

Mr Derriman responds:

On 6 Feb 2013, at 12:43, Eddy Derriman wrote:

Dear Mr Horsman

Thanks for your message and attachment.

Firstly my apologies for not getting some words down in response to your queries before now, but unexpectedly I spent some additional time in London last week at crucial meetings.

I will respond as best as I can to the points you raise in the order they are presented.

Breeding size – I wholeheartedly agree with your contention that management decisions should be based on robust science, and persuasive studies where they are available. Unhelpfully, there are several papers and studies that suggest different ranges but the 38cm to 42cm length I mentioned in my paper was quoted to me several years ago by Graham Pickett (who I guess you would agree is a well known authority on bass), as “an average” range for females becoming sexually mature. I suspect there may be nothing in writing to that effect. By no stretch of the imagination do those two sizes encompass the outliers on each side, so for example I have personally witnessed a female bass of around 36cm in length full of eggs, and several well known angling representatives have quoted 45cm to 48cm being the size at which all females will have bred at least once. I do not know where they draw that conclusion from, because I have not read any papers to those particular sizes.

Climatic changes – yes I am aware of Derek Goodwin’s surveys, and yes my officers assist him whenever possible. I also have his survey reports, so I well aware of the results for the areas he covers. I suspect the cold snaps we have had for the last three years has had an impact on the survival of 0 group bass in the estuaries/rivers, but the general temperature profile trend appears to still be increasing towards the poles, so the movement of bass northwards is perhaps not surprising.

Economics – I am unable to really comment on your conclusion regarding the setting of the national MLS in the 1980s – 90s, as I was not a fishery officer at that time and I was in other parts of the world. I note your comments and perhaps would not dissent from the thrust of your comment, but of course I would not necessarily agree with some of the words you used.

Management Issues – For information, the French pair trawlers catching bass are not “small inshore vessels”! As you know, the EU Commission refused to back the UK Government in 2005 in banning bass mid-water trawling, despite very strong indicators that many cetaceans were dying as a result. The predecessor SFC to the Cornwall IFCA lobbied Government very hard over many meetings in London and by written correspondence, but the results to our efforts were only partially successful. This incident demonstrates the point very strongly, that tacit agreement has to be reached by the EU and national government if any mobile/transient species is to be properly managed and protected, whether that be from fish, mammal or bird kingdoms. Despite that truism, as I have already indicated the local IFCA are already talking at a high level about possible regional management of bass.

The 500% and 20% figure was one given to me by Malcolm Gilbert when he sent me a copy of Bass' Bass Management plan. I cut and paste from the plan as follows

The average value now being realised by local fishermen for smaller wild bass is approximately £2 - £3 per fish. The potential value of those same small fish, if left to grow to 55cm before being captured, is significantly more both to commercial fishermen, recreational anglers and local communities. A fish of between 1.75 kg - 2 kg will be worth approximately £15 - £20 per fish. At this rate, this represents an increased value of 500% from landing the same number of fish. Alternately, the local commercial fishermen could earn the same income by landing only 20% of the fish now currently captured.

I have not tested these figures, nor am I in a position to do so, but in the interests of transparency I offered them in the paper as figures assessed by interest groups. Because it comes from your own plan, I am surprised you did not know them.

Personal conversations with various staff at Cefas in Lowestoft early last year, elicited the response that bass (nor mullet) were showing any signs of particular concern. However, given that Graham Pickett's and Mike Pawson's work on bass was effectively slimmed down or sidelined several years ago because of the necessity for additional work into 'pressure stocks' i.e. cod, haddock and plaice, the comment was made that they would recommend no increase in effort until such time as some more studies could be done.

Recent Issues Raised – I am slightly bemused that you state that “BASS are calling for an increase in MLS.....not [to be] reserved solely for sports fishing.....”. Malcolm Gilbert in particular, but also Leon Roskilly and other well-known angling reps have voiced the same opinion to me at every opportunity over 20 years, that bass should be reserved for recreational use only.

Malcolm and I first had that discussion at a meeting in 1992 or 1993 in Marazion, Cornwall where he and two or three other bass angling enthusiasts made it plain to me that their ultimate aim was to make bass around the UK a recreational species only. I gave Malcolm a list of MAFF (as it then was) officers contact details, as I explained the task was going to be an uphill one, and that the Minister would be the eventual decision maker.

Interestingly, the BASS Bass Management Plan itself, hints extremely strongly at the concept of a recreational species only in several places, with addition that a few commercial line boats could be accommodated also.

I hope you find this helpful

Regards

PS your message this morning came in as I was about to start this!

Edwin Derriman
Chief Officer
Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
St Clare Offices, St Clare Street
Penzance
Cornwall TR18 3QW