



EAA

European Anglers Alliance – April 2004 10th Anniversary Edition

Putting recreational angling on the map in Europe

It is well known that angling is a hugely popular recreation across Europe, with perhaps 25 million participants generating in excess of €25 billion for the economy, but until 1994 this potentially powerful sector had no voice at the heart of the European Community. Recreational angling is by and large a solitary pastime, indeed, one of its major benefits is the encouragement of quiet enjoyment of the countryside, so anglers are difficult to organise at a national level, let alone across borders that stretch from the Arctic Circle to the Southern Mediterranean, embracing different cultures and fishing for freshwater, salt and migrating species.

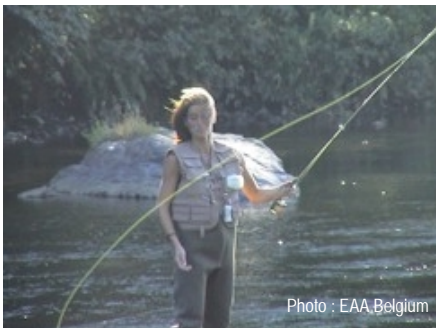


Photo : EAA Belgium

It took five years of intense effort before the new alliance was born, but on that historic day in April 1994, representatives from the angling governing bodies in 14 European Countries gathered in Brussels for the formal launch of the fledgling European Anglers Alliance.

Pan-European development

Over the ensuing years seven more countries have joined in, and despite the loss (for economic reasons) of three smaller countries, the organisation remains a broadly representative pan-European body. The EAA has demonstrated the ability of anglers to bridge national and sectarian divides, pre-empting German re-unification and peace talks in Ireland with unified national angling representation, a condition of EAA nation

membership. EAA now directly represents more than 5 million anglers affiliated to the governing bodies in 19 member countries. The EAA has also pre-empted EU enlargement by accepting the membership of candidate countries, and dealing with the problems of economic integration in terms of subscription levels and voting rights.

Lobbying in partnership

The organisation quickly realised that to make its presence felt required permanent professional representation in Brussels. The first important projects, on acid rain and cormorant predation were managed by Board members working in their home countries. A key partnership, established with The European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA) in 1996, enabled the appointment, first, of a part-time lobbyist in 1997, and subsequently a permanent full-time Secretary-General in 2001.

The Board of EFTTA, which represents over 200 trading members in Europe, realised that the future of their businesses was linked inextricably to the future of angling, and that our shared objectives deserved their support.

EAA works with other partners, particularly the Confédération Internationale des Pêcheurs Sportifs (CIPS), who are responsible for competition angling worldwide. EAA also shares many common objectives with environmental NGOs and organisations such as IUCN, WWF, Seas at Risk and Birdlife International.

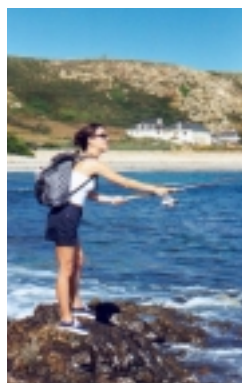


Photo : private collection

The next ten years challenges ahead

The past ten years have seen significant improvements in fresh water quality across western Europe, with benefits to both fish and wildlife; the European Water Framework Directive and Natura 2000 initiative offer opportunities for consolidation and further gains. However, major challenges remain; diffuse pollution remains a significant problem, linked to reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Salmon stocks in the North Atlantic continue to decline, and European eel stocks are in a terminal state

The EAA is committed to work with international partners and governments to help solve these problems. Our fish stocks at sea have been devastated by the commercial sector, and EU governments have failed to grasp the nettle of radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Recreational sea angling offers a sustainable alternative with substantial economic benefits over the commercial sector, yet EAA is kept on the fringes of the debate by entrenched thinking within the Commission; this is our largest and most immediate challenge.

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EAA is fighting for the fish

- from the mighty salmon to the humble cod

These two species, salmon and cod, illustrate some of the successes and, so far, failures of EU governments to address sustainable management of fish species.

Cod stocks in the North Sea have been devastated by years of overfishing. The commercial fishing industry has never shown real interest in long-term sustainability. For the past two decades a strong industry has consistently lobbied the EU not to implement the measures necessary to save the common heritage of our fish stocks. In 1981 the EU Commission proposed the minimum landing size for cod should increase from 30 cm to 45 cm. The industry was strongly against this and called the proposal '*anti-conservation and a threat to their livelihoods*'. Now 23 years later the minimum landing size is not 45 cm still but 35 cm. In Iceland it is 50 cm! On top of that the annual cod quota has been set by the EU ministers on average 30% higher than that proposed by the Commission for more than a decade.



