



EAA NEWS

European Anglers Alliance - January 2003

Europe's 25 million anglers demand equal rights to commercial fishermen

The recreational sector backs reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy to restore sustainable fisheries but insists on equal representation in the reform process.

As the reform process of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) comes to a climax the EAA has made its final presentation to the Commission calling for equal representation for the recreational sector.

At a meeting with EU Fisheries Commissioner Fischler in London on June 10th, EAA learnt that the recreational sector was at last to be represented in the revised proposals for CFP reform and would have a place on the proposed Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), but in the proposals to ministers from the EU Commission the Recreational Fishery is only offered token representation. Two sectors, Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture, outweigh all other stakeholders. After extensive lobbying, and with the help of Scottish MEP Struan Stevenson, Chairman of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, representatives of the recreational fishery sector met with MEPs, officers from the Commission and the European Council during a meeting of the Fisheries Committee on October 27th in Brussels.

Louis Tchertoff, President of the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA) brought with him impressive figures on the European Recreational and Sportfishery Sector. There are, within the European Union 2,900 companies, (manufacturers, and wholesalers) trading in Recreational Fishing tackle and representing 60,000 jobs. These 2,900 companies

make an annual turnover of 5 billion Euro. The Fishing tackle Trade serves 25 million Recreational Fishermen representing 6.5% of the total EU population through 12,900 tackle shops that employ another 39,000 people. He claimed that 25 Million Recreational Fishermen spend an estimated 25 billion Euro per year on equipment transportation and lodging in the 15 EU countries.

"The vague position offered us in the new CFP does not reflect either the millions of recreational anglers (and voters) in Europe or the massive business they generate," says Harm Minekus, President of the European Anglers' Alliance (EAA), "The recreational

fishery is unusual in that it is sustainable whilst making a huge socio-economic contribution. This puts us in a separate category half way between the commercial fishery and the conservation NGOs. But our very size and socio-economic importance and the need to turn the EU fisheries policy from failure to sustainability dictates that we should be recognised as a

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stakeholder group at least of equal importance to that of Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture."

In existing EU legislation recreational and sport fishing is only considered if its activities impose a threat to the commercial fishery!

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New Rivers Group formed

Following the decision of the General Assembly 2002 in the Czech republic the Dutch organisation NVVS has taken the initiative to form a new sub-group to consider the problems of Europe's major rivers which are common to all our members. The group will be meeting against the background of the EU Water Framework Directive which imposes common standards on water quality across Europe by 2015.

As a first step the NVVS have interested the major aquaculture company *Nutreco* in the sponsorship of a project to investigate the problems of salmon restoration in the Rivers Rhine and Meuse. It is hoped that this example can be used to interest the EU in similar projects aimed at improvements in fish stocks and angling opportunities in the major rivers of Europe.

A first meeting of the new Rivers sub-group is planned for 1st February 2003 in Amersfoort, Holland. If you are interested in participating, please e-mail Joop Bongers on nvvs@tip.nl.

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"The sad irony is that recreational and sportfishing has never been a threat to commercial fisheries; on the contrary commercial fisheries have for many years disturbed and damaged recreational- and sportfishing", said Mr Harm Minekus, President of the European Anglers Alliance (EAA) "For more than a decade supertrawlers have overfished our common heritage, the fish stocks, to the brink of collapse. We have experienced first hand the massive decline in fish stocks. And we are prime witnesses that those fish left in the seas have become smaller and smaller due to overfishing."

Recreational Fishing is one of the largest, if not, the largest pastime in the EU. But the EU seems - or chooses - not to care. All three Presidents call for the EU to recognise the important socio-economic contribution of the recreational and sport fishing sector by granting representation within the CFP at stakeholders equal to the aquaculture and commercial fishing sectors. This is an essential part of the process of change if the CFP is to stand any chance of turning the huge failures of the past into a sustainable future.

General Assembly 2003 - Leipzig

The provisional programme for the GA 2003 in Leipzig has now been announced.

Delegates will arrive on Friday 4th April, with the national programme on angling in Germany in the afternoon. The technical sessions will be held on Saturday and the Statutory session on Sunday morning. Delegates will be based in the centre of the city and an exciting programme of dining and visits has been arranged, with departures on Monday morning. Please put these dates in your diary!

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Socio-economic importance of angling in Europe

During his presentation to the Fisheries Committee, EAA president Harm Minekus pointed out that the Recreational Fishery Sector in Europe has not been well studied. In addition to the huge economic benefits, he emphasised that:

- recreational angling provides quiet enjoyment for millions of people
- angling often bridges the age gap between the old and young in a good social relationship, and
- angling brings our youth in direct contact with the natural environment and keeps them away from violence and drugs.

Building on the EAA study the *Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing in Northern and Central Europe* edited by Franz Kohl (EAA-Austria), the EAA has requested a pan-European socio-economic survey under the 6th Research framework programme.

