

## Contribution by land managers and anglers to the conservation of aquatic habitats in Europe



With the support of the European Commission – DG Fish

### Survey

The following study was launched in April 2006 by ELO, FDD EAA and the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board as part of the EU programme elaborated by the consortium. This project also includes three regional seminars (Baltic, Mediterranean and Atlantic) and one final conference in November 2006 in Brussels to conclude the programme.

The questionnaire was disseminated through the networks of the four organisations in order to have it distributed to people directly in charge of the management of aquatic areas. The questionnaire, which is factual and has quite simple aims, is focused on three issues:

- what is the profile of the individuals / organisations?
- What is their position toward environmental policy, particularly towards Natura 2000?
- What are the actions taken in favour of environmental protection?

The number of anglers represented by the individuals, organisations and companies, is as high as 3,5 million from 19 Member States, which gives this study quite a legitimacy.

<b>Member States</b>	<b># of responses</b>	<b>Anglers represented</b>
Austria	7	97,00
	1	1,00
Cyprus	1	115,00
Germany	2	681.500,00
Estonia	1	150,00
Spain	1	20.000,00
Finland	1	65.000,00
France	3	1.391,00
Hungaria	6	34.990,00
Ireland	3	24.241,00
Italy	1	180.000,00
Lithuania	1	15,00
Malta	1	-
The Netherlands	1	2.000.000,00
Poland	2	25.001,00
Czech Republic	6	350.174,00
Sweden	2	2,00
Slovakia	1	94.955,00
United Kingdom	3	242,00
<b>Total (19 MS)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3.477.874,00</b>

1. Please describe who you represent?

Association, federation etc...	: 60%
Individual	: 16%
Company	: 19%
Public body	: 5%

2. What is the status of the angling rights on the territories where you practise?

Public	: 37%
Private	: 30%
Common ownership	: 33%

3. Have you measured any improvement or a degradation of the natural environment where you practise?

Significant improvement	: 18%	] 34%	(no answer 2%)
Minor improvement	: 16%		
Neutral	: 16%	] 48%	(no answer 2%)
Minor degradation	: 24%		
Significant degradation	: 24%		

4. What are the main species you or your members are interested in? Max. 4

<b>Salmonids ( Danube Salmon, Trout, Salmon )</b>	<b>23/38</b>
<b>Carp</b>	<b>17/38</b>
<b>Pike</b>	<b>16/38</b>
<b>Bass, Perch and Pike Perch</b>	<b>7/38</b>

(no answer 6 out of 44)

5. Have you measured an increase or a decrease in the abundance of these species in the last ten years?

Quite an increase for all the species	: 0%	] 10%
A small increase for all the species	: 10%	
Stable	: 34%	] 56%
A small decrease for all the species	: 10%	
Quite a decrease for all the species	: 31%	
The trend is different for each species	: 15%	

6. Are the areas where you practice classified partially/totally Natura 2000?

Yes	: 72%
No	: 28%

7. If yes, do you think that this classification and the implementation of measures induced are favourable to the conservation of environmental quality and of biodiversity?

Completely	: 11%	] 53%
Partially	: 42%	
Neutral	: 17%	
Negative impact	: 6%	
No answer	: 24%	

8. Do you consider that Natura 2000 has a negative impact on angling activities (or do you think it could have in case the measures are not yet fully elaborated)?

Yes	: 47%
No	: 53%

If yes, please elaborate on why this is the case:

**Natura 2000 is mostly appreciated by the anglers but they still see the challenge posed by the fishing plans...**

9. If you have completed initiatives in favour of environment conservation and of aquatic biodiversity enhancement could you tell us which they are?

Maintenance of banks and of ponds	: 23/44
Mitigation of pollution	: 22/44
Reintroduction of animals	: 19/44
Communication activities and awareness raising amongst your members:	17/44
Monitoring of species, environment	: 14/44
Communication activities and awareness raising amongst the public	: 11/44
Restoration of natural sites	: 8/44

10. Did you complete some of these actions with other partners?

Yes	: 65%	<b>Mostly with environmental associations</b>
No	: 27%	

(no answer 8%)

11. Have ever you received European support?

LIFE Programme	: 8%
Other programmes, names	: 27% <b>(Leader+ was quoted 5 times)</b>
None	: 65%

## Conclusion

It is significant to underline that the answers came mainly from angling organisations (60%) as well as from individuals and companies (35%) with some answers by administration (5%), giving the survey a good panel. They declare managing in equal proportion public, private and common territories.

It is no surprise that salmonids (salmon and then trout) are the most commonly encountered game fish, followed by carp and pike. The role of leisure fishing of salmonids in the UK, Ireland and in northern Europe is fundamental for rural development. Such activity induces tourism as well as the fishing tackle sale business. The protection of salmonids is not only an environmental duty; it is also a vital necessity for the countryside.

The opinions of anglers towards environmental policy and particularly towards Natura 2000 are quite positive. 72% of the recipients of the questionnaire mention that they practice angling in Natura 2000 areas. 53% of them feel the Natura 2000 classification has at least a partially favourable impact on the environment, and 70% stipulate that Natura 2000 has no negative impact on their angling activities.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that Natura 2000 is seen as a factor of complexity for the elaboration and the implementation of fishing management plans.

As regards the actions taken by organisations, individuals and companies, most of the responses concerned the maintenance and monitoring of habitats and species, followed closely by mitigation of pollution and reintroduction of animals followed by information actions both for the members of the organisations and for public opinion. It shows that anglers not only pursue a passion but also feel responsible for the maintenance of the good status of the territories where they practice and also for the information and education of the public. 48% are concerned by degradation of their environment and 56% think that fish population decreases. They are therefore very interested in environmental changes and wish to be involved in sustainable management of Nature.

The survey also shows that in spite of all these efforts, only a minority of them are the recipients of European support.

To summarize the picture given by this survey, anglers and managers of aquatic territories are very conscious of the need to protect the aquatic environment. It is a prerequisite for the longevity of their practice but also an economic issue where angling is a professional tourism activity. Furthermore, they generally don't see Natura 2000 as an obstacle. In fact, they feel that the Natura 2000 network can bring additional environmental protection that contributes to the quality of angling territories. That is why most of them are involved in environmental projects at the local level.

It is therefore time to recognise the environmental added value brought by anglers and managers of aquatic territories to society. They feel both passionate about their activity and responsible for the environmental assets they have been given.