It is no surprise that these half-hearted attempts by the EU to please fishermen's short term interests have only postponed the inevitable – a virtual collapse in North Sea cod stocks. For two years running (2002 and 2003) ICES* scientists have recommended a complete closure of the fishery, recognising that there are still too many boats chasing too few fish, to allow stocks to recover. Yet the Commission have failed to endorse their advice, instead promoting yet another political compromise to allow some cod fishing to continue. EAA has publicly criticised this decision, pointing out that it breaches the Commission's own regulations:

Given that many fish stocks continue to decline, the Common Fisheries Policy should be improved to ensure the long-term viability of the fisheries sector through sustainable exploitation of living aquatic resources based on sound scientific advice

and on the precautionary approach, which is based on the same considerations as the precautionary principle referred to in Article 174 of the Treaty.' Council regulation (EC) no 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002.

EAA points out that disregarding ICES advice and allowing cod fishing to continue is neither precautionary nor sustainable, and is unlikely to ensure the long-term viability of the fishery

* ICES, International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. Independent advisor to the EU Commission

Fundamental changes required in EU fishery policy

EAA has called for fundamental changes to EU fishery policy, including a

- Closure of the North Sea cod fishery to allow stock recovery
- Increased mesh sizes to create a sustainable fishery for all stocks
- Complete ban on discards
- Re-balancing the fishery in favour of the recreational sector

For inland fisheries a new trend has been identified. This was clearly stated at EIFAC's *SYMPOSIUM ON FISHERIES AND SOCIETY - Social, Economic and Cultural Perspectives of Inland Fisheries* in Hungary year 2000:

"Inland fisheries management in most European and North American countries tends increasingly to emphasise recreation and conservation rather than the older function of food production. Many of the problems currently facing managers lie in the transition from commercial to recreational fishing. Recreational fishing is thought to have a greater socio-economic benefit to society, through increased rent and through the development of tourism."

Quote from: www.fao.org/DOCREP/MEETING/X8232E.HTM

This quote expresses what could be named the *New Reality in European management of Fisheries*. This *New Reality* should not be valid for inland fisheries alone but sea fisheries, too.

Recent figures on real angling value

A recent study by DEFRA (UK) showed the value of recreational sea fishing in the UK as £1.6 billion with considerable growth potential. The value of the commercial catch was £640 million, less than half, with no long-term prospects.

Another recent study by INDECEN consultants conclude that the value of wild salmon caught by anglers is worth *twenty times* more to the Irish economy than the salmon caught by nets on the annual salmon run to spawning grounds in Irish rivers. The study estimates the total direct income from commercial salmon fishing at € 4.33 million based on 2002 figures. This revenue estimate does not include added value from "downstream" activities such as fish processing and smoking. The value of the smoked salmon sector is put at approximately € 10.6 million as of 2002. The consultants estimate that salmon angling generates some € 11 million annually, with € 6.43 million generated by overseas visitors and € 4.59 million by domestic salmon anglers. It seems the two sectors generate an equal economic output, but the two sectors' uses of natural resources are significantly different. The angling sector is only taking 3 to 5% of the total salmon catches, while the commercial fisheries sector takes 95 – 97 %! The INDECEN consultants believe the level of catch should be aligned with sustainable development and say that a 'rebalancing' between commercial and angling sectors should be achieved. John Browne TD, Irish Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources welcomed the findings and was quoted for stating: '*To do nothing is not an option*'.

A third very recent study released in January is the 'Recreational fisheries in Germany – a social and economic analysis'. The study confirms the overwhelming value of the recreational sector (sea and freshwater angling). In 2002, about 3.3 million people aged 14 or older had fished at least once in

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Germany or abroad. The economic benefits associated with angling were estimated at >6,4 billion € per year; and about 52.000 employees were directly or indirectly dependent on angling expenditure.

The message from EAA to all European politicians, environment and fisheries managers is to reflect in their thinking about management of sea fisheries, that recreational sea angling is a huge industry, worth considerably more than commercial fisheries, causes lower stock mortality and is a sustainable method of exploitation. On top of that recreational angling is a cheap and simple recreation for all generations, a real family activity, providing pleasure, promoting a healthy lifestyle, relaxing, environmental, educational and is enjoyed by millions of people.

