



Decision on the Minimum Landing Size for bass announced

Following a public consultation and lengthy delay - on the 10th August, Defra announced that the minimum landing size for bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) is to be increased.

From April 6, 2007, commercial fishermen and anglers will not be allowed to take bass any smaller than 40cm. The current limit is 36 cm (37.5cm in Cornwall and South Wales).

The public consultation, which closed on 8th February, sought views on an increase from 36cm to 45cm in the minimum landing size (MLS) of bass and a corresponding increase in the minimum mesh size (MMS) for fixed gear. Approximately 2,800 responses were received.



Fisheries Minister Ben Bradshaw is quoted as saying *"I have listened very carefully to the representations made and have not taken this decision lightly.*

I have accepted the arguments for a bigger minimum landing size to help increase the quantity

and size of bass. This will also give better protection for the stocks. There may be short term costs from this measure before we see future gains but it is vital that fisheries management takes a long term view. The recreational fishing sector makes a major contribution to our economy and it is important that their voice, as well as that of commercial fishermen, is taken into account in fisheries management.

In the future, I intend to increase the landing size further, to 45cm, but subject to the results of a review in 2010, of the effectiveness of the measures I have announced today."

In their press release, Defra state that the increase to 40cm will bring the minimum landing size closer to the first spawning size for female bass (42cm). They further claim that, as a result, more juvenile fish will be protected and there will be increased recruitment to the spawning stock. This will in turn increase the number and size of bass available for capture, to both the commercial and recreational sectors.

Just how these claims can be justified is open to debate, with an MLS which is still set below maturity size for females.

Doubtless, BASS members will be very disappointed, that Option 2 of the consultation proposals was not fully adopted by the Minister with immediate effect.

This would have seen an increase in the MLS to 45cm, and would have ensured that most female bass would have survived long enough to have spawned at least once, before becoming a legitimate target for those wishing to take bass on a commercial basis or for personal consumption.

4 Centimetres is Not Enough!

BASS, SACN, NFSA, other sea angling organisations, including a wide cross-section of the sea angling sector, NGO's and MPs, pressed for the implementation of Option 2. whilst the consultation response summary reveals that most of the commercial sector, favoured Option 1 - Do Nothing.

BASS is pleased that the MLS has been increased (albeit by a derisory 4cms) and acknowledges the Minister's pledge to review again in 2010. However, BASS considers that Defra and the Minister have yet again placed the short-term profits of the commercial sector, above the long-term viability of the UK's bass stocks.

The revised MLS of 40cm is still set below the age of maturity for female bass and as such, is a token gesture. It is aimed at appeasing the commercial sector on the one hand and at the same time, offering the recreational sector some solace with a minor and mainly ineffective increase, claimed to improve our sport.

To accompany the increased minimum landing size, the Minister has also announced an increase in the mesh size for fixed gear for targeted bass fisheries from the current 90mm to 100mm, in order to reduce potential discards.

Having reviewed the full Regulatory Impact Assessment, which accompanies the announcement, it appears that the MLS been set to 'best fit' the mesh size of 100mm, already commonly in use, in order to minimise the cost to the commercial sector. BASS considers that this decision is a compromise, which will please neither sector, nor will it provide the benefits, as outlined in the Bass Management Plan.

A summary of these responses and a Full Regulatory Impact Assessment, which evaluates the costs and benefits of the proposals are available at –

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/bass-mls/index.htm>

Having now had time to analyse Defra's summary of those responses, the Restoration Team have doubts about the integrity of the some of the 'facts' that have been put forward, in order to justify such a modest increase in the MLS and we will be considering a full and robust response to the Minister in due course.

John Leballeur - BASS Chairman- said

'I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those who responded to the MLS consultation and supported Option 2. BASS members, Sea Angling clubs, the Tackle Trade, SACN, NFSA, UKSWFF

and the BASS Restoration Project team and each and every one of you, thanks for your support, enthusiasm and commitment. We have come a long way over recent years, but still have some way to go!'

Rod Raffle Winner

BASS mag 117 contained details of our latest fundraiser and invited entries to a raffle for a saltwater fly fishing outfit comprising of a Fulling Mill fly rod, Okuma reel, fly line and a wide selection of flies.



A total of 75 tickets were sold @ £5.00, so £375 was raised in all - 100% of which will go to the Bass Restoration Fund. A very big thanks to all who donated (Austen Goldsmith, Veals Mail Order and UKSWFF members) and of course, all who participated in the raffle.

The winner was Jon Williams, from Cornwall.

Can you help?

The restoration team is in urgent need of assistance. At the moment we have too few people, trying to cope with the job at hand.

We don't have a dedicated PR person - A dedicated fund raising maestro - Someone to liaise with the tackle trade and get them fired up. We need a couple of people who have a handle on advertising, design and distribution for posters, leaflets etc.

Writing reports and proposal documents, engaging with other angler groups, politicians and Defra can all be undertaken by the existing team, but there is plenty of 'backroom' stuff that needs doing and because we only have a small group of people doing the day to day work and sharing the tasks, most of

which are beyond our normal duties and experience,
we are never as efficient as we could be.

If you would like to help out then please drop the
Chairman a note – his address and email details are in
the BASS magazine, which you have recently
received. Thanks.