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 Responsibility

Salmon Scotland Wild Fisheries Fund boosts wild Atlantic salmon conservation initiatives

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Funding to help restore habitats, protect from predators and replenish salmon stocks in Scotland's rivers

The **Salmon Scotland Wild Fisheries Fund** (<https://www.wildfisheriesfund.co.uk/>) will invest £140,000 (U.S. \$175,000) into supporting the conservation of Scotland's wild salmon. The funding will be used to restore habitats, provide protection from predators and promote efforts to replenish salmon stocks in the country's rivers.

The fund is open to all river catchment organizations throughout Scotland in 2024, but there is a special interest in projects in the shared zone of aquaculture and wild salmon fisheries. This comes as part of a wider five-year investment of £1.5 million (U.S. \$1.8 million) from salmon farmers.

"Wild salmon is one of Scotland's most iconic species, but there has been a decades-long decline on the east and west coasts of Scotland as a result of climate change and habitat destruction," said Tavish Scott, chief executive of Salmon Scotland. "Scotland's salmon farmers want to continue playing their part in finding solutions, engaging constructively with the wild fish sector and taking meaningful action to save wild salmon."



The Salmon Scotland Wild Fisheries Fund will invest in supporting the conservation of Scotland's wild Atlantic salmon. Photo courtesy of Salmon Scotland.

Wild salmon and sea trout populations throughout the UK have been in decline for decades – particularly because of habitat loss and rising river and sea temperatures. These fish now have a marine survival rate of just 1 to 5 percent, compared to around 25 percent only three decades ago. The Scottish Government has identified other pressures facing wild salmon, including non-native plants, predation by fish, birds and seals and obstacles to fish passage including dams and weirs.

A dark blue banner with white text and graphics. On the left, there are two small images: a fisherman in a yellow protective suit and a fishing boat on the sea. The main text reads: "A comprehensive solution for the wild seafood supply chain." To the right of this text is a list of three criteria, each with a white checkmark in a blue box: "Crew rights", "Food safety", and "Environmental responsibility". On the far right is the "Best Seafood Practices" logo, which consists of a stylized fish icon and the text "Best Seafood Practices". Below the logo is a white button with the text "LEARN MORE" and a right-pointing arrow.

(<https://bspcertification.org/>).

"In 2023 wild Atlantic salmon in Scotland were officially classed as an endangered species," said Jon Gibb, coordinator of the Salmon Scotland Wild Fisheries Fund. "This keystone species is under very serious threat from a wide range of impacts both in the river and at sea, and any projects to further understand those impacts and mitigate against them are urgently required."

The initiative, first called the Wild Salmonid Fund in 2021 and renamed last year, is now entering its fourth year. It has already put over £335,000 (U.S. \$420,000) into relevant projects that support wild salmon.

To date, grants have been used to save and restore a historic dam in the Western Isles that assists wild salmon to progress to their spawning grounds, as well as restoration projects to reduce riverbank erosion and measures to provide tree canopy and in-stream cover for young salmon.

“Many salmon farmers are anglers themselves, and most people in the fisheries and angling sectors recognize the importance of a healthy shared environment, ensuring fish can thrive in our waters,” said Scott. “Through the extraordinary success story of farm-raised salmon, we have developed world-leading expertise in hatching and rearing salmon that can thrive at sea. As well as financial support to projects, our members are sharing their knowledge and experience to support wild fisheries with re-stocking, again showing how collaboration is key to reversing the worrying decline in wild salmon numbers.”

The fund is **open for applications** (<https://www.wildfisheriesfund.co.uk/applications>) until March 31, 2024, with decisions on grants taken by Salmon Scotland in April.

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