Dominance of the commercial sector threatens fish stocks

New Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) are proposed for the major sea fishery areas of Europe and will play a key role in providing advice to member states and Regional government on fisheries management in a reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Original proposals for the composition of RACs lumped the recreational fishing sector in with "other interest groups" and allocated 51% of the membership to the commercial sector. Latest proposals increase the allocation of seats to the commercial sector to 67%.

The RAC Proposal favours the voice of one stakeholder group, the commercial fishermen and the fishing industry, to an unreasonable extent at the expense of four other stakeholder groups, the Recreational Fisheries Sector, the Aquaculture sector, Environmental organisations and other interest groups. The commercial fishing sector would hold an overwhelming majority on the RACs, yet it is this sector which has consistently opposed scientific advice aimed at sustainable management of fish stocks.

The Commission proposal does not recognize the size and economic importance of the recreational fishing sector – which for recreational *angling* alone counts over 25 million participants generating a spend of more than Euros 25 billion pa - the growing contribution of the aquaculture sector or the influence of the environmental NGOs.

EAA calls for adoption of the eco-system approach

The European Anglers Alliance has called on the European Council to reject this proposals from the Commission and request a revised RAC proposal offering a better balance between stakeholders which can contribute effectively to the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) - in particular the sustainable management of fish stocks, incorporating an eco-system approach and the precautionary principle.

Salmon stocks set for recovery



Photo : Sea River News

There is perhaps more cause for optimism with salmon stocks. Despite continuous decline for the past 35 years, numbers of salmon in the North Atlantic appear to have stabilised and may be on the increase. Strenuous habitat

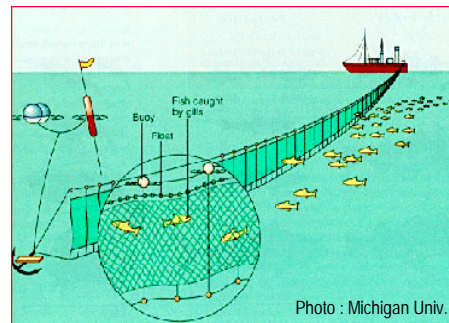
restoration schemes across Europe, in the UK, Ireland, Scandinavia, France and on the Rhine, have maintained and increased juvenile production in freshwater. However, whereas 30 years ago, some 25% of migrating smolts were returning as adults to spawn, that figure has now fallen to less than 5%, indicating that there is a major problem with survival of salmon at sea. Global warming, affecting the surface sea temperature and food supply on the migration routes is suspected as a major cause of the increased mortality, emphasizes the importance of tackling the problems which are under our control.

Irish urged to ban drift nets

Commercial exploitation of salmon at sea expanded rapidly in the 1960s with the introduction of monofilament nets and a huge fishery developed in the sea feeding grounds off West Greenland. Drift net fisheries also developed off the west coast of Ireland and north-east coast of England. Concern at this level of exploitation led to the formation of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) in 1984, an inter-governmental treaty organisation charged to set quotas for salmon on the high seas.

Since 1994 EAA has acted as Chair of the 24 NGO observers at NASCO and played a lead role in co-ordinating pressure on member governments. Following ICES advice, NASCO has been able to set lower and lower quotas at Greenland, culminating with a private agreement brokered by the Icelandic salmon campaigner, Orri Vigfusson, to effectively end high seas salmon fishing. A long campaign in the UK resulted in a public/private partnership agreement to buy-out

the majority of the English north-east coast drift nets, which at one time accounted for 80% of the total salmon catch in England and Wales. Anglers have also played their part, and more than half of all salmon caught in the UK are now released after capture. However, the Irish drift net fishery remains the largest fishery in the North Atlantic and takes an estimated 300,000 fish pa. It is particularly damaging because it intercepts salmon from England, Wales, and the recovering rivers of France, Germany and Spain.



EAA continues to focus international attention on the Irish Government, and hosted an Irish NGO delegation to Brussels in 2003. Irish intransigence is particularly embarrassing to the EU delegation at NASCO. Removal of the Irish drift nets remains a key policy objective for EAA.

EAA becomes observer at Baltic Commission

Drift netting is also a major factor affecting Baltic salmon in the Baltic Sea. In 2003 EAA attained observer status at the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission, held in Vilnius, Lithuania. The fishery for Baltic salmon is sustained by the release of large numbers of farmed smolts from rivers blocked by hydro-electric schemes (ranching). Moving drift nets away from those rivers which still have a surviving run of wild salmon has resulted in an increase in the proportion of wild to ranched salmon to over 10% for the first time. Sweden has demonstrated that the wild salmon rivers have a huge socio-economic advantage, and, backed by EAA, continue to campaign for a complete ban on drift netting in the Baltic.



