

# BASS

Restoration Project  
Newsletter



The Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society

Special Newsletter

Summer 2012



## In this Issue

### Report on meeting to revive bass Minimum Landing Size debate.

After a 5 year period of inaction, Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon meets with BASS to review the bass Minimum Landing Size.

### BASS presents its proposal paper with the support of The Angling Trust.

As announced at the AGM the AT supports BASS in its campaign.

### BASS also receives support from MPs

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of The All Party Parliamentary Group on Angling join us in support of an increase.

### How YOU can help to Support your team.

It couldn't be easier – Just sign to say you are behind us.

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## The Men at the Ministry

John Quinlan, Nigel Horsman, Ian Misselbrook, Charles Walker and George Hollingbery outside Nobel House before the meeting.



## Press release from the Angling Trust

Last week representatives from the Bass Anglers Sportfishing Society joined MPs from the All Party Parliamentary Angling Group in an Angling Trust organised delegation to meet Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon to press the case for sustainable size limits for bass in order to allow the fish to breed at least once and for stocks to replenish. UK bass stocks at many locations are showing an alarming decline with recent poor recruitment years and overfishing of juvenile fish which are harvested well before they have had an opportunity to breed.

The Angling Trust delegation included National Campaign Coordinator Martin Salter, Ian Misselbrook and Nigel Horsman from the Bass Anglers Sportsfishing Society and John Quinlan, Chairman of the Irish Bass Protection Group. They were accompanied by Charles Walker MP and George Hollingbery MP, chairman and vice-chairman of the APPG on Angling. The group presented Mr Benyon with their paper ' Bass Stock Management and the minimum landing size '.

The paper argues for a new minimum landing size of 48cms to allow for the maximum number of fish to successfully breed before running the risk of harvesting. At this size a corresponding increase in net mesh sizes would reduce discard levels.

In support of the need for urgent action from the government the group produced the latest official Solent Bass Survey figures which shows worryingly low recruitment indices (survival of young bass) for 2008 & 2009 and with the last significant recruitment occurring as far back as 1997, the survivors of this year class are now over 10lb and at the peak of their breeding capacity - but there are few spawning years which have produced fish of this quality to ensure a healthy stock into the future

Mr Benyon was told of the collapse in Irish bass stocks in the late 1980's and how the introduction of a statutory close season, a two fish bag limit and a minimum landing size has allowed stocks to recover to the point where the Irish bass fishery is now worth over €18 million to the Irish economy.

### **Recreational bass angling**

Government estimates put the number of sea anglers in Britain at 771,750 with corresponding annual expenditure ranging from £679m to £1billion.

Defra's report - Charting Progress 2 states:

*"The most popular sea angling species to target is bass, with nearly half of all sea anglers choosing this as their main target species. The value of the bass sport fishery in 2004 is estimated to be in excess of £100m p.a., despite severely depleted stocks of larger bass".*

This indicates the number of "bass anglers" is in excess of 300,000.

The Bass anglers Sportsfishing Society has a policy aimed at achieving 'More and Bigger Bass' for both recreational and commercial fishing interests

Nigel Horsman from BASS comments:

*"Whilst the economic case for making this change is clear and undeniable, it is more important that we do this for the bass themselves.*

*Harvesting fish before they have had a chance to breed would normally be considered at least unwise, but with bass stocks severely depleted due to overfishing and poor recruitment over many years, made much worse by recent cold winters killing off baby bass in their inshore nursery areas, carrying on doing that via the current mls is utter madness.*

*We must raise the mls so the fish have at least one chance to breed before it is too late."*

**Martin Salter said:**

*" Preventing the exploitation of bass until they have had at least one chance to spawn and replace themselves in the stocks not only passes the common sense test, but also meets with good sustainable fishery management practice.*

*The Angling Trust supports increasing the minimum landing size to 48cm in order to start to increase stock numbers and average sizes, which have fallen alarmingly in recent years."*



**George Hollingbery MP and Vice Chairman of the APPG on Angling added:**

*"A move to a 48cm minimum landing size for bass makes all the sense in the world. We cannot hope to continue exploiting the population in a way that removes fish from the system before they have had a chance to breed.*

*It has taken Ireland 20 years to begin to recover from disastrous over-exploitation. We have the chance to do something before we reach that stage and for the sake of commercial fishermen, recreational anglers and the economies of some of the most marginal areas of the country, we have to do it now."*

**Please read on if you would like to help**

# Action YOU can take to help . . .

Your Restoration Team has moved mountains to get the MLS debate back on the agenda and to get in front of the Minister and he is open to revisiting the previous error of judgment made by Jonathan Shaw in 2007 when he kept the MLS at 36 centimeters.

All that the team now asks is that you support their work by signing the enclosed letter and sending it to Richard Benyon – What could be easier?

Sign the letter and send it to Richard Benyon and send the other copy to your local MP.

That's it!

If you wish to extend your letter, perhaps using some of the following points, then by all means do so; BUT the most important thing is that you send the letter.

- We think that the increase is long overdue and whilst there is a short term impact . . . it is only short term (1-2yrs).
- It is clear that over the last three decades, the structure of bass stocks has dramatically altered. The frequency of catching 60+ cm bass has plummeted.
- If a 48 cm MLS was introduced (with appropriate minimum mesh size), most of the bass that are currently caught and retained (by recreationals & commercials) between 36 and 47.9 cm will be provided the opportunity to remain in the sea for an additional 1-2 years until they are over breeding size. We will then have a significantly enhanced opportunity to catch a decent sized bass.
- When considering the pros and cons of an increased MLS, bear in mind that the difference in weight between say a 41 cm bass and one of 49 cm is very significant. The 41 cm bass will weigh about 0.75 kilo and generate £4.50 to a commercial fisherman and 2 x 6 oz fillets for a recreational to consume. That same bass two years older at 49 cm weighs 1.2 kilo and generates £9 (combination of increased mass plus increased price per kilo for weighing over a kilo) for a commercial and 2 x 11 oz fillets for a recreational to consume.

Thank you . . .