



News



Salmon Farm Project Defeated in Outer Hebrides, Scotland

April 12th, 2011

Monday 11 April 2011

Application for Salmon Farm in Isle of Lewis defeated

Fish Legal is celebrating with local protestors on the Isle of Lewis following the Western Isles Council's ("Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar") refusal of planning permission for a salmon farm in Broad Bay near Stornoway, one of the last pristine bays on the island to be free of fish farms.

The application for planning permission was made by Lighthouse Caledonia, a company which already has 35 fish farms in the Hebrides and the West Coast of Scotland. The company has a productive capacity of over 20,000 tonnes per annum, which amounts to 20% of Scottish farmed salmon production. The company is now known as 'the Scottish Salmon Company' although the vast majority of the company is owned by Swiss and Norwegian investors.

One of the principal reasons why the application was rejected was that Lighthouse failed to satisfy the Council that the fish farm would not endanger local wild salmon and sea trout populations, in the light of concerns raised by Fish Legal. It is now well established that poorly sited fish farms can be a material cause of sea louse infection on local sea trout populations; a situation that can lead to widespread mortality and population collapse. This danger has not been fully recognised by planners in the past.

Local rivers such as the Gress and the Creed are exceptional amongst West Coast and Hebridean rivers in that they have enjoyed sustained increased in their salmon and sea trout catches over the last few years; a fact that may not be totally unrelated to the absence of fish farms in the locality. Not only has this been a great boon to the locals who fish the rivers but angling remains an important contributor to the local economy of the Western Isles with estimates that it supports as many as 250 full time jobs.

The local fishing associations who own and run much of the local waters around Broad Bay have run an energetic campaign to keep out the fish farm and have enjoyed widespread support, particularly in the local community. Initially there was concern that in recent years applications for fish farm development on the west coast of Scotland have enjoyed almost universal approval by local councils despite the concerns of local angling and fisheries groups regarding the dangers posed by aquaculture.

Fish Legal was called in to help, and was able to arrange for the submission to the Council of a detailed letter signed by 18 senior fishery biologists advising them of the very real dangers posed by the proposed fish farm to the local wild salmonid population.

Fish Legal Solicitor Robert Younger commented: 'I am delighted that the Comhairle took note of the warning given by the fisheries biologists. For too long the environmental concerns have been brushed aside by planning authorities and I commend the Comhairle for rejecting this application. Too many west coast fisheries have been damaged by fish farms sited near their river mouths and we should make sure that the few remaining healthy rivers are protected. I very much hope that Lighthouse Caledonia will respect the decision of the Council supported by the vast majority of the locals and not appeal this decision'.

Fish Legal is currently working alongside the Salmon & Trout Association and the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards to fight the threat posed by aquaculture to wild fish and the aquatic environment.

Notes to Editors

Fish Legal is the new name for the Anglers' Conservation Association, which was founded in 1948 to use the law to fight to protect the aquatic environment and fisheries. Since then, the organisation has settled and won in excess of two thousand cases and recovered many millions of pounds in damages, which has been returned to the members represented to plough back into angling and the protection of the aquatic environment. Only four cases have ever been lost in Court. Fish Legal employs its own in-house legal team covering the whole of the UK, including a Scots-qualified lawyer.

Fish Legal operates throughout the UK and is backed by tens of thousands of individual anglers. Fish Legal is the legal arm of the Angling Trust in England.

If you have any comments on Atlantic salmon issues and coverage, or would like further information, contact:

Sue Scott, V.P. Communications
1-506-529-1027
E-mail: sscott@asf.ca

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International Headquarters, St. Andrews, N.B., Canada

Phone: (506) 529-1033 / Fax: (506) 529-4438

asfweb@nbnet.nb.ca

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