Photos : Sea River News



Cormorant predation



Progress towards a European management plan

Cormorant predation was at the top of the EAA agenda in 1994 and it is still a subject which stirs fiery emotions with anglers across Europe.

To highlight the size and scale of the problem, EAA co-ordinated and produced a cormorant atlas, published in 1997, which graphically demonstrated the impact of this voracious fish-eating bird.

Calls for large-scale culling were predictably resisted by Birdlife International, and although derogation was available for shooting under licence in individual countries, relatively small numbers of birds were shot. Faced with this resistance, EAA followed the example of UK colleagues, who had established a dialogue with the bird lobby, and co-operated in a three year EU funded study, REDCAFE (*Reducing the Conflict between Cormorants and Fisheries on a Pan-European Scale*).

This demonstrated that to make any impact on the European cormorant population, some 70,000 birds would have to be shot every year, at best difficult, and at worst creating an entirely negative public image for angling at a time when the ethics of catching fish on rod and line were being closely examined in many countries.

Emphasis switched away from shooting to kill, to shooting to scare and management methods, such as fish refuges, to reduce the impact of predation. Cormorant numbers, which were increasing at 5% per

year now appear to have stabilised, and by and large, the predation problem is being managed by fishery managers. While this result may not be universally applauded, the debate has served to concentrate the minds of politicians on the need for active management of predators, rather than simple conservation, and in recent months a willingness to consider derogation from the Birds directive has become apparent in several member states.

The REDCAFE report

The REDCAFE report is the most important work undertaken by the EU on cormorants and acknowledges, for the first time, that there are thousands of conflict situations across Europe. The report argues that solutions require a structured dialogue between stakeholders and should be guided by scientists, based on scientific fact. EAA supports this principal conclusion and will urge the EU to establish and support forum dialogues.

Controversial statistics

Some aspects of the report have caused controversy. The report states, referring to population estimates, that *shooting 17,000 birds had no effect, that shooting 30,000 birds would only have a limited effect and that shooting 50,000 birds would lead to population extinction*. There are concerns that the report is weak on basic population statistics, with very weak data on fertility and mortality, and that population sizes may have been underestimated.

Strong indications from various sources tell

us that the population now might be well over 1 million individual birds. This reinforces concerns that this model is flawed: 50,000 birds represents only 5% of the total population and should be easily compensated by the breeding success of the remaining 95%. Further, case studies on cormorant damage, which should have formed the backbone of the report, are grossly skewed, and studies showing 80% damage to trout and grayling populations have been omitted; this is even acknowledged in the report itself.

EAA will be taking all these points up with the Commission on behalf of the angling and fisheries community

Governments respond to pressure

There are clear signs, all across Europe, that the cormorant debate has entered a new phase. After years of angler pressure about cormorant damage, predictably resisted by the bird lobby, more Governments seem prepared to apply Article 9 of the EU Birds Directive as it was intended: wherever it is necessary to protect fish stocks from considerable damage, all measures, including shooting, might be taken against individual birds, as long as there is no threat to the cormorant as a species.

- Denmark: after years of total protection, the number of colonies is to be reduced by 50%
- Czech Republic: stricter controls on number of birds in colonies
- Switzerland: measures to control birds on salmonid waters extended to other site.
- Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany) regional law allows unrestricted shooting to kill.
- Germany: Bundestag passed resolution calling for action at EU level to establish a real pan-European Management plan.

This reinforces and gives new encouragement to the EAA campaign for sustainable management of fish-eating birds.

Campaign for aquaculture regulation falters

'Aquaculture is growing more rapidly than all other animal food producing sectors. Worldwide, the sector has increased at an average compounded rate of 9.2 percent per year since 1970, compared with only 1.4 percent for capture fisheries and 2.8 percent for terrestrial farmed meat production systems.'

The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2002; FAO

Salmon farming crisis

Salmon farming has come under unprecedented public pressure in recent weeks, first, in early January, from the paper published in *Science*, claiming that farm-raised salmon are so full of PCBs that eating them too often poses a cancer risk, and second, later in the month, from a petition heard by the European Parliament. This accused the UK Government of fraud and failure to carry out any credible environmental assessments of any Scottish sea cage projects.

