

## Paper 2 - Forth Invasive non native species Mink control description

### Summary

Initially, mink control in the Forth will focus on a single, defensible area of the Forth Fisheries District and will initially cover three separate catchments, the Allan Water, Forth and Teith. However, there is scope to increase this area to cover the whole North side of the Forth, by including the Devon, Black Devon and Leven catchments.

### Description

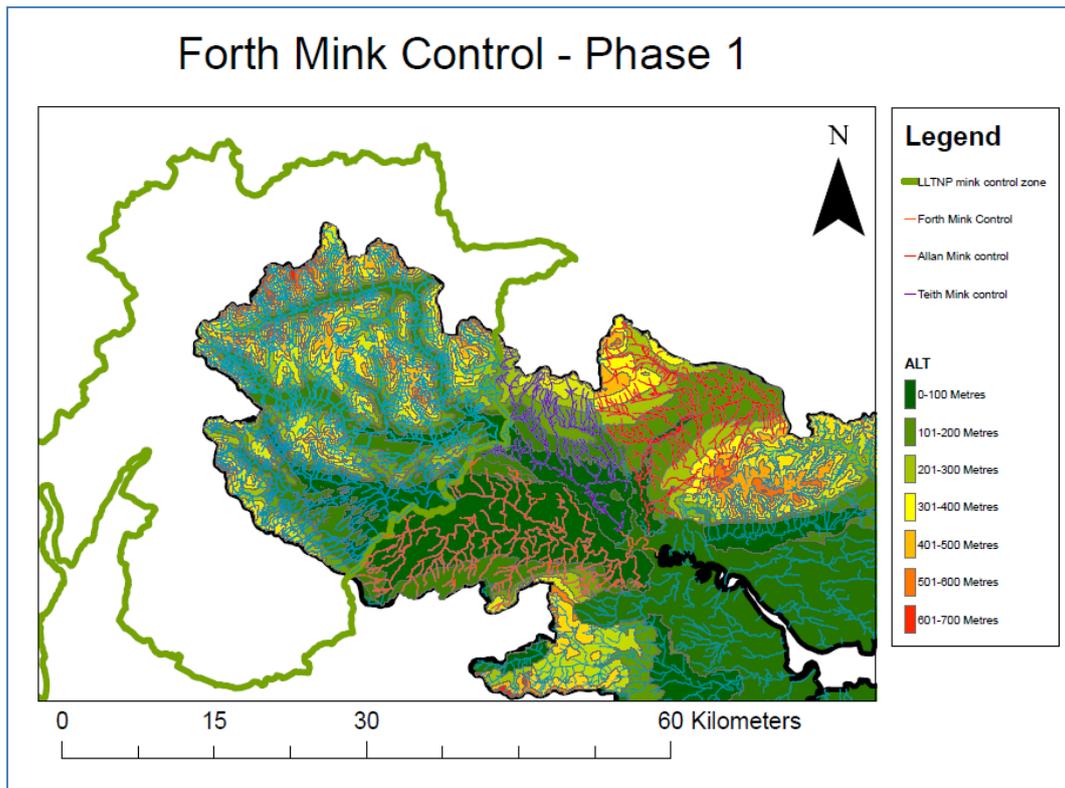
The FINNSP mink control will link up with the LLTNPA mink control area which is maintained as part of the Trossachs mink control project. This will border the western edge of the Forth's mink control on the Rivers Teith & Forth. The forestry commission uses 58 mink rafts to cover the eastern boundary of the park from Loch Katrine in the North to Gartmore in the South. To the South of the Forth, the mink control area is bounded by the Gargunnock Hills, a 300m craggy escarpment that overlooks the Forth valley, neighbored by the Fintry Hills to the West. To the North, the Braes of Doune (664m) bound the North side of the Teith. The headwaters of the Allan lie in the Earn valley (dissected by the A9 motorway) and to the Eastern side of the Allan's watershed are the Ochil's (highest point 418m). Monitoring and control will initially focus on tributaries originating in these upland areas with control shifting to lowland habitats as the project progresses.

