

Minutes

Attendees: Andrew Kerr, David Bunt, Richard Fordham (Sweden), Chris Leftwich, Miran Aprahamian, Alex Koelewijn (Holland) Jac Tijssen (Holland), Matt Gollock, Barry Bendall, Brian Knights, Roger Castle

Guests: Paul Coulson IFM, David Jacobi, ZSL

Apologies: Peter Wood, Peter Neusinger, Andy Don, Alan Walker, Alistair Maltby, Marc-Adrien Marcellier, Corine Rozendaal, Andrew Morgan, John Van Dooren, Vin Fleming,

1. Introduction

Actions

Andrew described the enormous progress made by SEG in recent years and months thanks to the commitment of individuals and the strength of our organisation through our partnerships and how we are continually developing new partnerships.

The forthcoming eel conference will be important as a large one, drawing from across Europe.

Also, the significant recent work to provide briefings to Brussels MEPs on the situation with the eel.

Our challenge is environmental with many tens of thousands of barriers to migration in Europe to unblock. 320 have been unblocked in England & Wales in the past 2 years with few elsewhere in Europe.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting Jan 2013

Agreed as a true record

3. Updates and Matters Arising

3.1. IUCN Listing Review Process in July (Matt Gollock)

Matt and David at ZSL are progressing the review of the IUCN listing of Anguillid species.

Engaging people and collating data. Conference call last week. **Next key milestone to prepare for is Workshop 1 – 5 July.** Note that IUCN members are voluntary.

3.2. From DUPAN including the presentation of certificates (Alex Koelewijn)

6921 silver eels (weighing 4252 kilos) were transferred over the Dyke at 17 major pumping stations of a total 4671 locations in Holland to the sea in autumn 2012. It was self-funded but Dupan are seeking funds to increase the programme over future years and announced that the Dutch Government was investing €240k for this Autumn.

The unblocking of migratory pathways ought to be an important factor to influence support from NGOs such as WWF and Greenpeace to our objectives instead of their current opposition. Brian suggested that these silver eel numbers should also be converted to number of potential eggs contributed to the spawning stock.

Barry suggested that an estimate of fishing efficiency would also be helpful if possible.

Miran suggested that each member state needs to have better data on the impacts of each anthropogenic factor so that we know better the effects of each fishing, barriers, pumping stations etc.

A presentation of SEG Certificates was made to a large proportion of Dutch Fish Farmers and Smokeries at an event in Vollandam, the Netherlands, on 9 April. This event means that over half of the industry in Holland is now certified and capable of dealing in Certified Sustainable Eel.

3.3. From France including this seasons recruitment

Andrew gave an update on successive recent visits to France. The French are increasingly supporting the sustainable agenda.

Catch rates suggest possibly the best recruitment of Glass eels in the Bay of Biscay in the 2012/13 season for 10 – 15 years.

3.4. From the Severn & Parrett this year's recruitment

After a very slow start due to the cold spring and endless easterly winds, catches on the Parrett also seem to be the best for 10 – 15 years. There are early positive signs on the Severn too. Brian suggested that climatic and environmental factors affecting sea survival are probably the cause of the better Glass eel runs this year. eg. the NAO (North Atlantic Oscillation) was at it's lowest since 1864 in 2010. Glass eel catches have shown a relationship by a 2 year lag with the NAO.

Roger Castle described very high recruitment on the Stour last summer and a very good run of Silver Eels in the autumn.

The Glass eel crash around 1980 suggests climatic factors which also ties in with declines in salmon populations.

3.3 Progress on the 'Technical Review' of the Eel Regulation (Andrew Kerr)

Andrew described the so far successful lobbying / influencing of EU MEPs in Brussels to counter the attempts by Isabella Lovin MEP to introduce an emergency ban on fishing across the EU. Andrew and others (Richard F, Barry, Didier) have been, and continue to be, pushing the environmental arguments and the sustainable agenda. David is attending in Hamburg with Arne on 24 April to assist a German presentation.

Information on the economic impacts would be helpful – **Andrew & Dupan to use the SEG network to gain best estimates of economic information.** Brian Knights / David Righton / Maria Damanaki have also collated economic information in the past.

Matt pointed out that **we should support Lovin's amendments where we agree with them.** The September – October 2013 period will be the most important opportunity to influence the Eel Regulation.

3.4 Progress on contractual agreements (Chris Leftwich)

We have agreements with several organisations – two for use of the SEG Eco-label and with Dupan for their partnership contribution, and two other MoUs.

3.5 Financial position

Andrew spoke briefly to the financial report which had been circulated with the agenda and was agreed as a reflection of SEG accounts.

3.6 Wetlands International

Andrew explained that wetlands International are forming a new Company to focus on wetlands and rivers in Europe and have asked SEG if they would like to participate. This idea was welcomed and Andrew will proceed and engage with this project.

4. **The London Eel Festival June 2013** (Paul Coulson)

Paul Coulson of the Institute of Fisheries Management gave an update on the arrangements for the London Eel Festival 25 – 28 June. This will include the Conference as well as a series of other related events, eg. trips to Billingsgate Fish Market. Discussions about how best to ensure the arrival of the Dutch Eel Barge.