Cod closure

The European Commission is considering possible alternatives to the complete ban on cod fishing in the North Sea proposed by ICES and may recommend drastic reduced quotas as an alternative to complete closure. It is important that any measures address the problem of by-catches and they must also safeguard fishing effort on other more sustainable stocks.

The EAA will consider any proposals carefully, but if we believe the Council of Minister's decision is inadequate, we will - however reluctantly - call for a cod closure. Our over-riding principle must be that EU fisheries policy must become sustainable and allow depleted stocks to recover. At the end of the day this is in the overwhelming interest of all stakeholders and the marine environment.

Mackerel by-catch may help explain declines in salmon stocks

Stocks of Atlantic salmon could be under severe threat from the huge mackerel fishery operated in the North Norwegian Sea. Scientists fear that the fishery could be responsible for killing up to 900 000 young salmon as a by-catch. These may represent up to a quarter of the total salmon stock found in the North East Atlantic area.

Exploiting juvenile salmon before they have the chance to grow and reproduce is the quickest way to wipe out the stock. The mackerel fishery has an obligation to operate in a responsible way which protects its own fishery and that of fish which may be accidentally taken. EAA has urged NASCO parties to seal agreements to apply the precautionary principle and protect both the mackerel and salmon fisheries.

EAA to join IBSFC

Following our successful contribution to NASCO, EAA is to apply for NGO accreditation to the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission (IBSFC). The wild Baltic salmon, which is of enormous economic importance to Sweden and Finland, is endangered by the large commercial drift net fishery in the southern Baltic Sea. Poland, Germany and the Baltic states also have an interest in the fishery. There are many parallels to Atlantic salmon, and IBSFC is the equivalent inter-governmental organisation to NASCO.

Cormorant News ...

At a well-attended Intergroup meeting on 15th May 2002, in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, MEP's were briefed on the impact Great Cormorants have on fish stocks and the local ecosystems.

Dr. F. KOHL (Austria), on behalf of the *European Anglers' Alliance*, illustrated the importance of the impact of Great Cormorants on (wild and farmed) fish stocks and called for a pan-European management plan.

Dr. D. CARSS, (Scotland) co-ordinator for the "*Reducing conflicts between cormorants and fisheries in Europe*" or REDCAFE project, gave an overview of his findings. He suggested an pan-European information network to find the best solutions to the problems the Great Cormorant causes.

Several interventions highlighted the serious socio-economic impact of Great Cormorants on fisheries and fish-farming interests, but also the threats to wetland ecosystems – directly through predation on rare fish species, indirectly through the abandoning by owners of proper management of ponds and lakes.

MEP's approved a Recommendation, calling for a European management plan for cormorants, as well as for an addition of the species to Annex II "hunnable species" of Directive 79/409/EEC.

REDCAFE update

The overall objective of REDCAFE has been to synthesise current Europe-wide conflict between conservationists and fisheries interests. The project – which began in January 2001 and is scheduled to finish in December 2002 – is funded by the European Union.

REDCAFE involves applying a novel, biological/modelling/socio-economic approach to this problem and, for the first time, brings together all the relevant European stakeholders to discuss and report on these issues in a rigorous, co-ordinated and equitable manner.

A supplementary, though equally important, objective is to establish a framework for improved communication and information transfer between stakeholders (i.e. fisheries and conservation organisations, fisheries scientists, ornithologists/avian ecologists etc.) and other interest within the EU.

Dr Bruno Broughton, who attends EAA Board and General Assembly meetings on behalf of EFTTA, is a member of the REDCAFE group, and he will report to the EAA on behalf of the EAA! He was joined by EAA Board member Bernard Breton at a workshop held in London during November 2002 as part of the project to try and resolve conflict between stakeholders in the River Lea valley as part of a Fisheries Action Plan for that catchment.

Cormorant Count

You can help keep up the pressure for Europe-wide management of the great Cormorant by taking part in a pan-European count of these birds this winter.

Full details from:

<http://web.tiscali.it/sv2001/>

INTERCAFE

Concerns that progress towards a Europe-wide management plan for cormorants would be slowed when the current REDCAFE project came to an end have been eased with the news that application has been made to continue work under the new project title "INTERCAFE". More details will be available at the General Assembly in Leipzig.

Booklet on controlling Cormorants

A 24-page booklet offering practical advice on controlling cormorants has just been published in the United Kingdom. It is the result of co-operation by members of the Moran Committee Joint Bird Group, which includes anglers, ornithologists, Government agencies and fisheries scientists. A copy of the booklet is included with this newsletter.

Transatlantic Tie-up

Fishmongers Hall, London was the scene of a ground-breaking initiative bringing together angling organisations from Europe and the USA in September 2002.

