

Minutes of the SEG Meeting 13 Jan 2016 at Van der Valk, Schiphol

Attendees: Andrew Kerr (Chairman), David Bunt (Standards Panel Chair), Willem Dekker (SEG Science Leader, SLU Sweden), Alex Koelewijn (SEG Commercial Leader, DUPAN, Netherlands), Frank Hoffmann (Wetlands International) Netherlands Deputy for Alison Debney as SEG Conservation Leader, Jac Tijsen, Norbert Jeronimus; John Van Dooren, Magnus van der Meer, Hans Boon, Willem Swinkels (NIVIS), Han Walder (Apesca), Koen Dil (Dilvis), (Netherlands) Richard Fordham SSE (Sweden), Marc-Adrien Marcellier (France), Arne Koops, Gert Gotting, Alexander Wever - Aal Initiative (Germany), Paul Coulson (IFM), 19 Present

Guests: Matthew Wenban-Smith and Aimee Russillo via conference call from London and USA

Apologies: Alison Debney (SEG Conservation Leader, ZSL) Chris Leftwich (Fishmongers Company), Alison Debney, Matt Gollock (ZSL), Andy Don (EA), Simon Toms, Andy Sadler, Kerry Sims (EA), Vin Fleming (JNCC), Simon Soffe, Roger Castle, Alistair Maltby, Barry Bendall (Rivers Trust). Brian Knights, Miran Aprahamian, (Independent scientists), Armando Piccini (Italy), Rodolfo Barrera (Spain). Corine Rozendaal, Peter Neusinger (UK), Peter Philipsen, Morten Lauritzen (Denmark), Peter Wood (UK) and many others!

Welcome and focus for the meeting

Andrew welcomed everyone, reported that once again, there has been many developments, and once again we are at an important point in our evolution. The meeting is about updating and information sharing – it is structured into two parts. The morning until lunch time has the three themes Science, Conservation, Commercial and the afternoon is devoted to the SEG ISEAL programme. The back drop to the meeting is: strong reports of recruitment in France, renewed action to curtail illegal trade, the Arzal fishery meeting the Standard, the German Eel Initiative commencing. The challenge is pushing onwards with effective action for recovery and proving the concept of eel sustainability.

“Collaboration between science, conservation and the industry across all of Europe and North Africa is the only way to solve the eel crisis”

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting September 2015 at ZSL London

- Proposed by Jac Tijsen and accepted as a true record

2. General Matters short briefings mostly arising from the Minutes

2.1. Governance and Finance Update

- The start up loan from UK Glass Eels has now been re-paid. Thanks to you all for your help.

- A new firm of Accountants have been engaged to do quarterly management reports plus VAT and annual returns – the leader will be Simon Fisher from Shinner Mitchell Fisher, Chartered Accountants, Stroud, Gloucestershire. This was agreed and ratified.
- SEG would be refreshing the web site and introducing several languages

2.2. Standards, Assessments and Panels

David Bunt gave an update on the current status of certifications. He also presented proposals on how the Panel should expand and divide between 'Setting' and 'Managing' the Standard. SEG members commented on the proposals and suggested membership of each panel. The aim is to have the proposed membership in place for the next SEG meeting in April.

2.3. Meeting the Commission both in the Hague and Brussels

Willem Dekker and Andrew Kerr had had a series of meetings on Monday and Tuesday in Brussels. The purpose was to explore and understand the latest developments on eel within the Brussels Political and Commission community.

The outcome was renewed determination for SEG to work across Member State promoting collaboration between stakeholders. The latest of the ICES 3 yearly reviews of progress would provide the science base to inform the calls for effective recovery action.

2.4. Outcome of the SEG meeting in Paris on trade

Andrew started by recalling the SEG September meeting at ZSL where Traffic presented evidence of the illegal trade of 20 tonnes of Glass eel to Asia in each of the last 2 years. At that meeting there was widespread condemnation and a call for action - SEG should take the lead as the illegal trade undermines our objectives, our credibility and our purpose – The sustainable solution.

As a result SEG has since briefed Europol and CITES and the authorities in Europe are collaborating. Four people were arrested in Hong Kong just a few days ago. SEG members are encouraged to share intelligence information with the authorities to help stop the illegal trade.

The current situation is unacceptable to SEG with a home market for Europe for consumption of some 15 -17 tons and for restocking of about 12 -15 tons - therefore a total legitimate market of about 30 tons. SEG estimates that the annual catches are running way above this level and could be double.

SEG is determined to find answers so that the CITES Convention is upheld, the illegal trade ceases and the 60/40 restock to consumption ratio is boosted and met.