5. **Delivering the EFF Conservation Project** (Barry Bendall)

5.1 Review actions to complete EFF project

Barry outlined where we are with each of the EFF projects (further below) and what needs to be done to complete them with the correct governance by the end of May.

- 5.2 Glass Eel measurement in the Severn
Delivered by EA and Cefas. Monitoring happening at the moment – end date of project is May.
- 5.3 Schools Education Programme
Progressing gaining information on plans & expenditure for the project report fromm Severn & Wye Smokery.
- 5.4 Unblocking Migratory Pathways
Prioritising barriers for removal & habitat creation project all going to plan.
Passage improvements (total £650k), 44 on target for delivery (£400k) by Rivers Trusts and no.?? [awaiting figure from Andy Don] & £250k by the EA. These are in addition to the 320 already mitigated by the EA.
- 5.5 Restocking Strategy for the Severn
The Environment Agency has agreed in principle (1) to extend the fishing season on the Severn due to the cold start to the 31 May and (2) to allow surplus Glass eels from the Parrett and Severn to be moved and re-stocked and for bio-security reason this must only happen within the same River basin district. Fishermen have agreed to donate the surplus fish. EA wish to see a strategic stocking plan before it is fully approved. **Andrew is progressing.**
- 5.6 Eel Standard Development
Progressing and expenditure claims have gone in – need to update and provide paperwork for expenditure, plus a launch event (to be at the London Festival – may need written approval as beyond the project end date. **David / Andrew**
- 5.7 Eel Forum
Banners, website etc. to all be accounted for. **Andrew**

We need to be credible with our project governance to help ensure allocation of future project funds. **We are developing a Phase 2 bid for future project spends to submit by 20 May.**

6. Annual General Meeting (Andrew)

- 6.1 Annual Report. The Chairman's Annual Report was presented by David and agreed by those present as a record of the most important activities of the past year.
- 6.2 Financial Statement. Agreed as an accurate record Peter
- 6.3 Elections. Board membership. Agreed on how to present Govt. Observers, and how to present European membership. The amended Board Membership will be coirculated with the notes of the meeting.
Matt Gollock wished to record the Group's thanks to Andrew Kerr for his untiring efforts as Chairman. Andrew recorded his thanks to SEG members for their commitment and dedication to conserving the eel.

7. Progress on the Mature Eel Standard (David Bunt)

David reported on progress with the Sustainable Eel Standard:

- 7.1 Certificates awarded. The following table summarises the number of Certificates awarded over the past 2 years. This means that over half of the operators in Europe are now certified and capable of dealing in Certified Sustainable Eel. Of these, 7 are due for renewal in the next 3 months, having been assessed in Spring 2011 (certificates last for 2 years).

Certificates

Type	Awarded	Applied
Glass eel Fisheries	5	
Buyers	5	1
Farmers	16	3

Eel Fishing	0	
Smokers / Processors	22	
Total	48	4

In the past 6 months there have been 3 reports of operators with Certificates possibly not complying with the expectations of those who are certified. These have been investigated with the outcomes: 1 has had the certificate withdrawn; 1 is still under investigation and 1 had made some genuine errors and has amended practices and procedures.

7.2 Conditions of Use & use of Logos. The reported misuses of Certificates indicated that we had not set out clearly what the Certificate means; what it can be used for and the difference between the Eel Standard Certificate and Eco-label. A set of Conditions of Use (provided with the agenda) has now been developed which is being shared with all Certificate holders. The basic differences are: (1) the Certificate shows that an operator has complied with high standard has the ability to deal in Certified Sustainable Eel; (2) the Eco-label can only be used by those operators on batches of sustainable product and after a licence agreement with SEG.

7.3 Printing of Eco-labels

The most suitable printing and numbering arrangements for SEG eco-labels was discussed to maintain a balance of (1) administrative simplicity (2) flexibility and (3) security and credibility. It was agreed: (1) SEG to control and allocate sequential batch codes to operators, (2) Operators to print their own labels suitable to their packaging and according to SEG standards, numbering and controlled, (3) all batch coding to be auditable to give confidence that the label on the final retail / wholesale product has a traceable and Sustainable chain of custody to a Sustainable Source. **David** to check this against MSC standards and with Richard Wailes of MEP before communicating to operators.

7.4 Improvements to the Standard

The Standard has been undergoing review and improvement over recent months. We will be consulting on the content and methodology with the Standard Panel, SEG members and other stakeholders with the aim of launching an upgraded Standard at the Eel Festival in London in June.

8. **Forward Planning Dates**

All to note the following dates in diaries.

Month	Major Events	SEG Events
January	Sweden Eel Conference 23 / 24th	Board
February		
March		
April	9th Award of SEG Certificates in Holland	Board /AGM
May		
June	London Eel Festival 25/26/27 – Launch Mature Standard	Host
July	IUCN Eel Listing. ICES report to Commission	
August	STEFEC Report to Commission	
September	ERR Conference Vienna	24 th Board
October		
November		
December	The Commission Reports to the European Parliament	Board
January		7 th Board