

Recreational sea angling workshop - a synopsis

(Held at the National Marine Aquarium on 15 January 2003 and presented by the Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society and the National Federation Of Sea Anglers.)

This is a Synopsis of the workshop, 'Recreational Sea Angling, a wealth of opportunity', to discuss the sustainable use of natural resources and the development of alternative fisheries management policies, to benefit the peoples and the economy of the South West.

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Introduction - ***John Leballeur (Chairman of BASS)***

There are estimated to be in excess of one million anglers who enjoy their recreation around our coastline and yet sea anglers, and their contributions to the economies of coastal communities, appear the least valued of all its visitors.

Our objective is, for a cross-section of representatives from our sport, to increase awareness and understanding for the potential VALUE that recreational sea angling has to offer.

We aim to achieve this through the presentation of an effective argument for the delivery of sustainable, economic, environmental and social benefits to the south west, through proposed enhancement and development of its natural resources.

Our programme, therefore, will seek to cover the key issues in order to support this understanding.

The hope is, that through increased knowledge and understanding of the benefits that can be derived, we may then go on to investigate the opportunities for strategic development of recreational sea angling as a key revenue and employment generator for the region.

We would consider the final discussion session to be the leading instrument for this objective.

This workshop comes at a very crucial time, when we have the current Common Fisheries Policy deliberations, loss of fishing jobs due to the decline of fish stocks and increasing environmental concerns.

We believe our proposals will provide benefits in direct contrast to the majority of negative effects now being realised from the current trends and state of affairs.

We hope that, as a result of your attendance at this forum, or from reading this synopsis, you achieve a greater understanding why recreational sea angling is an important stakeholder and should be fully recognised as such. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

Who are we and what are our objectives - **David Rowe (NFSA Development officer)**

Anglers have fished the shores of the British Isles for generations. The skills and enjoyment, experienced from this popular recreation, is often passed from parent to child and a love of angling can often be traced back, through the generations, to grandparents who have also wielded a rod and reel. Once introduced to angling, a young person begins to appreciate his, or her, natural surroundings, develops an interest in wildlife, conservation and an awareness for the environment.

Sea Angling can be a solitary pastime, where time is found to reflect and to re-charge the batteries in surroundings that can inspire the soul and refresh the spirit. Sea Angling can be a social affair, where groups of adults and youngsters can participate on equal terms, the adults armed with their knowledge, the kids overflowing with youthful enthusiasm. Whether angling to find peace and solitude, or for the camaraderie that the competitive side of the sport offers, angling in salt-water is a worldwide pursuit. There are no barriers in angling, imposed by gender, race, religion, physical ability, age, or class.

In the UK alone there are in excess of 1 million sea anglers.

A fishing rod has been described as being *"a fool at one end and a hook at the other"*, I guess because the idea of an angler outwitting a fish is difficult to comprehend for those who do not understand that angling is about so much more. It is about being in great outdoors, sometimes braving the elements, observing nature and indeed using this knowledge to advantage to catch fish. Therefore we are unhappy about this description, for anglers are proud and passionate about what they do preferring to describe angling as being truly an occupation and sport for all and a measure of the passion is that there have been more books written about angling than most other sports.

There has been some discussion as to whether angling is a recreation or a sport but we believe there is no discussion, it is both, it can be as relaxed as you like or as intense as one wants to make it and UK sea anglers are very successful and have achieved much on the world competition stage. Angling is an ideal outdoor leisure activity contributing to both the physical and mental wellbeing of society with immense development potential. It is the one of the largest if not the largest participation sport and it is interesting to note that a recent survey by the English Disabled Federation of Sport that Angling was the second most popular sport that disabled persons had tried and the second most popular sport that they wanted to take up. In addition in other parts of England especially the North East there are angling participation schemes that

have had support for their work with the disadvantaged and young offenders. Therefore there is real understanding by many social workers of its value as a healthy, worthwhile sport.

Major organised angling events, bring revenue to the areas that host them and as an example the 1997 World shore angling championship at Dover, where according to Dover council's figures the overall economic benefit of that 7 day event alone was £370,000, and a similar substantial amount was spent at Bridlington in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1998 when England hosted the Junior World championships.

Each year there are several week long events held in the south west, The YYS Boat and Shore Festival, at Weymouth, the Torbay Festival and here in Plymouth, the Plymouth Festival are all major events that attract people and business to the area.

We hope to illustrate just how important RSA is to the economy, particularly for the coastal areas where levels of seasonal unemployment are often high.

What do we want?

The answer is greater Opportunities.

We want to develop our sport by creating, more angling opportunities, to make angling accessible to more people which in turn will benefit not only the participants, but also all those who depend on the sport for a living.

We want more and larger fish.

It is a fact that most anglers want to catch more and bigger fish, it is part of their psyche and the primary reason for going sea angling, and indeed there are National Award Schemes in place which record the capture of good specimen fish and make awards accordingly, therefore we need management measures to ensure that there are larger fish to catch.

We need to catch them within our target range.

Not only do anglers want the opportunity to catch fish, but they also need to catch them within target range, Most sea angling, other than that carried out by the long distance charter boat is either from the shoreline or within a very few miles from the shore, in small boats.

Opportunity of access to fishing venues be they piers, estuary and river foreshore, beaches, or at sea.

It is true to say that most piers and beaches, particularly in the south west are private, owned or leased from the Crown by Local Authorities and because of various difficulties including that of Liability Insurance, and management problems, many piers around this country are closed to angling, and the port areas which have in the past provided valuable angling venues are being closed to shore anglers. This restriction to venues worries us, as does the influence of the various regulatory bodies that restrict access to our coastline.

In addition, once anglers arrive at their venues, they need to be able to carry out their sport in safety. This is not always possible because of the nets set close to the foreshore that, in some cases, are within wading

depth or even dry out at low tide and become a danger to anyone who uses the beach. Be they anglers, swimmers, divers or surfers.

These nets also remove an angling opportunity in that they also capture the immature fish that live close inshore. This also applies to the trawlers that are permitted to drag their nets close inshore and in some cases their nets have been observed dragging along the beach out of the water. The NFSA has over the years received more complaints about netting and gill netting in particular than any other single topic.

Finally, therefore, to create more opportunities we need more recognition by local authorities, tourism chiefs, and not least by the fishery managers of our right to a share in the common resource, we are all stakeholders and sea angling has as much right as any other user group to access to the essential ingredient of our sport - fish. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

Why do we currently not have what we want - **Malcolm Gilbert** (**NFSA Fisheries Rep & BASS European Liason Officer**)

Malcolm would be the first to admit that he is not an academic. He has no scientific training or qualifications. He is, in the true sense of the word - a layman. He has, however had more than thirty years involvement with the Recreational Sea Angling sector from a number of different perspectives.

He was born and grew up in Helston, Cornwall, and after a few years away in his late teens / early twenties, returned to Cornwall where he developed a retail fishing tackle and sports goods business. Some twenty-five years ago he started a business processing, freezing and distributing locally caught fish for sport angling baits.

"From about 6 years old I had always been crazy about fish and fishing. Towards the end of the seventies, conscious of my own decreasing catches and stimulated by what I considered to be unsustainable commercial over fishing, I developed a growing interest in marine fish stock management issues. Since the early eighties I have remonstrated frequently with the powers that be, through my local MPs, without making much headway I might add!"

Malcolm is currently the Fisheries Liaison Representative for the National Federation of Sea Anglers, European Liaison Officer for the Bass Anglers Sport fishing Society and he represented the UK on sea angling issues in the European Anglers Alliance, which is based in Brussels.

"Despite living with the sea on my doorstep, I live in St Ives, most of my sea angling activities now take place in the West of Ireland or the east coast of the US. I would now like to tell you why this is the case.