**Phase 1:** Initially, the total area of river that the project seeks to protect consists of just over 106km of main stem of river (Allan 30km, Teith 16km, Forth 60km) (Map A). Once mink have been eradicated in these catchments, control will focus on 'pinch points' for mink dispersal to prevent further incursions of mink into the Forth, Teith and Allan Water catchments. Such strategic areas include the Earn valley and the coastal zone of the Forth estuary around Stirling (where the catchment boundaries of the Forth, Teith and Allan meet). These are narrow areas between upland areas and the sea (4 & 10 km) and the mountains flanking the Earn valley (11km).

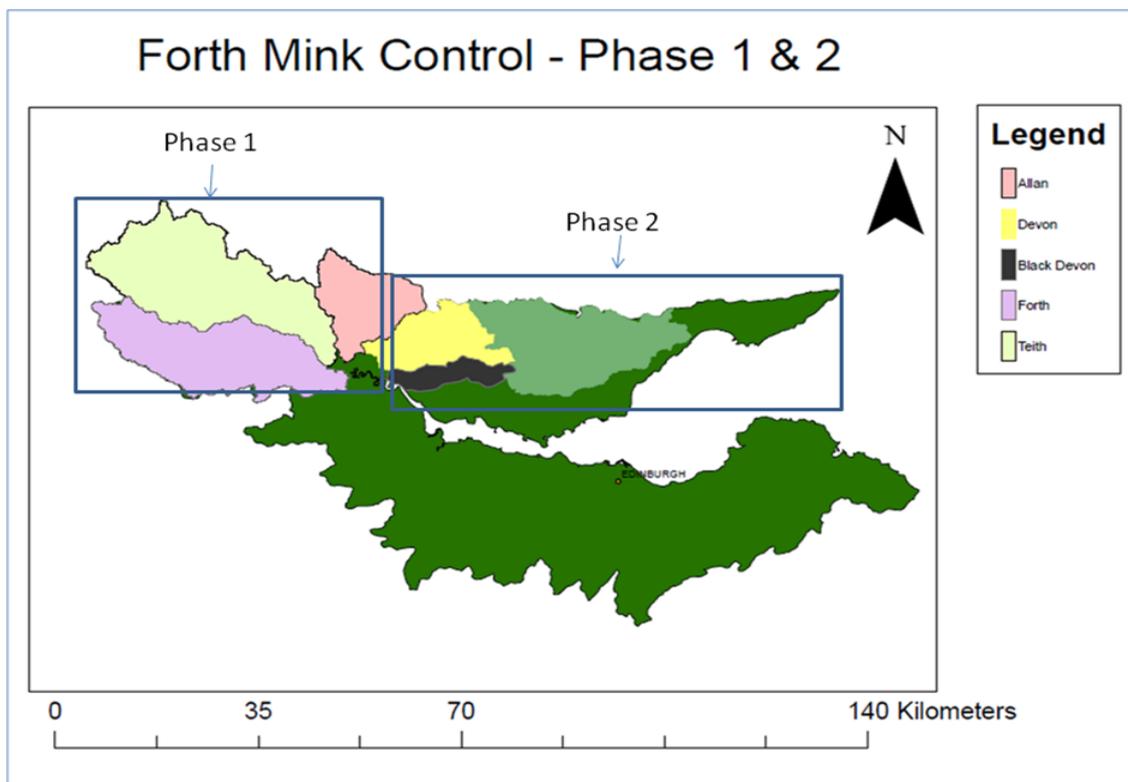
**Phase 2:** The project area will be expanded to include a larger defensible area that is the North side of the Forth estuary comprising the Devon, Black Devon and Leven catchments and the coastal burns of the North side of the Forth estuary (Map B). All of these rivers back onto the Ochil range of hills and are separated from the South side of the Forth District by the Forth estuary which is a complete barrier to mink dispersal. At this point in time it may be possible to link up with the North of Scotland mink initiative, at first in the Middle Tay (which will afford protection of the Earn valley) and then the lower Tay and coastal zone of the Tay estuary.

The project will utilize volunteers drawn from the land and riparian owners and estate staff in this area.

Volunteers will check rafts at least once a fortnight, however this will rise to at least twice a week during February and August - September which are peak dispersal times for mink (due to breeding and seeking out new territories respectively.) The project officer will then assist with trapping whenever this is required. The programme will actively recruit volunteers who either live near burns or rivers (or their properties contain them) or whose work patterns and/or commutes bring them into close proximity to rivers and/or burns.



Map A – Mink Control location



Map B – Forth Mink Control phases.