Food scares

There have been scares concerning farmed salmon before, often based on flimsy or exaggerated evidence. Although this recent paper has a much sounder statistical base, there is still disagreement about exactly what levels of PCBs in fish flesh constitute a threat to human health, and the various food safety agencies in North America and Europe rushed out statements to re-assure consumers. The Norwegian Seafood Export Council reported reduced sales all over the world. Sales of Norwegian farmed salmon fell in France, Poland, Japan, Taiwan, Russia and by over 70% in Spain. In some other European countries sales of Scottish salmon fell by 80% as shoppers switched to salmon produced in New Zealand and North and South America. But the scare was also met with scepticism by some consumers, with sales of salmon in one supermarket chain actually rising 25%. This was good news for the conservation lobby. The report had suggested it was now safer to eat wild salmon, and while that may still be true, it



Photo : Sea River News



Automated fish feeding system in West Highland sea loch
-Photograph delivered by The Salmon Farm Protest Group

Environmental assessment

Alan Berry submitted his petition to the European Parliament in April 2002 after the Scottish Executive refused calls for an independent public inquiry into the impacts of fish farming, and he was granted permission to present his petition to the Parliament this month. He accused the UK Government of fraud, in that (he claimed) they had deceived the European Commission regarding the assessment and subsequent grant-aiding of certain fish farming projects by falsely claiming that proper environmental assessments had been carried out by designated agencies. He further claimed that there was no evidence of any credible environmental assessment for any Scottish sea cage fish farm projects. Berry requested the Parliament to investigate this matter as well as subsequent environmental damage to water quality and wild fish stocks. These are serious charges which must have been acutely embarrassing to the Scottish Executive. The European Parliament is limited in its power, and they requested further evidence in support of the claims, which, given that any such information is held by the Scottish Executive, will be difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, it reinforces calls from the whole wild fish lobby of the need for independent regulation of the industry. During the rapid establishment and expansion of a new industry like this it must be reasonable to suppose that mistakes are made which only come to light as the result of later experience.

The need for regulation remains outstanding, and the EAA will keep up the pressure until this is achieved.

Escapes

EAA has been bitterly critical of failure by North Atlantic Governments to regulate their fish farming industry in terms of disease, parasites and escapes. Last year, more than 80% of salmon caught in some Norwegian rivers were escaped farmed salmon. Around 354,000 salmon and trout escaped from Norwegian fish farms in the first ten months of 2003 (FIS 7/11/2003). Over the past five years in Scotland there have been over 1 million escapes from fish farms. Some west coast Scottish rivers now contain only escaped farm fish and their progeny. Fishery biologists believe that wild salmon are extinct in 15 west coast rivers.

In 1994 NASCO adopted its Oslo Resolution, strengthened in 2003 as the Williamsburg Resolution, aimed at minimising the impacts of aquaculture on wild fish. Dialogue between wild fish interests, government and salmon farmers has resulted in some progress in the UK and Norway, but this dialogue is noticeably absent on the international scene. The International Salmon Farming Association has formed an aquaculture liaison committee with NASCO, from which EAA and other NGOs are currently excluded.

EAA will continue to press for inclusion in this group and for genuine regulation to create sustainable salmon farming

'In five years time, half of all fish and fish products available in the market place will come directly from aquaculture, according to experts. With the continuing decline in marine resources and the need for fishing practices that are sustainable, people around the world are recognising that the nature of the global fishing industry has to change significantly.'

FIS, Fish Information & Services, 16.12.2003

EAA will continue to campaign for a balanced approach, recognizing the contribution of aquaculture, but insist on strict regulation to ensure sustainable development and minimal impact on wild stocks.



Alan Berry & Jan Kappel - EAA, Secretary General
In the European Parliament 22nd January

PROFET Conference in Hungary

The recent PROFET conference in Hungary heard presentations from the EU, FAO and EIFAC experts on the status and contribution of aquaculture to inland fisheries. The emphasis was on the research requirements of the aquaculture industry in terms of developing new technologies and new feedstuffs in the drive to achieve sustainability.

While the contribution of aquaculture in support inland fisheries, particularly in terms of re-stocking was acknowledged, there was little counter-balance of the need for controls on escapes, disease transfer and illegal movements and introductions which are widespread throughout Europe.

