

Joint Land Management Forum & Spey Catchment Initiative Meeting

Held on 26th September 2012

At Boat of Garten Community Hall

Notes provided by Sally Worsdall of the Spey Fisheries Board

OPEN FORUM

Will Boyd Wallis, Programme Manager for Land and Conservation, Cairngorms National Park Authority welcomed everyone and gave an introduction on the Land Management Forum which was followed by an open discussion on the current affairs affecting Land Managers.

Cairngorms Nature

A presentation was given to announce a new Cairngorms Nature Management Group. The first meeting was to be held on Thursday 27th September. The structure of the strategy group will consist of key members from Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission, National Trust Scotland, Dee River Trust, Cairngorm National Park Authority, RSPB, Scottish Land Estates. Farming and community representatives on the management group have yet to be confirmed but will be added. These agents would lead on the future strategy of “Cairngorms Nature” while a wider Partnership will meet perhaps once a year to take an overview and monitor progress in Nature Conservation in the National Park. A discussion followed surrounding the structure of the group and the initial draft and will be finalised following the first meeting.

The main areas of focus for Cairngorms Nature are on are the following:

- Woodlands & Wetlands
- Grassland & Moorland/Montane
- Local Sites – areas in communities
- Bio-security (disease and invasive species)
- Vulnerable species, eg Wildcat, pine hover fly, capercaillie etc
- People – Importance to engage with communities, volunteering groups etc

At a recent Argyll Meeting for the Management of Protected species, farmers wanted a discussion on species such as ticks in lambs. The SNH produced a Protective Species Framework which will be looked at by the group. A discussion then followed and it was agreed that people involved from agencies need to be more hands-on and to look at including farmers in the Management Group so that they can highlight problems and to bring solutions together. Will Boyd-Wallis confirmed that the intention of Cairngorms Nature was to ensure that land managers and the community continue to be at the heart of nature conservation in the National Park.

Wildlife Estates Scotland

This initiative developed by a steering group led by Scottish Land and Estates has been piloted in the National Park with 6 estates taking part. Hamish Trench reported that across Scotland approximately 200 Land Managers have already signed up for Level 1. The target in the National Park is to have at least 75% of estates signed up.

Red Band Needle blight (Dothistroma)

Dothistroma needle blight (also known as red band needle blight) is caused by the fungus *Dothistroma septosporum*. The natural dispersal of the fungus is spread over long distances through winds. The Forestry Commission announced on the news that the Dothistroma Needle Blight is affecting large areas of commercial forestry and that it is expected to have the greatest impact in the north and north-east of Scotland, where pine accounts for almost half of the woodland area. The Forestry Commission reported that this could have a great impact on the National Park which affects trees including the Corsican Pine, Lodgepole Pine and Scots Pine.

The Forestry Commission recommend the following courses of action:

- To be vigilant – *‘Symptoms are first seen at the base of the crown on older needles. Infected needles typically develop yellow and tan spots and bands, which soon turn red. As the disease progresses, the ends of the needles then turn reddish-brown whilst the needle base remains green. ‘*
- Bio-security – one way to help control the spread of the disease is to clean boots, clothing and plant machinery when moving from one forest to another. Trimming tops of trees and thinning can also control the spread.
- The Forestry Commission state that further planting of Corsican Pine is not recommended and also advise that Lodgepole Pine has been suspended in Forestry Commission woods.

Further information on training, the control and management of this disease can be found from the Forestry Commission Forest Guide 2012 at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry

Training

Will Boyd Wallis announced that there are a wide range of Land Management Training Projects available designed for land based businesses and that other future courses are being looked at following suggestions from feedback forms. Forthcoming training:

17th October – Hydro Event – Atholl Estates, Perthshire

24th October – Animal Nutrition (Venue to be confirmed)

Funding Fair – Date and venue to be confirmed

13th November – Wildfire Prevention, Laggan Gaskmore Hotel

22nd November – Wildfire Prevention, Lonach Hall, Strathdon

Further information about these courses and registration is available from Laura Grant (lauragrants@ Cairngorms.co.uk / 01479 870500).

WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS ON 3 KEY SPEY CATCHMENT INITIATIVE PROJECTS

Three workshops were run to focus on a different priority led by Steering Group members as follows:

- Riparian and Wetland Enhancement - Anne Elliot and Duncan Ferguson
- Natural Flood Management - Matt Smith and Debbie Halliday
- Catchment Management Processes - Eilidh Johnston and Alastair Mathieson – SEPA

Following a 20 minute workshop for each group the Facilitators fed back to the whole forum the barriers to progress each of the SCI priorities and what possible solutions could overcome these.

Riparian and Wetland Enhancement

The aim is to reduce diffuse pollution, stabilise riverbanks to reduce erosion, control runoff, habitats, create shading with woodland corridors. Working with Farmers to identify problems would achieve the best outcome.

Barriers

- There is a limit to available land to create a wetland
- Perceptions in culture
- SRDP criteria needed to meet funding
- Loss of land
- Land in different units

Opportunities

- An increase in sporting/tourism value
- Can be created quickly, unlike planting trees and introduces wildlife immediately
- Planting coppice crops can benefit landowners to enhance wet ground
- Improve habitat for salmon by creating riparian woods
- SRDP – a change in structure, ie grants at £15,000 and under for smaller schemes which would be self monitored

Generally, everyone was interested but cautious with different points of view expressed and would like to receive grants.

Natural Flood Management

This means taking the energy out of the water flow, reconnecting rivers with their floodplains, improving wetlands with small improvements to create a large cumulative effect overall naturally.

Barriers

- Conflicts of interest slowing the flow down
- Sacrificing land for development can lead to poor planning
- Natural flood management needs to be sold to the Farmers

Solutions

- Methods of compensation
- Incentives to sign up
- Relaxing planning applications in upland catchments
- Payment for blocking drains on hills

Catchment Management Processes

A study has already been piloted with the aim to produce a baseline understanding of how the Spey system works and to create a basic understanding of hydrology and morphology. This will give the opportunity to collate a whole range of data to do with the river that could be accessible to all and be used to inform decision making at all levels.

Key Points

- Importance of local knowledge from Farmers, Ghillies and Land Managers – The Spey Catchment Initiative will help to achieve this

Potential Use

- Helping to make better responses
- Identify an area and where is the best approach
- Catchment wide approach is key and money would be helpful