



Full Steam Ahead for Partnership

The Partnership is well on the way of carrying out the first year of implementation targets

The Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust on behalf of the River South Esk Catchment Partnership earlier this year was awarded £20,000 by the Angus Environment Trust (landfill tax funding) allowing the proposed first phase of implementation of the River South Esk Catchment Management Plan to proceed. The success of this application ensured that match funding previously awarded by Angus Council, Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Cairngorms National Park Authority, and Rural Tayside LEADER were available, ensuring a further one year delivery of the objectives of the South Esk Catchment Management Plan (SECMP). The Implementation Phase began with the employment of a Project Co-coordinator to implement actions identified in the SECMP and to assist with the first flag-ship project for the partnership, the control of invasive non-native species (INNS project). The Steering Group have selected the INNS project as a priority as it believes that it is excellent way of engaging stakeholders in

the early stages of the implementation of the SECMP. The high-profile project is applicable to many of the plans action cards which include water quality, habitats and species, social and economic factors, water resources, flood management, and river engineering. Other priorities for this first year include enhancing relationships with catchment residents and business, promoting good ecological practice, investigating the economics of the catchment, developing an educational outreach programme and securing funding for future years implementation.

Montrose Basin looking North west over the catchment



Catchment Wide Weed Wipe Out

Invasive non native weeds eradication project in progress

Undertaking a catchment wide invasives weed eradication project has been no small feat but progress this year has been very successful. Treatment carried out by the contractor Tillhill Forestry Ltd. using Roundup Bioactive under licence from SEPA and authorisation (under SAC Legislation) from SNH has ensured that large swathes of the catchment have been treated. In excess of 180,000 sq m of

Giant Hogweed was sprayed beginning in the middle of the catchment and over 14,500 sq m of Japanese Knotweed were sprayed in the three main areas of infestation. The spraying programme ended in late October and will begin again in March/April next year. Seed banks and regrowth will contribute to new plants in future years, hence the need for continued spraying over several consecutive years.

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Ministerial Visit to River South Esk

FINAVON – 10 AUGUST 2010



Giant Hogweed in the catchment

“The Minister was also keen to see and hear the experience of land managers in delivering Government targets for biodiversity and water quality”

Children enjoying the Lathallan eco school event

The aim of a visit, hosted by Scottish Natural Heritage, was to show Roseanna Cunningham Minister for the Environment the collaborative catchment management work going on at the River South Esk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) including:

- ✦ South Esk Catchment Management Partnership & Plan;
- ✦ Fresh water pearl mussel and salmon conservation; and Practical management on the ground.

Tony Andrews, the partnerships chairman, kindly volunteered to host the day with a visit to his fishing beat along the South Esk at Finavon.

More detailed topics discussed included the background of the formation of The River South Esk Catchment Partnership, the production of the partnerships management plan, and future actions that will come out of it.

The partnerships flagship project the Invasive Non Native Species project was discussed in great depth and an area of river bank was walked looking at the Japanese Knotweed problem.

The Minister was also keen to see and hear the experience of land managers in delivering Government targets for biodiversity and water quality. SEPA elaborated on how

work on the catchment of the river as an SAC has fitted with the Water Framework Directive targets, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agencies (SEPA) priority catchments targets and partnership targets listed in the catchment management plan.

The brief visit was an excellent opportunity to show exactly what has been happening on the ground within the catchment and the theme of water quality, monitoring and enhancement was continued at the following visits to the SEPA office in Arbroath and at Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre.

Eco day Success

Partnership play a part in educating local school children on the importance of the South Esk Catchment

On 4th and 5th October, Lathallan held a huge two day Eco Event at which the South Esk Catchment Partnership were pleased to have an educational stand. More than 160 local school children attended the event which raised ecological concerns that children may encounter in their daily lives. The day kicked off with a “Eco debate” during which senior pupils were able to

quiz four environmental expert panellists.

In the Assembly Hall and outside the castle, exhibitors including The Royal Zoological Society with their Highland Tiger project, FirstGroup, Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Grampian Police Wildlife Crime Unit, Aberdeenshire Council's 'Eco Bus' RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and Mr Roy Cowie brought a firewood processing machine. All proved to be very popular with the pupils.

Lathallan has already achieved a Silver award from Eco Schools and we are now heading towards the prestigious Green Flag award. For more information please see <http://www.ecoschoolsscotland.org/>



Eurasian Otter Lutra lutra



Scotland is a European stronghold for the otter, Est. 8000 in 2003

Otters live up to ten years

Gestation in otters is about 60 to 86 days

Fresh water Otters occupy very large home ranges (around 32 km for males and 20 km for females).

