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Finlay Carson MSP  
Convener  
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

By Email: [rural.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:rural.committee@parliament.scot)

19 May 2023

Dear Finlay,

I was pleased to be able to update the Committee on various matters relating to aquaculture at the session on 10 May. During the session I offered to provide more information on the Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan (the Plan) and the timelines and reporting associated with it.

[The Plan](#) was published in February 2023, setting out over sixty actions to be taken to address the wide range of pressures acting on wild salmon. These actions will help to protect and restore populations allowing us to achieve our vision of flourishing populations of wild salmon.

Since publication of the Plan, a stakeholder Delivery Group (the Group) has been established which will oversee and direct delivery of the actions within the Plan. Based on the timelines for actions set out in the Plan the Group will develop a work plan which describes the programme of work to be taken forward and associated deadlines in greater detail. The Group will also be responsible for preparing an annual progress report, with the first one expected to be published in 2024.

Work is ongoing to deliver the actions within the plan, notable progress that has been made since publication includes;

- Establishment of a Science Advisory Board which will meet for the first time at the end of May. The role of the Board will be to develop a coordinated approach to research and monitoring activities across multiple organisations.
- The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022 came into force in April 2023 for the 2023 salmon fishing season. This requires mandatory catch and release of salmon in areas which fall below their defined conservation limit.

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- Improved support for riparian tree planting, taking into account multiple benefits has been delivered and target areas have been identified. Support for planting is prioritised in places where multiple benefits for the environment can be delivered including reducing river temperatures, decreasing flood risk and increasing biodiversity.
- Collaborating with our international partners through the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) and will be attending the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in June 2023.
- Preparing for a potential invasion of invasive non native pink salmon in Summer 2023 we have worked with our partners in the Pink Salmon Task Group to refresh the guidance for members of the public on what to do if these fish are caught or spotted in Scottish waters and how to report sightings.
- Working with SEPA as they continue to develop a new sea lice risk assessment framework to manage the interaction between wild and farmed fish, a further consultation on the framework is expected this month.

The Group will review and shape the programme of work in light of new evidence and other policy developments on an ongoing basis. This dynamic, adaptive approach will ensure that the programme of work in Scotland to support salmon restoration can be adjusted as we gain more insight into pressures and successful mitigation options.

The underlying delivery approach for the Wild Salmon Strategy is set out in a graph attached as Annex A.

I am happy to provide an update to the Committee as the important work to conserve and restore our wild Atlantic salmon progress.

I hope that the Committee finds this helpful.

Yours sincerely,



**MAIRI GOUGEON**

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## ANNEX A

A schematic diagram of how the different groups (blue) formed as part of the delivery of the Wild Salmon Strategy and Implementation Plan interact with each other and the outputs (green) they are responsible for.

### Wild Salmon Strategy - Delivery Structure



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