Some other EAA engagements

European Commission, DG Environment - Advisory Forum on

'Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources'

Natura 2000 User's Forum

a stakeholder's working group on NATURA 2000 (Habitats Directive, Birds Directive)

'Work on Specific articles of Directives'

IUCN

'Sustainable Management of Freshwater Fisheries and Nature Conservation in Central and Eastern European Countries'

- with EAA as participant

EU Constitution

- Press release -EAA amendments

Regional Advisory Councils (RACs)

- Press Release - Anglers ask EU to think again on fisheries reform proposal

- Explanatory report to the EU Council and Commission

EAA mini seminar in the European Parliament, Brussels, 25 March 2004

'The socio economic importance of Recreational Angling in Europe'

EAA General Assembly 2004

26-28 March, Dinant, Belgium

CONSSO, Committee of North Sea Senior Officials

- observer and work shops

FishBase

- projects in co-operation with FishBase

EYES2004

'European Year of Education through Sport 2004'

- EAA as sports partner

Revised EAA website

- to be launched May 2004

(Text above is clickable in the electronic version of this newsletter).

Eel stocks dangerously close to collapse

The European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) in trouble

Reports last year from ICES showed landings of yellow and silver eel combined are down by 50% over two decades with a 99 % decline in glass eel recruitment for the same period.

ICES urged that it is of vital importance to get the message across to fishermen, managers, and politicians that the most widespread and single most important socio-economic fish stock in Europe is dangerously close to collapse.

The European Commission got the message and on 2 October released a 'Communication*' to the European Council and Parliament on the development of a Community Action Plan for the management of European eels. But we need this plan to speed up, we need additional measures in both EU member states and internationally, and we need them fast! The eel stock is dangerously close to collapse. Without better, co-ordinated assessments and an international management plan, the future looks bleak for these ocean travellers.



The eel is found in a wide variety of habitats including coastal waters, river systems and stillwaters where unrestricted migration routes permit access. Its distribution ranges across much of Europe, and along the Mediterranean coasts of Africa and Asia. No other fish stock within the ICES Area is as widespread or involves so many fishermen. An estimated 20,000 to 25,000 people are involved in eel fishing, at least part-time.

For most anglers hooking an eel may not be everyone's cup of tea, nevertheless there are good reasons for all to care about the eel as it plays a key role in freshwater eco-systems and provides the staple diet of many bird species, predator fish -like the pike- and small mammals; the eel is one of the otters' favourite foods. In this regard the Water Framework Directive under implementation in the EU member states calls for indicators of 'good ecological status' of rivers and streams etc. Eel is an excellent choice as an indicator species.

The alarming reports over recent years from ICES reinforce calls from the EAA for urgent action across Europe to save this unique species. Following on from a resolution at the 2003 GA the EAA looks set to call for even stronger measures in 2004, including immediate action to ensure adequate numbers of silver eels can escape to the sea to breed, and to ensure enough elvers can migrate to nursery areas. This should involve severe restriction on numbers of nets and catching efforts -or even a complete ban for some regions- on catching silver eels during their autumn migration and strict controls on elver fishing.

Concerning dams and hydropower stations, every stream and river should be examined so that proper eel passes are or will be put in place. Tenders for new installations should, of course, always include a demand for providing a free pass for eels and other fishes. A huge amount of eels end their days -chopped to pieces- in one of the thousands of hydropower station turbines throughout Europe. These turbines might be the biggest of all eel killers but no one knows for sure. More research is urgently required but we cannot await those studies, action is needed now.

The Community Action Plan for the management of European eels has a very ambitious timetable urging emergency measurements in place before the New Year.

But up till now, the Commission hasn't lived up to this timetable. We are entering a debate on emergency measures, and losing momentum.' says Willem Dekker, Netherlands Institute for Fisheries Research and ICES consultant to EAA News. The EU eel plan comprises both emergency measures and long term measures.

'Both ingredients are very much appreciated but emergency measures are intended to be implemented quickly, while only the ultimate measures are designed to implement a particular goal' Willem Dekker stresses.

EU could utilise the Water Framework Directive to protect eels.

The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) informs in its Briefing No. 15, Oct 2003 that although eel measures are to be developed under the CFP, the Commission foresees that some issues will be taken forward in the context of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (Directive 2000/60). Under the WFD, European-wide River Basin Management is introduced together with international co-ordination. IEEP suggest that the WFD can be used to promote the objectives of eel management, such as using eels as an indicator of 'good ecological status' of rivers. 'River basin authorities could also be used for setting targets and implementing eel action programmes,' IEEP says. In addition to using the WFD, IEEP finds that it would seem appropriate to add eels to Annex II or IV of the Habitats Directive, concerning species as this would provide eels with immediate protection. The fact that salmon is already a listed species demonstrates that the Directive is applicable to fish. 'An argument against this however is that many Member States are not currently meeting all their obligations under the Habitats Directive, and adding additional species would dilute the focus of their work' stresses IEEP.