Fresh water otters are largely (but not exclusively) nocturnal

In freshwaters, otters feed mainly on fish such as trout, salmon and eels

Road casualties are the no 1 threat to otters

See www.snh.gov.uk for more info

Diffuse Pollution & Priority Catchment Status

Working to improve water quality in the River South Esk

The river South Esk is vital for the economy of the Angus area, supporting sectors from farming and forestry, to fisheries, tourism and leisure. The river is also important in ecological terms, as it is home to internationally significant populations of Atlantic salmon and freshwater pearl mussels. These species prompted the South Esk to be designated a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) monitoring data, however, is showing that a number of the surface and groundwater bodies within the South Esk are at less than good status, and are suffering from elevated nutrient and sediment inputs from diffuse sources across the catchment. As part of the national strategic approach, SEPA have been working with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to try and tackle diffuse pollution on a catchment scale. SEPA monitoring data shows that several of the surface and

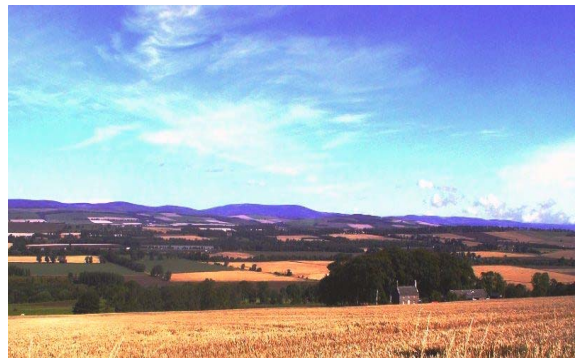
groundwater bodies in the South Esk are not achieving the good ecological status required by the Water Framework Directive. The river has also been assessed by SNH under their national 'Site Condition Monitoring' program, and found to be in an unfavourable condition. SNH has serious concerns over the long term survival of freshwater pearl mussels, which require exceptionally good water quality in order to reproduce successfully, with juveniles being particularly susceptible to increased levels of silt and nutrients in the river.

During April and May of this year, SEPA staff walked approximately 400km of the River South Esk and its tributaries. The focus of this work was to collect information on diffuse pollution sources, particularly breaches of the Diffuse Pollution General Binding Rules (DP GBR's). There were 95 cases of good practice, such as the presence of buffer strips and water troughs, recorded during the survey along with over 500 breaches of the DP GBRs:

- ten breaches related to the storage and application of fertiliser (DP GBR 18);
 - 257 breaches related to livestock, including significant poaching or erosion of land within five metres of surface water and livestock feeders being positioned within 10 metres of surface water or wetlands (DP GBR 19);
 - 234 breaches due to land being cultivated within two metres of a surface water or wetland (DP GBR 20);
- six breaches relating to the discharge of water run off via surface water drains to the water environment. (DP GBR 21). For further information please visit www.sepa.org.uk

“a number of the surface and groundwater bodies within the South Esk are at less than good status”

Views over the middle of the catchment



The Flying Flock has arrived!!

Innovative habitat management method underway at Montrose Basin LNR

In order to control vegetation in the Salt Pans area of Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve, the Scottish Wildlife Trust are utilising their very own flock of sheep to graze the site.

Grazing with the flock, which are used on reserves across Scotland, will:

Enhance the salt marsh habitat and many transitional swamp communities.

Maintain high biodiversity within the sward.

Encourage wildfowl by providing a more palatable sward for grazing.

Encourage wading birds by improving visibility for predator evasion.

Encourage breeding waders through overall habitat improvements.

Encourage waders to feed by muddying pool margins.

Montrose Basin is the enclosed estuary of the river South Esk and is a wildlife spectacle at this time of year. See <http://www.swt.org.uk> for further information.



Just visiting!

About The River South Esk Catchment Partnership



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland



SEPA
Scottish Environment
Protection Agency

South Esk Salmonid Stocks 2010



To address the many issues which affect the South Esk catchment, representatives of some organisations have been meeting regularly since 2004 with the development of an integrated Catchment Management Plan at the forefront of their aims. Gradually an informal Steering Group was formed*. The process of developing a Catchment Management Plan began in earnest in 2008 with the employment of a part-time Project Officer to oversee an intensive two year consultation phase which would capture people's views on what they considered the key environmental, social and economic issues to be within the catchment. These views were used to form the basis of the plans strategic aims, catchment objectives and actions. Phase one of the plans implementation is now well under way and development of the next phase of implementation is at the forefront of the Partnerships mind.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership would like to thank all its funders and supporters. Without them it would be impossible to carry out the work we are undertaking in this first year of the management plans implementation and indeed in future years.

The logos on display denote the funders of the 2010/11 phase. Their funding has allowed us to work towards enhancing and promoting many facets of the catchment .

The Esk District Salmon Fishery Board, Angus Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Scottish Agricultural College, Forestry Commission Scotland, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Macaulay Institute, Scottish Water, National Farmers Union Scotland, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate.

- A statistically significant model based on the rod catch trends during the preceding 20 years is used for estimating stock abundance.
- On the basis of rod catch returns up to and including the month of June, early-running stocks of multi-sea-winter salmon were the lowest on record for the period 1990-2010.
- In contrast, reports suggest that the rod catch for the period July – October was among the better years in recent times. Grilse remained on the small side.
- Sea trout like 2009 showed an improvement probably linked to the cold winters.
- It is interesting to note that improvements were also noted in sea bird colonies during that period with sandeels likely to be the common factor.



Upcoming events.....

In order to help land managers understand the requirements of the DP GBR's, including links with Cross Compliance, SEPA and the River South Esk Catchment Partnership will be hosting an event on Tuesday 25 January 2011, at the Finavon Hotel, Forfar, between 10.00 and 13:00 hours. This event will also provide information on potential funding streams for diffuse pollution mitigation measures and outline SEPA's 1:1 farm inspection programme in the South Esk catchment.

For further information please contact Susan Arnott at susan.arnott@sepa.org.uk

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