Cromarty Firth Fishery Board

Monthly Report – July 2025

Salmon Conservation Status – River gradings for 2027 (Proposed)

The assessment for the 2027 season has been made using the most up to date data available from fish counters and catch returns from the 2025 fishing season. On the whole for Scotland, it makes for pretty bleak reading. Downgrades have been suggested for the River Beauly, Shin, Ness, Clyde and Forth with one of the big 4 (the Dee) being now categorised as Moderate conservation status (Category 2).

The Conon, although receiving its lowest value in 2025 is still a clear Category 1 river, just below 90%. We are now one of 22 Rivers in Scotland in Good conservation status.

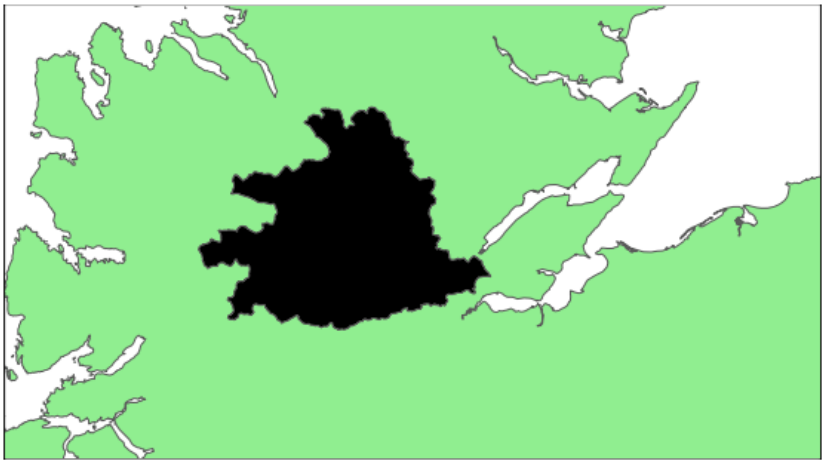
The Alness has fared relatively well considering the impact of drought and record low catches in previous years. These numbers are based on rod catch so highlight the importance of rod effort and maintaining a fishing presence even in poor years. This is the first year that the Alness has dipped below the 60% required to remain as a category 2 river.

Conservation status	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027 (proposed)
Good	37	29	32	31	32	22
Moderate	35	31	29	24	26	28
Poor	101	113	112	118	115	123

Figure 1: The status of Scottish rivers 2022 – 2027.

Good conservation status
At least 80% probability of meeting the CL. Exploitation is sustainable therefore no additional management action is currently required.
Moderate conservation status
Between 60-80% probability of meeting the CL. Management action is necessary to reduce exploitation: catch-and-release should be promoted strongly in the first instance.
Poor conservation status
Less than 60% probability of meeting the CL. Exploitation is unsustainable therefore management actions required to reduce exploitation for one year i.e. mandatory catch-and-release (all methods).

River Conon: Good Conservation Status



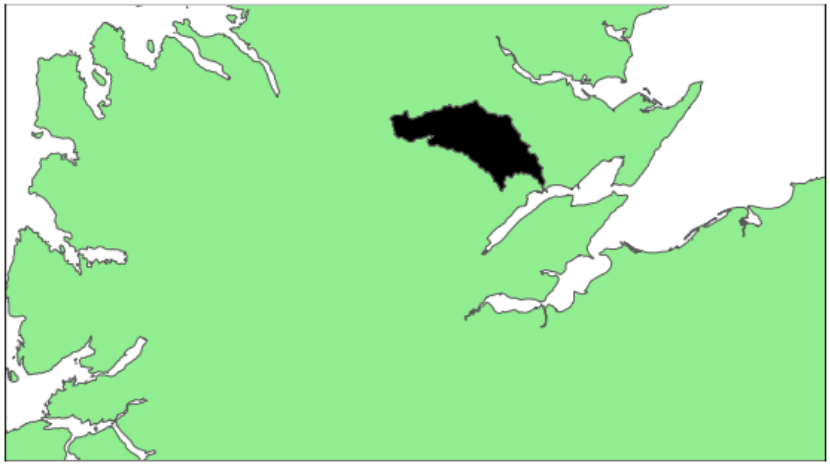
Summary Table

Eggs required (m^2)[a]	Area (m^2)[a]	Total egg requirement[a]	Percentage chance meeting requirement						Status
			2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Overall	
2.85	2,304,000	6,540,000	93.79	93.85	87.1	91.03	83.81	0.89916	Good

[a] Figures presented are median values

Figure 2: Current Conservation Status of the River Conon. This is based on the estimated number of spawners contributing to recruitment extrapolated from rod catch.

Alness River: Moderate Conservation Status



Summary Table

Eggs required (m^2)[a]	Area (m^2)[a]	Total egg requirement[a]	Percentage chance meeting requirement						Status
			2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Overall	
2.58	574,000	1,480,000	68.5	75.73	79.74	61.91	56.65	0.68506	Moderate

[a] Figures presented are median values

Figure 3: Current Conservation Status of the Alness River. This is based on the estimated number of spawners contributing to recruitment extrapolated from rod catch.

Electrofishing Surveys

Our survey season is now in full swing. We have started, as usual, by surveying the stocked reaches of the Meig, Bran and Blackwater. Early indication is that there has been excellent fry recruitment when compared to previous years with good numbers of parr being caught as well. The latter is encouraging given the very dry summer of 2025. As we head into August, we will turn our attention to some contract work and habitat improvement monitoring.

Figure 4: Above, *Survey team arguing over who caught the biggest fish; below, the fish.*

Barrier Easement and fish passage on the Logie

On request from Diagio (Glen Ord Distillery), fishery board staff made a visit to the new Alaskan fish pass on the distillery burn. The fish pass and flood bypass channel have been operational for much of last year and Diagio are looking to contract surveys to inform how successful it has been. They are also seeking advice on further improvements to the habitat immediately downstream. The upper reaches of the burn were stocked with hatchery reared fry in early 2025 but not 2026 meaning that any salmon fry present above the weir this summer will be the progeny of wild spawners.

Figure 5: *Upstream exit of the Alaskan Steeppass which runs up adjacent to rock armour (bottom right).*

Junior Angling

The Cromarty Firth Watershed Environmental Trust have taken on the organisation of our Junior Angling program with ongoing support and involvement by the Board. To date four sessions have been put on with excellent attendance. Fish have been caught on each session and the participants have enjoyed getting a chance to get out and have a cast. There are another two sessions planned in August so If you know any children who would like to have a few hours fishing please get in touch and we will do our best to accommodate them.

Bailiff Report

During July board staff conducted day and nighttime patrols of the rivers and coastline across the district. During these patrols a total of 11 persons were spoken to for fishing without permission. In each incident advice was given with no formal action taken.

Figure 6: The river Conon (Lower Fairburn) holding water midsummer.