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Mr Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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16 February 2024

Dear Finlay,

Electrofishing for Razor Clam Scientific Trial- Annual Update Report Year Five

As you may recall from previous updates, during consideration of The Razor Clams (Prohibition on Fishing and Landing) (Scotland) Order 2017 (Scottish Statutory Instrument 2017/419) the then Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee requested updates on the Scottish Government's scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams. Please find attached the latest report on progress made during the trial's fifth year of operation (2022/2023).

Whilst the trial is managed by my officials in the Marine Directorate, it receives vital support from key public sector partners whose continued productive engagement has underpinned the progress documented. The trial participants continue to operate under bespoke terms and conditions of the trial.

The trial is an exemplar in inshore fisheries management in the way it brings together fishers, scientists, regulators, policy and academia in helping to achieve its objectives. My officials and public sector partners continue to work closely with fishers participating in the trial and the Scottish Razor Clam Association (SRCA). The good working relationship with the SRCA has proved invaluable in ensuring a flow of information between parties to improve standards and help ensure scientists are provided with quality information about fishing practices and grounds.

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I will send further information to the Committee in 2024, with an update on data analysis once the next 12-month trial period is complete (1 February 2023- 31 January 2024). In the interim, if you have any questions about this report please do not hesitate to be in contact with my office or with the official responsible for policy on this matter (Malcolm MacLeod, Access to Sea Fisheries team leader – malcolm.macleod@gov.scot.)

Yours sincerely,



MAIRI GOUGEON

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