannot have both healthy wild fish and farmed salmon in nearby inshore pens.

As supporters of wild fish, we think the wild fish lobby must do just that: lobby on behalf of wild fish not assist the PR machine of the Norwegian-owned Scottish salmon farming industry.

Hence we are calling on you to stand up for healthy wild salmon and sea trout and withdraw your support for MIAP. Please follow the lead of Lochaber Fisheries Trust who withdrew their support for MIAP last week and the Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board who withdrew their support from MIAP just yesterday.

“The Lochaber Fisheries Trust (LFT), which covers one of the most dense fish farming regions in Scotland, said it had refused to co-operate with RAFTS amid fears its research is flawed,” reported [The Sunday Times](#) (13 January 2013). “Others have accused RAFTS of ‘selling-out’ to the Scottish government, which wants to increase farmed salmon production after striking a trade deal with the Chinese government. They claim the map will effectively rank Scotland’s salmon rivers in order of commercial importance and lead to smaller rivers being sacrificed for aquaculture expansion.....Diane Baum, the LFT’s senior biologist, said

the trust initially backed the idea of locational guidance to ‘help steer fish farms away from the most sensitive areas’ but became concerned that the research is not sufficiently robust, in particular because the migration routes of young salmon and the dispersal of sea-lice from farms will not be considered.”

“Wild fish interests are coming increasing pressure from the Scottish Government to assess the risk of fish farms without proper data,” said Diane Baum, [Lochaber Fisheries Trust’s](#) senior biologist, in an interview with [The Sunday Times](#). “In our view, bad data are worse than no data. We have made a decision not to be part of it.”

[The Sunday Times](#) continued: “However, Jon Gibb, a member of the Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board, said: “RAFTS is, perhaps inadvertently, supporting the unsustainable expansion of aquaculture in onshore waters and ministers are buying endorsement from the wild fish community – what greater prize is there?”

For more background, please read the article – “Anti-aquaculture body ‘aiding fish farm growth’” – published in [The Sunday Times](#) at the weekend (13 January 2013).



Campaigners say the conservation trust, which opposes fish farms, such as this one in Loch Ewe, is leading a government project to help their spread

Anti-aquaculture body ‘aiding fish farm growth’

Mark Macaskill

A CONSERVATION body that opposes aquaculture has been criticised for leading a government-funded project that, critics argue, will aid the expansion of fish farms along the west coast of Scotland.

The Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (Rafts) believes fish farms pose a deadly threat to wild salmon and has been handed public money to identify the salmon rivers most at risk from aquaculture. The one-year project is due to finish in March when a “locational guidance” map is due to be handed to ministers.

On Friday, however, the Lochaber Fisheries Trust (LFT), which covers one of the most dense fish farming regions in Scotland, said it had refused to

co-operate with Rafts amid fears its research is flawed.

Others have accused Rafts of “selling out” to the Scottish government, which wants to increase farmed salmon production after striking a trade deal with the Chinese government.

They claim the map will effectively rank Scotland’s salmon rivers in order of commercial importance and lead to smaller rivers being sacrificed for aquaculture expansion.

Concerns were raised last year when Rafts asked its 25 members to provide data for the project, such as the number of juvenile fish, the rateable values of rivers and fisheries and habitat quality.

Diane Baum, the LFT’s senior biologist, said the trust initially backed the idea of locational guidance to “help steer

fish farms away from the most sensitive areas” but became concerned that the research is not sufficiently robust, in particular because the migration routes of young salmon and the dispersal of sea-lice from farms will not be considered.

“We agree some areas are more sensitive to fish farming than others and are resigned to the expansion of aquaculture along the west coast,” said Baum. “However, wild fish interests are coming under pressure from the Scottish government to assess the risk of fish farms without proper data. In our view, bad data are worse than no data. We have made a decision not to be part of it.”

Last week, senior members of Rafts were contacted by The Sunday Times but refused to answer questions about the

locational guidance, part of its publicly funded managing interactions aquaculture project (MIAP).

However, in a letter to be published in Trout and Salmon magazine, the body will state: “The assertion that the project is intended to support aquaculture development is offensive and wrong . . . Political support for aquaculture expansion in Scotland is significant. The best option for wild fisheries is to prevent development in important and sensitive locations . . . The locational guidance part of MIAP will help with this.”

A document published by Rafts in July 2011 says a big “aspect of [MIAP] is a sensitivity analysis which will result in the production of locational guidance for planning marine aquaculture developments”.

However, Jon Gibb, a member of the Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board, said: “This will effectively rank rivers in order of importance. What on earth are we doing?”

“Rafts is, perhaps inadvertently, supporting the unsustainable expansion of aquaculture in onshore waters and ministers are buying endorsement from the wild fish community — what greater prize is there?”

Don Staniford, an anti-fish-farm campaigner, said: “Instead of being a guard dog for wild salmon, Rafts is rolling over on to its back and having its tummy tickled.”

Salmon is Scotland’s largest food export, with a global retail value of £1bn. In January 2011, the Scottish and Chinese governments signed a deal to export Scottish salmon to China.

Please take the time to investigate why your support for MIAP is misguided. Why are RAFTS, for example, refusing to answer basic questions?

“Last week, senior members of RAFTS were contacted by The Sunday Times but refused to answer questions about the locational guidance, part of its publicly funded Managing

Interactions Aquaculture Project (MIAP),” reported [The Sunday Times](#) (13 January 2013). “However, in a letter to be published in Trout & Salmon magazine, the body will state: “Political support for aquaculture expansion is significant. The best option for wild fisheries is to prevent development in important and sensitive locations.....The locational guidance part of MIAP will help with this.”

Please also read a [letter](#) published in the January 2013 issue of Trout & Salmon magazine:

“The Scottish Government have opened the market for Scottish farmed salmon to the Chinese,” wrote Jenny Scobie of the Rhidorroch Estate. “If 1% of the Chinese eat Scottish farmed salmon then fish farm production will be required to increase by 100%. Currently a 50% proposed increase is on the cards. You would think the battle cry would have gone out led by Rivers and Fisheries Trusts (RAFTS), followed by Association of Salmon Fishery Boards, Atlantic Salmon Trust and the Salmon & Trout Association. But no – seemingly before having time for a cup of tea RAFTS have delivered to Scottish Government their “answer” – The Managing Interactions of Aquaculture Project (MIAP). RAFTS have put together this project to cater and accommodate for this massive proposed expansion on the West Coast of Scotland which is already devastated and fragile by the effects of fish farming on the wild salmon and sea trout. Guidelines by RAFTS in conjunction with Scottish Government are to be produced with “science” to find new salmon farm sites in inshore lochs for this proposed expansion.”

For more details on MIAP please ask your wild fish representatives to update you on the current situation. RAFTS have made some documents available online via:

[“West Coast Wild Fisheries – Aquaculture Mitigation, Management and Liaison Programme”](#)
[“Managing Interactions – briefing on behalf of wild fish interests”](#)
[“Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project: Sea Trout Post Smolt Monitoring Project Regional Report 2011”](#)

Finally, we ask that you stop supporting the promotion of salmon farming on West coast Scottish sea lochs and start protecting wild salmon and sea trout. Please withdraw your support for MIAP immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Scobie, Rhidorroch Estate and member of the Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board
Jon Gibb, Clerk to the Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board
James Semple, Chairman of Shielbridge Ltd
Don Staniford, Director of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture