



European Commission

EU Pilot

16/06/2011

File ref n°:	2094/11/ENVI
Member State:	UK
Commission service:	ENVI
Issue area:	Environment/NATURE
File nature:	Complaint / Citizen

Responsible Filehandler Member State:

File history

- **16/06/2011:** File submitted to Member State in EU PILOT database - Environment

File status (16/06/2011)

- **File status:** Awaiting acceptance by Member State
- **MS: Target Date:** 25/08/2011 = 70 day(s) left

Title:

- Atlantic Salmon sites in Scotland

Issue Description:

- **Commission service language:** The Commission has received a complaint concerning the need to designate more sites under Directive 92/43/EEC on natural habitats for wild salmon, especially the Ullapool river. Whilst the designation of the UK for *Salmo salar* was judged sufficient in the frame of the biogeographic process, there are relatively few sites designated for the Atlantic salmon on the north-west-coast of Scotland, most of the site for the species are river systems leading to the east-coast. The conservation status of *Salmo salar* in the UK is judged in the 2007 Art.17 report as unfavourable inadequate (amber) with a negative trend and poor prospects. Scotland has a high EU-wide responsibility for the protection of this species given it hosts half of the EU-stock of spawning salmon. It would appear that the estate owners of the Ullapool river have asked for the designation of their land for the salmon and other interests but that they received a negative response. This would appear to be puzzling given that the case for including the Ullapool river appears strong (for salmon but also for the freshwater pearl mussel) on technical grounds including also the positive comments from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Given that this additional designation of the Ullapool river for the salmon would be a very positive initiative and a technically meaningful addition in view of the conservation status of the species and the geographic distribution of sites in the UK, the Commission would like to understand why the UK authorities have refused request of the land-owners to use this unusual opportunity to improve the network for a declining species?

More generally with Commission would also like to ask for clarification with regard to the complainants allegations that the salmon farming industry is having a negative impact on biodiversity, in particular on Atlantic salmon. The complaint gives details of the following threats:

sea-lice infestations and escapees whilst providing information on practical steps that could be taken to lower the risk of these threats. The Commission would like to ask for clarification on the action that the UK is taking to assess these threats generally and more specifically with regard to salmon returning to designated Natura 2000 sites. Furthermore, the Commission would welcome information on the assessments being undertaken by the UK in response to allegations that there is growing evidence for genetic pollution of wild salmon leading to lower fitness of the wild strains generally and more specifically with regard to those of the species within the Natura 2000 network. The Commission would also like to ask whether the UK authorities have considered the idea of strategically keeping fish-farming at a distance from important salmon rivers e.g. 25km distance from river mouths of salmon rivers as proposed by the complainant. Whilst coastal waters and the sea are not areas within which the Habitats Directive requires the *salmo salar* to be protected in designated sites, given their migratory nature it is clear that actions in these areas can come within the scope of application of the Directive where they impact on fish returning to protected sites. It would therefore need to be assessed to what extent salmon farms represent a source of sea lice which can interfere with the species ability to return to and successfully reproduce in their Natura 2000 habitats. Finally the Commission notes the concerns of the complainant with regard to protecting the Little Gruinard and Langavat SACs given their current poor status and whether the specific recommendations made by the complainant could be of assistance to improve this situation.

Correspondent details

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