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## **Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2019**

I am writing to advise you that the process for updating the Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations is now well underway, and we will be launching the annual consultation on proposed amendments, including river gradings for the season, on Thursday 25 October.

The Committee has previously taken a keen interest in the regulations and debated the current SSI in March of this year. Since then we have made a number of changes to the assessment methodology, including refinements to the way in which egg targets are calculated so that targets are more closely associated with individual rivers instead of working to a Scotland-wide target figure. We are also taking forward a number of matters raised in Committee, including working towards a full scientific peer review of our adult salmon assessment model.

For 2019, the latest assessment shows that the downward trend in salmon stocks is unfortunately continuing. However, changes and improvements to the assessment mean that we can allow properly managed exploitation on a greater number of rivers than in the current season. There will be an increase in the number of Grade 1 and 2 rivers for 2019, with fewer rivers being subject to (Grade 3) mandatory catch and release requirements. There is, however, no room for complacency and we will continue to work with stakeholders, anglers and other partners to conserve our iconic Atlantic salmon stocks for the future.

The statutory 28 day consultation will take between Thursday 25 October and Friday 23 November 2018, with a review of the responses being undertaken thereafter. Following the consultation on the proposed gradings, I will write again to make the Committee aware of the next steps.

I hope this is helpful to the Committee.

**Roseanna Cunningham**