3. Science Progress

Briefing from the ICES EIFAC Meeting in Turkey

Willem Dekker gave a detailed briefing from the ICES / EIFAAC/GFCM meeting of Antalya, Turkey in November 2015. The slides are attached and the full report is at

Headlines:

- The 2nd Three Yearly Review of EMP's by Member States
- The data is shown as presented by Member States
- Accurate and consistent population measurement remains very problematic
- Although better glass eel recruitment over the past 4 years, this does not yet indicate a sustained recovery. It is still at historically very low levels
- Very few management plans show improvement
- Much improved reporting with 80% of MS basically complying
- A very long way to go

4. Conservation Progress

4.1 Wetlands International European Association

Frank Hoffmann gave an outline of Wetlands International's work and common objectives with SEG to conserve the European Eel. In particular he spoke of the success at winning funding for the Association and how Eel has become a flagship species of their plans.

4.2 World Fish Migration Day 21 May 2016

Paul Coulson reported on this world wide event that tells the story of blocked fish migration pathways and how this represented a great opportunity to tell the restocking / translocation story for the European Eel. The plan is to assemble a tally by member state of the numbers moved this season Oct to 21 May. The announcement will be made in New York. The programme is organised from the Netherlands by Hermann Wanningen who has worked with SEG from the inception (the Bridgewater Eel Conference of 2009).

4.3 IFM EA SEG Eel Conference Peterborough

Paul Coulson reported a well attended conference in November – 135 delegates from 13 countries attended. The programme concentrated on practical implementation solutions to eel passage. A big world eel symposium is planned for June 2017 in London.

4.4 EMFF availability of application forms

They should be available from mid January

4.5 INTEREG Programmes Atlantic and North Sea

Magnus Van der Meer reported on the Intereg project. This is an opportunity to promote eel recovery through member states working together to share best practice and bring about the sustainable solution. In addition to the two headline regions ideas were also being developed for the Baltic and Mediterranean. One of the major themes will be to develop the most efficient and effective practices for restocking – all as part of the process and learning that is needed to show net benefit. The first meeting of interested parties was to take place on Thursday.

5. Commercial and Fishing Progress

5.1 Alex Koelewijn gave a presentation on the commercial sector's vision for the future of SEG.

The headline message was that the Industry and Fishery were focusing on Eel Stewardship as part of their contribution to the sustainable and recovery agenda. It was SEG's role with the science, conservation and industry inputs to lead the Sustainability logics and principles.

He spoke of a growing and strengthening agenda and of the major challenges ahead. Especially the need for collaboration across member states to create the supply chains that meet the SEG Standard. The industry has a very important role in proving sustainability by implementing full traceability and playing its part in the ending of illegal trade.

The ISEAL programme is of immense importance and there is work to do in strengthening the Assurance aspects and getting behind the Impacts code so that positive benefits can be demonstrated and proven to doubting stakeholders. It will be transparent and open process.

The fishing season in France had indicated strong recruitment and sales in the run up to Christmas had been better than last year.

Alex called for all countries to develop Stewardship Funds like DUPAN's and now the Aal Initiative in Germany. He was keen to help any country with this plan and can enable this to happen.

5.2 Progress with the German Eel Initiative

Alexander Wever reported that the German stewardship fund was receiving strong support and the formal processes were nearly complete and contracts signed.

5.3 Progress with the French Eel Initiative

Marc-Adrien reported that Jerome Gurruchaga is making good progress with developing a sustainable supply chain from France. The Arzal fishery will be approved within a week or so. Other fisheries and collectors had applied to start the process leading to assessment to the SEG Standard.

6. ISEAL Programme

Matthew and Aimee led the meeting through their review and recommendations talking from the circulated slides.

A revised SEG Standard is to be prepared for Spring 2017 and will flow from both the 'Stakeholder Review' and lessons learnt over the last three years of operation.

The meeting agreed to proceed with the ISEAL process.

7. Some Key Dates Going Forward for 2016

- 15th Feb UK Glass Eel Fishery Opens until 25th May
- 23rd Feb ISEAL Theory of Change Workshop Potsdam
- 24th/25th Feb Aal Initiative Potsdam
- INTEREG bids submitted in March
- 26th/27th April River Restoration Conference Blackpool
- 21st May 2016 World Fish Migration day
- Set SEG May Meeting date - London
- Set SEG October Meeting date – France
- January 2017 - Copenhagen

The Meeting was held in the context of SEG's Directional Objectives:

1. To organise and mature SEG's governance and structures as one European entity
2. To win funding to achieve SEG's goal
3. To develop the communication network across Europe so that the SEG message is heard, believed and acted upon
4. To enable, coordinate and expand sound eel scientific research
5. To build and develop conservation programmes with partners throughout the eel's natural range
6. To promote sustainable fisheries and commercial supply chains in the major countries concentrating on the 'Atlantic' focus first
7. To achieve ISEAL accreditation (membership) for the SEG Standard, its governance and complementary programmes