EAA endorses fully those views of IEEP and suggests the EU should utilise the Water Framework Directive to protect the eel.

Action is needed now

The ICES figure below shows in which perilously state the eel stocks are. Landings of yellow and silver eel combined are down by 50% since the 80's; in the same period the recruitment of glass eels dropped by 99%! The future for eels looks very bleak indeed.

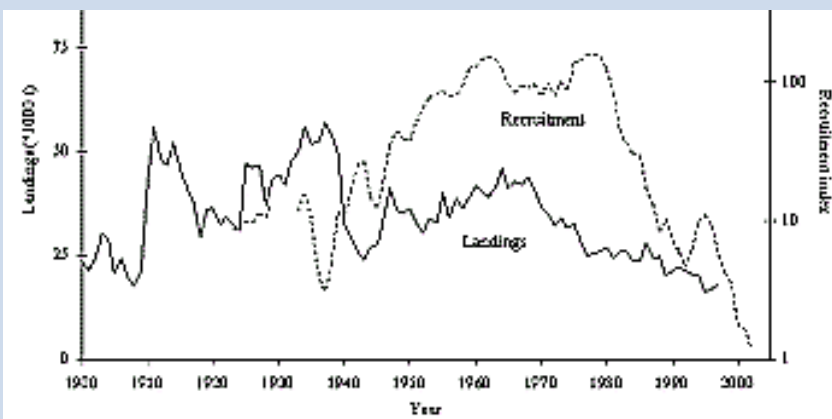


Figure from ICES' website: <http://www.ices.dk/marineworld/eel.asp>

Estimated trends in recruitment and landings of the European eel showing the downward trend in recruitment. Numbers of new glass eels has now dropped to 1%. Landings (yellow and silver eel combined) declined by 50 %

The European Anglers Alliance urges those responsible in all European countries and within the European Commission to acknowledge the importance of the European eel to European biodiversity and to act quickly to save this unique species. EAA calls for increased and immediate co-operation across Europe for management measures to ensure the long-term survival of the species. In addition and in particular EAA urges the introduction of legislation requiring all sales and exports of elvers and eels through registered and licensed dealers.

* Press release from the European Commission DG FISH 2 October 2003:

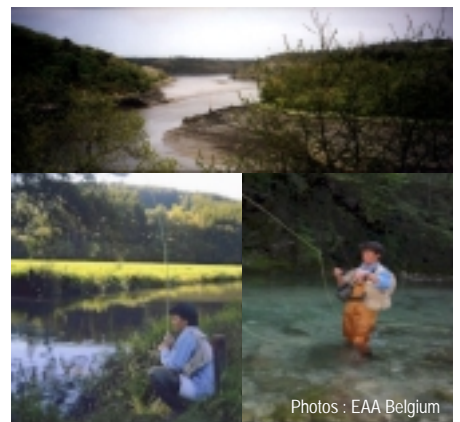
'Commission proposes EU action to protect European eels'

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Brussels, 01.10.2003, COM(2003) 573 final

'Development of a Community Action Plan for the management of European Eel'

Socio-economic impact of angling

We all know that angling has a huge socio-economic impact, estimated at €25 billion across Europe, but can we prove it? EAA has tried hard to persuade the EU to fund a pan-European study, so far to no avail. EAA Austria/Dr Franz Kohl has produced an EAA leaflet (2002) reporting on surveys done in nine European countries, and other partial studies have been commissioned recently by government in the UK and Germany. It remains an EAA priority to commission a co-ordinated Europe-wide study that will be recognised by the EU and prove our case, once and for all. For management purposes this study is even more important. It is urgently needed to provide data on catches by anglers and other recreational fishermen divided in clearly separated categories so as to make it possible to identify and address the problems and measures to the right category of fishing.



EU seminar

As part of our 10th anniversary celebrations, EAA will be hosting a seminar in the European Parliament 25th March to present the latest figures on the socio-economic impacts of the recreational angling sector across Europe. An invited audience of MEPs and Commission officials will hear presentations from the EAA, the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association, This will be a key part of our campaign for funding of a comprehensive pan-European socio-economic study.



