

Why do we need a 45cm Minimum Size for bass?

In the very near future, Defra will begin a public consultation, which proposes to increase the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) at which a bass can be retained by anybody in England and Wales

THE PROPOSAL IS that the MLS should go from 36cm (just over 14in) to 45cm (just under 18in), so an increase of 9cm or little more than 3½in. Proposals to increase commercial net mesh sizes to reduce accidental capture of bass below 45cm will also be part of this consultation to ensure that bass will be given the chance to spawn at least once.

The consultation on raising the MLS will be the first of a series of consultations, which will later include...

- Proposals for inshore gill net restrictions within one mile of the shore.
- A closed season to protect bass when they are ready to spawn.
- Stronger laws for nursery areas to further protect immature bass.
- The introduction of COMMERCIAL licencing and the use of carcass tags to reduce the current high level of illegal netting and sale of 'illegal' bass.

All of these conservation proposals will be designed to increase the number and size of bass in our coastal waters and will have a knock-on effect, which will help improve the quality of sea angling for all.

Still not convinced?

For some anglers, the reasons behind a proposal to increase the minimum size for bass may still not be clear. After all, many of us currently do not catch many bass bigger than 36cm (1lb), so why is a 45cm



IF THE MINIMUM SIZE FOR BASS WAS INCREASED TO 45cm IT WOULD MEAN THE FOLLOWING FOR ANGLERS:

- A short period (12-18 months) during which any 36-45cm bass caught could not be retained. During this period commercial fishermen would not be able to retain any fish below 45cm either and the proposal to significantly increase mesh sizes at the same time will reduce accidental captures of smaller fish.
 - After that initial 12-18 months, there would be not only a year-on-year increase in the number of bass caught by the average angler, but also a year-on-year increase in the size of those bass caught by sea anglers.
 - A lot more bass would be able to spawn. This would help ensure that breeding was maximised each year and would keep spawning success high.
- IT IS COMMON SENSE REALLY**
1. Reduce the number of immature fish being taken by fishermen.
 2. Leaving more fish to spawn.
 3. Helping to produce more fish.

(2lb) limit being proposed?

At the current time most anglers in the UK mainly catch small bass - because that's all there is to catch.

Bigger fish have been seriously reduced in numbers by over-fishing. It's true that some lucky or skillful anglers catch a few bigger bass, but there are nowhere near as many big bass as there used to be.

There are, however, lots of small bass around. Due to

favourable climatic conditions the bass nursery areas are producing record numbers and our warmer winters are increasing the survival of these little bass.

But, before those small bass become big enough to put a decent bend in your rod, they are taken by the commercial fishery when they are between 36 -45cm (mostly by British vessels fishing within our own six-mile limit) and very few

bass now survive to become adults - fish worth angling for.

How much better would it be to have a good chance of catching the same numbers of bass, but two or three times as big? This approach has already produced staggering increases in the numbers and size of striped bass for anglers in the USA. Why should we not have the same in the UK?

After years of campaigning, sea angling representatives are at last being taken very seriously and this is our first chance at driving through changes designed to benefit our fisheries and our sport.

Don't just sit there - do something!

During the consultation period, your help is urgently needed. To ensure that the proposals, to increase the MLS of bass, along with other measures - like bringing in netting restrictions and commercial licencing - will ultimately result in : **"More and Bigger Bass For Sea Anglers"** Watch out for the Defra public consultation and participate by making a written response, to make the changes for improved sea fishing a reality. Details of the consultation and suggested responses will appear on www.ukbass.com and the fisheries page of the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/fish/fishindx.htm (under consultations) in Oct/ Nov. ●

These companies support the Bass Management Plan...