Representatives of the European Angling Alliance (EAA) met with Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the US-based Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and agreed on mutual support in achieving their common objective of sustainable fisheries management. The RFA represents the interests of 15 million salt water anglers in the US and has become a powerful lobby on Capitol Hill.

Jim Donofrio commented: "*I'm pleased and excited that for the first time in history angling groups from both sides of the Atlantic have come together in a spirit of co-operation to communicate and discuss the future of sportfishing and the problems that we can address multilaterally*".

The RFA have persuaded the US Government to challenge EU Fisheries policy alleging that overfishing of Atlantic tuna stocks is in breach of the ICATT Treaty. This action has been supported by the EAA.

Eel stocks crash

In a report timed to coincide with a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting in Chile Nov. 2002, wildlife campaigners have highlighted the world-wide fall in eel catches. Loss of wetlands, poaching and barriers to migration are among the problems, and there are calls for radical measures to improve conservation and monitoring world trade in eels. This report mirrors concern expressed by France and the UK at the EAA 2002 assembly, which will be discussed again in Leipzig.

Greenland agreement to end commercial salmon fishing

An historic agreement brokered by Orri Vigfusson's North Atlantic Salmon Fund may spell the end of commercial salmon fishing off the west coast of Greenland where salmon from N America and Europe mix on the feeding grounds. Although the details of the agreement have yet to be finalised, a substantial annual payment will be made to the Greenland fishermen to close the fishery and pay for the development of alternative fisheries. It is understood the agreement has been underwritten by the US Government, using unspent funds from previous years.

This exciting development follows the 19th annual meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) in the Faroe Islands June 3-7 which agreed reduced quotas for salmon in the Greenland high seas fishery allowing for a catch of between 20 and 55 tonnes for 2002. No quota was set for the Faroes fishery, but there was no fishing there last year.

NGOs call on Ireland to match restraint shown by Greenland

The European NGOs called on Ireland to match this restraint in homewaters. Last year Greenland caught about 5,000 salmon; in contrast the Irish commercial fishery took a staggering 237,000 fish. Despite scientific advice for a 40% reduction, Ireland has just announced an average reduction of only 6% for the 2002 catch.

"Its time for Ireland to demonstrate a real commitment to salmon conservation by implementing their scientists' advice and making substantial reductions in catch as soon as practically possible." said Chris Poupard representing the EAA and Chairman of the NGO Group.

In a subsequent development The Wessex Salmon Association (UK) has applied to the European Commission to intervene in the Irish drift net fishery on the grounds that intercepting migrating salmon at sea is damaging many river salmon stocks protected under the Habitats Directive.

Farm salmon protest

A major campaign against farmed salmon to draw attention to the impacts of the industry on wild salmon and sea trout was organised this autumn across the UK and Ireland. Centre piece of the campaign was the picketing of thousands of supermarkets by members of the protest group urging consumers not to eat farmed

Natura 2000 - Opportunities for angling

Concerns at continuing declines in biodiversity led the European Union to create the Natura 2000 programme, setting targets for member states to designate sites and species of special conservation interest throughout Europe. The programme embraces both the Habitats and Birds Directives and has led to the creation of 18,000 Natura 2000 sites exceeding 15% of community territory, with more to come.

EAA Secretary-General, Jan Kappel, is a participant in the Forum Natura 2000 Working Group which consists of landowners, FACE and other stakeholders, set up to defend sustainable use of Natura sites. He has attended seminars on Financing the Management of Natura 2000 sites (April 2002) and Socio-economic benefit of Natura 2000 (November 2002).

Financing the establishment of Natura 2000 sites can be expensive, particularly if they involve whole river systems or the conservation of a species in such a system. A good example is the programme to restore the Huchen in the Danube, concentrating on restoring access to spawning streams in S. Austria which had been blocked by hydro-power systems. Any such proposal involves huge numbers of stakeholders, from landowners, water authorities and angling groups, including compensation to mill owners; fortunately EU funding via the LIFE programme is available for such projects, which include restoration of the Loire salmon and conservation of the European sturgeon in the Gironde estuary.

Kappel stresses the importance of Natura 2000 to angling; as well as helping conserve and restore declining habitats and fish species, there are opportunities for angling related tourism and access to EU funds. Concerns about restriction on angling in some schemes are usually balanced by opportunities created elsewhere, but it is important to make sure that the rights of anglers are represented to the nature conservation bodies in each country during the consultation process which always accompanies the designation of a site or species. That is the job of the national organisations. It is the EAA's role to make that representation at a European level to the Commission.

As the pace of site and species designations grows, EAA Secretary-General Kappel believes that Natura 2000 should form one of the main priorities for EAA during 2003.

salmon. The protest drew a robust response from the salmon farming industry, emphasising that their product was safe to eat and pointing out their contribution to the rural economy in terms of jobs.

In response to the campaign, EAA issued a brief policy statement on aquaculture, and the subject will be discussed in detail at the General Assembly in Leipzig.