Water Framework Directive

a major opportunity for angling



The European Water Framework Directive is a major piece of European environmental legislation which has profound implications for water quality (and fisheries) throughout Europe. Member states have been obliged to incorporate it into national law by the end of 2003. The EAA has produced a simple guide to encourage member organisations to take a proactive approach and make the most of this opportunity.

What does the WFD aim to achieve?

Good ecological status in all river and water bodies by 2015

The WFD also promotes

- Sustainable water use based on long-term protection of resources
- Development of River Basin Management Plans
- An economic analysis of water use, including full cost recovery
- Addressing pollution from both point and diffuse sources
- Ensuring deterioration of water quality and ecological status does not take place
- Maintaining international agreements eg ending the discharge of hazardous waste
- Establishing a framework for protection of wetlands
- Full public consultation and participation

How is good ecological status defined?

This lies at the heart of the WFD and its relevance to fisheries and angling.

Ecological status should take into account water quality, water quantity and habitat.

River Basins will be classified into the following types:

- High – pristine, no human impact
- Good - slight deviation from high
- Moderate - average ecological quality
- Poor - limited biodiversity
- Bad – unable to support life

The monitoring and measurement of ecological status will be based primarily on biological as well as chemical criteria.

Which river and water bodies are covered by the WFD?

In theory, all surface waters, although some national derogation and variation can be expected. The Ground water Directive, Freshwater Fisheries Directive and Habitats Directive (Natura 2000) are also relevant.

Why is it important for my country, my organisation and my members?

The WFD is only a framework; it will be implemented by national legislation in each member country. Each EAA member nation needs to make sure that it is being implemented properly, to consistent standards, and that fisheries and angling interests are properly safe-guarded.

My country is not a member of the European Union. How will it affect us?

Those countries who will be joining the EU, as well as Norway, are implementing parallel legislation, so the WFD is driving higher water quality status across Europe.

What is the timetable?

2003 Identify River Basin Districts.

The WFD is based on the principle of managing water by River Basin District.

2004 Characterise (describe and define) each River Basin District

2006 Establish their current ecological status

2009 Establish a programme of measures to restore good ecological status and publish River Basin Management Plans

2010 Develop sustainable water pricing policies

2012 Implement water pricing plans

2015 Achieve environmental objectives of good ecological status

What progress has been made so far?

Member countries should already have identified River Basin Districts and created national legislation for the implementation of the WFD. In addition, a Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) has been established, and the following River Basin Management Plans are being tested on a Pilot basis; (in alphabetical order)

CECINA & TEVERE - Italy

GUADIANA – Portuguese side

JUCAR – Spain

MARNE – France

MOSEL-SARRE -France, Germany,

Luxembourg

ODENSE – Denmark

OULUJOKI – Finland

NEISSE – Czech Republic, Germany, Poland

PINIOS – Greece

RIBBLE – UK

SHANNON – Ireland

SCHELDE/ESCAUT – Belgium, France, Netherlands

SOMOS – Hungary

SULDALSVASSDRAGET - Norway

WHAT SHOULD EAA MEMBERS BE DOING NOW?

River Basin Districts

River Basin Districts (RBD) should have already been designated. If this has not happened in your country, or you are unhappy with the designation for any reason, first complain to the responsible government department. If you do not receive satisfaction, it may be possible to complain to the Commission (consult with our Brussels office)

Pilot River Basin District Management Plans

Individual pilot RBDMPs have been established across Europe (see list).

EAA members should find out the status of the pilot plan in their country; check its status and whether angling and fisheries interests are being properly consulted as part of the plan. Get involved with the process.

Common Implementation Strategy

Participating Governments are responsible for implementing a common strategy aimed at fulfilling the WFD timetable and the Pilot RBDMPs are part of this process. If you are unhappy with any aspect of your Government's performance complain to the relevant department. If the infraction is serious, you may be able to complain to the Commission (consult with our Brussels office).

Classification of waters - River Basin Management Districts

Your Government or its Agency should be undertaking classification of waters within each RBDM in the first half of 2004. Once this process has been completed, a comparison across River Basins and countries will be undertaken by 2005 to make sure the classification is consistent and compatible across Europe.

This is where your organisation and its members can play a vital role in 2004.

There is widespread concern that many countries will continue to rely on chemical quality and inadequate monitoring to set a low baseline for the classification system. Good ecological monitoring (with fish at the top of the eco-system) is an integral part of the process. Get involved with the process at national, regional and local levels to make sure that adequate monitoring is taking place and that classification is accurate.

For a full copy of the guide contact EAA Brussels Office.