



## Catch Form 2005



### Freedom of Information, Confidentiality and your Catch Data

You will notice that we have added a new question as Part 1 of the catch return form you receive this year. The next few paragraphs will explain, as far as we are able at the moment, the reasons why we need to ask another question.

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 confer on citizens a right of access to recorded information held by Scottish public authorities such as FRS. This may include some of the information you supply each year by completing the catch return form.

The Data Protection Act 1998, however, gives individuals certain rights to privacy of 'personal' information relating to them and held by third parties, and places obligations on those who hold and process that information.

FRS is currently seeking clarification on how we may meet our obligations under both data protection and freedom of information legislation.

Once the situation becomes clear, we will advise how these issues are likely to affect you and how we collect and process the catch data provided in a further leaflet.

### Catch and Release Introduction

It has been clear for a number of years that numbers of spring salmon (early running MSW fish) returning to

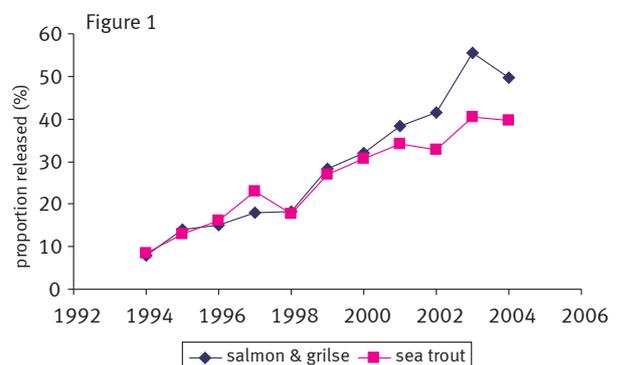
Scottish waters have been in decline. In the early 1990s it was recognised that such declines posed problems both for fisheries and the underlying populations. Since this time, a growing number of management interests such as District Salmon Fishery Boards, Fisheries Trusts and proprietors have encouraged the practice of catch and release as a means of increasing the number of potential spawners and protecting the resource.

Declines in the runs of sea trout are also evident in some areas. This has resulted in catch and release also being prosecuted as a conservation measure in sea trout fisheries.

### Results

FRS has been recording the numbers of fish released since 1994. Figure 1 shows the percentage of salmon (black line) and sea trout (pink line) released each year since 1994.

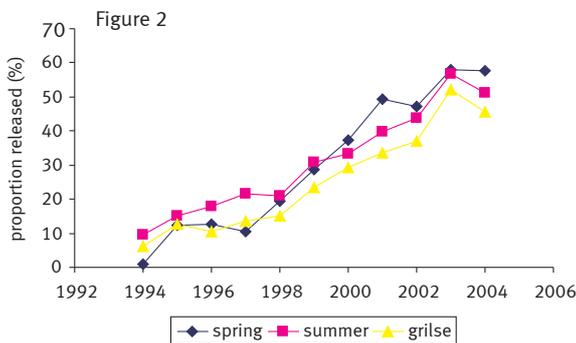
For both species, there is an increasing trend and the current level of release is 50% for salmon (46,249 fish)





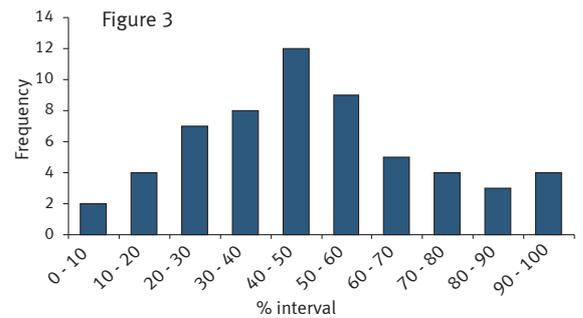
and 40% for sea trout (10,264 fish). These values are substantially higher than those recorded in 1994 (8% for salmon and 9% for sea trout).

The practice of catch and release has not been restricted to the early months of the fishing season. Figure 2 shows the level of catch and release for the spring salmon (black line) summer salmon (pink line) and grilse (yellow line) components of the overall salmon catch.



Both the annual level of catch and release and the increasing trends have been similar among components. In any one year, the percentage value has not varied by more than 10%.

So far we have looked at the percentage of salmon released for Scotland as a whole. Catch and release however, is not uniformly practised throughout the country. As an illustration, data for 2004 are presented in Figure 3. The percentage of salmon caught and released in each statistical district has been calculated. These correspond either to a single river catchment or a group of neighbouring smaller catchments. The x-axis shows the percentage of salmon released in a series of intervals from 0 to 10% to 90 to 100%. The bars show the number of districts where the percentage of salmon caught and released falls within that interval.



Districts vary considerably in both size and catch. The plot shows that catch and release varies from 0 to 100% across districts. However, 88% of districts returned between 30% and 70% of their total rod catch. This large variation around the country may indicate the degree to which local anglers perceive the status of the local salmon stock.

Catch and release is not restricted to Scotland and has been practiced throughout the North Atlantic in response to the widespread decline in salmon abundance. Similar to the variation in release levels recorded among districts within Scotland the uptake of catch and release varies among countries. For example, in 2004, 16%, 48%, 55% and 76% of rod-caught salmon were released in Iceland, England and Wales, Canada and Russia respectively.

## Conclusion

Catch and release is now a generally accepted practice and the current release level in Scotland is a valuable contribution to the conservation of all stock components.

An expanding range of information, including information leaflets, reports and papers, are available from the library at FRS Freshwater Laboratory, Faskally, Pitlochry, Perthshire, PH16 5LB, Tel: +44(0)1796 472060 or may be downloaded from [www.frs-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.frs-scotland.gov.uk) by following the Information Resources link.