

Memo: David Rowe, NIWA

From: Andy Bruere, BOPRC

Subject: Ōhau Channel, 11 October 2013.

On 11 October I visited the Ohau Channel to check if the fish (smelt pass) was still in place on the true left side of the weir structure. My observations showed that it is still in place. The attached photos show that a log stuck in the weir fence was causing a reduction in velocity around the whole structure. It did not appear to be kept clear of debris and it seemed the velocity above the fish pass was significantly higher. Concrete blocks are located in the channel above the fence that are designed to allow for resting places for smelt passage. At higher flows the concrete blocks are well under water and they would not appear to not provide much of a rest for fish travelling upstream.



Photo 1. The fish pass can be seen below the log, but appears to be inundated with sediment.



Photo 2. The fish pass is located in the eddy below the second post out from the shore. Velocities upstream of the fence are higher, and the water level is well above the concrete blocks designed to assist in resting places.

I then went round to the true right bank to have a discussion with Joe Butterworth who was surveying fishermen in that area. He showed me the smelt schools swimming upstream. These could easily be seen in the calm water close to the true right bank. I took photos of the smelt schools but they are not visible on the photos.

A lady fishing for smelt in that area had set a trap for smelt and in the trap there were plenty of smelt. She showed a bucket full of smelt which she reported as coming from one lift.



Photo 3. Smelt trap, on true right bank.



Photo 4. One lift of smelt from the trap.

I also observed many red legged gulls diving into the water to catch fish. This was occurring for periods of time on the water closest to the true left bank.



Photo 5. Gulls fishing for smelt in the channel at

about 9am, 11 October 2013.

Joe reported that the smelt had been running in a similar way since opening day, and the gulls had been diving like this regularly morning and evening. I have asked Joe to email me with his observations which he has agreed to do.

I believe it would be worthwhile getting some monitoring done over the next week if possible to confirm that significant smelt runs are still occurring at times.

Andy Bruere.