Scottish Natural Heritage
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LOCH FADA
Site of Special Scientific Interest

SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Site code: 983

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Purpose

This is a public statement prepared by SNH for owners and occupiers of the SSSI. It outlines the reasons it is designated as an SSSI and provides guidance on how its special natural features should be conserved or enhanced. This Statement does not affect or form part of the statutory notification and does not remove the need to apply for consent for operations requiring consent.

We welcome your views on this Statement.

This Statement is available in Gaelic on request.

Natural features of Loch Fada SSSI	**Condition of feature (date monitored)**	**Other relevant designations**
Oligotrophic loch	Unfavourable, no change (September 2004)	SAC
Open water transition fen	Favourable, maintained (October 2004)	
Vascular plant assemblage	Favourable, maintained (September 2004)	SAC

Features of overlapping Natura sites that are not notified as SSSI natural features	**Condition of feature (date monitored)**	**Designation (SAC or SPA)**
Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	Favourable, maintained (August 2003)	SAC

Description of the site

Loch Fada SSSI is situated on the Hebridean Isle of Colonsay and is comprised of a string of three shallow freshwater lochs which are notable in having a relatively nutrient poor water chemistry. The lochs are rich in aquatic plant life with a range of submerged, emergent and floating species. Of particular interest are the rare Slender Naiad *Najas Flexilis* and six-stamened waterwort *Elatine hexandra* which grow within Loch Fada SSSI.

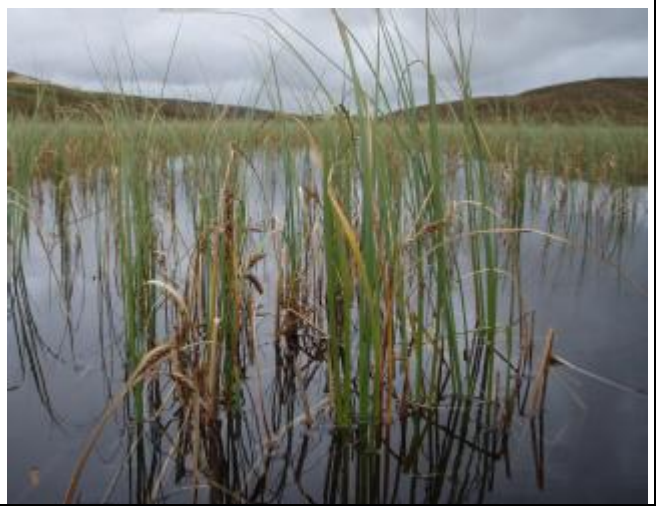
The site includes areas of loch shore which are seasonally inundated. This inundation has led to the evolution of fen and wet meadow habitats which support diverse plant communities and good numbers of wildfowl and waders. Irish Ladies Tresses, a nationally scarce orchid, has also been recorded in this locality.

Loch Fada is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on account of its importance for the slender naiad and otters, as well as for the quality of its freshwater habitat (specifically the lochs' oligotrophic standing waters).

The habitats of the loch shore also support noteworthy populations of insects. Amongst these are two species of china-mark moth (*Donacaula mucronellus* and *Elophila nymphaeata*) which have a very localised distribution in Scotland.

Site condition monitoring carried out in 2004 found the open water transition fen and vascular plant assemblage feature of Loch Fada SSSI to be in favourable condition, however the oligotrophic loch feature of the site was concluded to be in unfavourable condition due to the presence of the invasive non-native species of waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*.

More recently, further site condition monitoring has been carried out to assess the oligotrophic loch feature condition and results are currently being written up.

Picture 1. White water lily *Nymphaea alba*	Picture 2. Bottle sedge *Carex rostrata*
	

Past and present management

The site is located in the middle of a crofting area and the southern side of the loch has traditionally been used as common grazings. The more fertile northern shores have in the past been intensively used by crofters on a rotational cropping and grazing system.

At present, apart from some seasonal angling for brown trout, there is currently little activity on the lochs themselves. The northern shores are part of a number of agricultural holdings and are used as hay/silage fields and as pasture for cattle and sheep. The heathery slopes on the southern side of the lochs are open to light grazing by sheep.

At the advice of hydrologists, a weir was installed in 2001 to enable maintenance of water levels suitable for the slender naiad and fen plant communities.

The invasive *rhododendron ponticum* is also present in parts of the site and some control work has been carried out.

Objectives for Management (and key factors influencing the condition of natural features)

We wish to work with the owners and occupiers to protect the site and to maintain and where necessary enhance its features of special interest. SNH aims to carry out site survey, monitoring and research as appropriate, to increase our knowledge and understanding of the

site and its natural features and to monitor the effectiveness of the management agreement.

The EU Habitats and Birds Directives oblige Government to avoid, in SACs and SPAs, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, where such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of these Directives. The objectives below have been assessed against these requirements. All authorities proposing to carry out or permit to be carried out operations likely to have a significant effect on the European interests of this SSSI must assess those operations against the relevant Natura conservation objectives (which are listed on our website through the SNHi – SiteLink facility).

1. Maintain the oligotrophic nutrient status of Loch Fada SSSI and the high diversity of aquatic flora for which the site has been notified.

The main pressures affecting the nutrient status of Loch Fada SSSI include the surrounding agricultural practices, particularly grazing and fertilising, which can result in nutrient enrichment and trampling damage at the loch margins. At present the level of agricultural inputs into the loch are not having a negative impact, however any increases in run-off or intensification of these management activities could potentially have damaging effects on the SSSI and should be avoided. In addition, any development or building works in the vicinity of the SSSI should be sensitive to the presence of the lochs and avoid runoff of pollutants.

The extent of the lochs should also be maintained and the loch water depths should remain within the bounds suitable for the slender naiad (1-2 metres). The installation of a weir in 2001 has kept the water levels within these limits and has enabled the continued inundation of fen communities and should therefore be maintained.

The presence of the invasive non-native species *Elodea nuttallii* within Loch Fada SSSI is cause for concern as it may spread across the site and outcompete native plant species present within the lochs. The results of cycle two site condition monitoring are currently being written up and should shed light on whether continued monitoring of the spread of *E. nuttallii* is necessary or whether active management is needed to attempt to eradicate this species from the SSSI.

The invasive *rhododendron ponticum* is also present within the SSSI and although it does not have a direct negative impact on the loch interests of the SSSI it should ideally be eradicated and prevented from further spread across the site.

Positive management of the site may be supported through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and owners/occupiers of the site should consider application to this scheme in the future.

2. Maintain otter populations and distribution within the SSSI.

Avoid causing significant disturbance to otters within the SSSI, particularly during breeding seasons, and ensure the extent and condition of their habitats within the site is maintained.

Date last reviewed: 3 February 2011