

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

Spey Fishery Board Launches “Save Our Smolts” Project to Protect Young Salmon

The Spey Fishery Board announces the launch of the Save Our Smolts project, a ground-breaking initiative aimed at protecting young Atlantic salmon, also known as Smolts, during their critical migration phase from the headwaters of the River Spey to the North Atlantic.

The Save Our Smolts Project is being launched in response to the crisis faced by Atlantic salmon populations. Atlantic salmon are born in the headwaters of the River Spey before journeying to sea and into the North Atlantic to feed. Protecting young salmon, known as smolts, during their critical migration phase is essential for the species' survival.

As participants in the Atlantic Salmon Trust's Moray Firth Tracking project, which looked at the downstream migration of salmon smolts, the Spey Fishery Board contributed to findings which are indicating that rivers with ‘pinch points’ experience higher smolt loss rate around these features. The Save Our Smolts project, building on this valuable data, aims to address this issue by trapping and relocating juvenile salmon around known pinch points on the River Spey, ensuring their safe passage.

During this year's trial, salmon will be collected in traps above Loch Inch, a known pinch point on the River Spey. The salmon will then be electronically tagged, with half released above the loch and half below. By monitoring the survival rates of the two groups, the project aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of trapping and relocating smolts on the River Spey.

The project, which will be running during the spring and early summer of 2023, highlights the importance of protecting young salmon, which are vital to the ecosystem and local economy.

Roger Knight, the Spey Fishery Board's Director, said,

"We are thrilled to be launching this important project, which has the potential to make a real difference to the survival of young salmon in the Spey. We believe that by working together, we can protect this vital part of our natural heritage and ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy these magnificent fish."

Dr Sandy Scott, Chairman of the Spey Fishery Board, said,

“Anglers from across the world visit the River Spey each year to fish for salmon, providing the backbone of our local economy. So we must do all we can to help our Atlantic salmon – an iconic species sadly now in crisis. This work is very demanding on the limited resources of the Board’s small team, but it is vital if we are to achieve our mission of getting as many salmon smolts as possible out to sea. We look forward to hearing about the results in due course.”

Mark Bilsby, CEO Atlantic Salmon Trust, said,

“This project is a great example of our sector working together and building on joint successes, ensuring that the important work from the Moray Firth Tracking Project stimulates further action to protect wild fish. That great, collaborative project is giving river boards and managers the confidence to take the next informed steps on their own catchments. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the River Spey, supporting them wherever we can to help them achieve their goals.”

Members of the public and businesses are encouraged to support the Save Our Smolts project and help ensure the survival of our iconic Atlantic salmon. If you would like to contribute financially to this critical work, please contact director@speyfisheryboard.com.

To find out more about the Save our Smolts project, please visit the Spey Fishery Board’s website here: <https://www.riverspey.org/news/save-our-smolts-trap-and-truck-project-launched-on-the-river-spey>

Regular updates on the progress of the Save Our Smolts project will be posted on the Spey Fishery Board social media channels using the hashtag #SaveOurSmolts.

For further information contact:

Roger Knight, Director, Spey Fishery Board, at director@speyfisheryboard.com or telephone [01340 810841](tel:01340810841) or 07919 284 482 (available Mon – Fri)

Notes to the editor:

Project images (see examples below) can be accessed here and used in all publications:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Ju3tfcSMpXtM9yC8o-Z--v-rzpVo8yu8?usp=sharing>



When using images, please credit: Spey Fishery Board

Spey Fishery Board Background Information

Founded in 1862, the Spey Fishery Board is a statutory body established under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003. Its primary role is to protect and enhance the fishery resources within the Spey catchment area, including the iconic Atlantic salmon. The board carries out a range of responsibilities, including river management, habitat improvement, scientific research, and promoting sustainable angling practices.

Committed to the long-term conservation and prosperity of the River Spey and its fisheries, the Spey Fishery Board collaborates with local and national organisations, landowners, and stakeholders to ensure the sustainable management of the river and its habitats. Through

research, education, and practical conservation initiatives like the Save Our Smolts project, the board strives to preserve and enhance the River Spey's valuable resources for the benefit of future generations.

For more information please visit: www.riverspey.org