

Alex Salmond, First Minister,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.
Scotland

November 15, 2010

Dear First Minister

We are writing to you personally to ensure that you know that we are extremely disappointed that wild salmon netting is still being allowed and indeed encouraged around the coast of Scotland. Let me explain why.

Back in the late eighties the wild salmon population of the North Atlantic was at an all-time low. Most of the 'salmon nations' affected recognised the desperate need to protect the dwindling stocks. A co-ordinated programme to reduce commercial wild salmon fishing was put in place – most notably in the feeding grounds around the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland.

In April, 1991, my organisation, Laksaskip, the Faroese Salmon Fishing Vessel Owners' Association led the way by taking a voluntary cut in catches in order to restore wild salmon stocks. Scotland, Norway and Ireland were the principal beneficiaries of our action

Our practical efforts to help rescue the threatened resource soon went much further. With the help of private and governmental funds (mainly from Iceland, France and the USA) Faroese commercial fishermen, eager to help rebuild wild salmon stocks, agreed that they would not harvest any of the wild salmon that feed in our waters. It was not an easy decision. The Faroe Islands have few natural resources other than the sea so our fishermen made great sacrifices in ceasing to fish for salmon.

It is estimated that as a result of our action we have allowed over one million healthy salmon to return to Scotland (and nearly four million salmon to Norway) in the last twenty years. I am sure that you will agree that this should have been a huge boost to the Scottish economy and a great conservation success. We certainly thought that by protecting the fish in our waters we would be greatly increasing the number of salmon that survived to spawn in Scottish rivers and that the stock numbers would be bound to rise.

It was with great dismay, however, that we recently learned that over the same period of 20 years Scottish netmen have killed 969,234 salmon off the coast of Scotland.

In effect, every fish we saved was killed in Scotland by netmen. This means that all the efforts of our Faroese longliners have been utterly in vain and a total waste of time, money and effort.

Our fishermen are quite rightly appalled that their restraint has been completely undermined in Scotland and they are now seriously considering reclaiming their rights to fish for salmon. If they do your netmen will soon find that they have few fish to catch and Scotland's multi-million sporting salmon fishing industry will be damaged beyond repair. We feel we simply cannot continue to accept this 'one rule for them and one for us' attitude taken by the Scottish Government. The future of the North Atlantic's wild salmon is at stake here and Scotland is continuing to ignore its international obligations.