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Mr Finlay Carson MSP  
Convener  
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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10 September 2024

Dear Finlay,

### **Scientific Progress Report on the Biological and Ecological Goals of the Scientific Electrofishery for Razor Clams Trial**

As you may recall from our annual trial updates, during consideration of The Razor Clams (Prohibition on Fishing and Landing)(Scotland) Order 2017 (Scottish statutory Instrument 2017/419) the Committee requested updates on the Scottish Government's scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams. I am pleased to update and provide the scientific progress report on the biological and ecological goals of the scientific electrofishing for razor clams trial thus far.

The findings from the report are encouraging and demonstrate a significant improvement in our understanding of razor clam population biology and sustainable harvesting levels. The findings suggest that fishing for razor clams at the current level of intensity appears to be sustainable in the areas for which we have sufficient data to make an assessment. The trial is an exemplar in inshore fisheries management in the way it has brought together fishers, scientists, compliance, academia and public sector partners in helping to achieve its objectives. The collaboration and good working relationships have proved invaluable in ensuring a flow of information between all parties to improve standards and help in providing robust and sound information about fishing practices and changes.

Razor clams caught under the trial are the 20<sup>th</sup> most valuable species landed in Scotland, and the participation in the trial supported the regular employment of 97 people in 2022-2023. There is potential for positive economic benefit to coastal communities from an appropriately managed electrofishery for razor clams. The information presented will allow for careful consideration, using the best available knowledge, of our next steps regarding the future of fishing for razor clams in Scotland.

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I will send further information to the Committee 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](mailto:malcolm.macleod@gov.scot).)

Yours sincerely,



**Mairi Gougeon**

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