So, Why do we currently NOT have what we need and is sport fishing a legitimate use of fish?

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (UNFAO) '*Code of conduct for Responsible Fisheries*' is signed up to by all EU member states. The introduction reads: '**Fisheries provide a source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well being for people throughout the world.**' It also states that fish stocks are part of '**Humanity's Natural Heritage**' and as such should be utilised both sustainably and for their '**Optimal utilisation**'.

Clearly, fish stocks are not the exclusive property of the commercial fishing industry. The selectivity of Sport fishing, the increasing willingness for catch and release and the enormous socio-economic impact to the coastal belt from minimal fishing mortality, irrefutably places sport fishing at the top of the list for 'Optimal utilisation'.

Our activities are certainly legitimate, so what are the problems?

Firstly, the entire fisheries management regime at EU and national level focus on the one user stakeholder, commercial fishing, without considering or even recognising the other user stakeholders. Since the war years fisheries management has been entirely preoccupied with food production. Within a culture of prioritising food productivity, immense damage has been done to the environment and consumers for many years suffered as a result. As recognition of the unsustainability of such a culture became better understood, so the importance of the environment has been elevated.

During AND AFTER the Foot & Mouth experience, it became apparent that as catastrophic as the outbreak was to some farmers, the real economic damage was in fact far greater to the tourism sector than to the agricultural sector.

In exactly the same way as agricultural productivity was over-valued, so the apparent pre-occupation for the commercial fish catching sector, with its short-term aims has ignored the well-being of the finite resources that are so essential for sustainable fishing and the activities of other stakeholders. A major failure of fisheries managers has been the unwillingness to admit the existence of over-fishing.

Patently, an administration in denial of over-fishing is most unlikely to proactively seek remedies to a situation it does not recognize.

However, in the spring of 2000, volume 1 of the Common Fisheries Policy Green paper was published, spelling out very publicly just how bad things really were:

"The CFP has not delivered sustainable exploitation of fishery resources."

"Many stocks are at present outside safe biological limits. They are too heavily exploited or have low quantities of mature fish or both."

"If current trends continue, many stocks will collapse."

"The available fishing capacity of the community fleets far exceeds that required to harvest fish in a sustainable manner."

On average, the quantities of mature demersal fish in the sea, as assessed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) were about ninety percent greater in the early 1970's than in the late 1990's.

The general decline in landings is similar.

"For many stocks, the authorised mesh sizes remain too small for the effective protection of juveniles."

The protection of small juveniles is particularly difficult to put into practise. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that larger fish have become rare.

There are references to over-fishing of some fish stocks more than a hundred years ago! However, the systematic depletion of a wide range of fish stocks of interest to angling has really only manifested itself during the last two to three decades. Prior to this decline, sea anglers could predictably target the various species, depending upon their geographic location and season. Prior to over-fishing, the South West enjoyed an enviable reputation for both its shore and boat angling and if fish stocks had not been allowed to become so depleted, the 'sea angling product' would have naturally and organically developed.

As the ongoing depletion of stocks manifested itself with reduced catches and less predictability, a pervasive feeling of injustice has begun to fester amongst recreational anglers who are disillusioned by what they see as ineffective management of fish stocks. Despite widespread media coverage of over-fishing, there is an apparent complete lack of will by successive governments to stop the decline and start the process of restoration.

There is a proven and direct correlation between the level of angling activity and the availability of fish;

Let us call this the 'fish availability threshold'.

Anglers must believe that they have a chance to catch fish if they are to be motivated to go fishing. Once they perceive the 'fish availability threshold' is such that their chances of catching a worthwhile fish are negligible, the motivation to go fishing is diminished.

Despite the increase in leisure and expendable income, the potential to develop sea angling has been curtailed by a significant reduction in fish resources. Many long term sea anglers who experienced better times historically have given up sea angling or participate less often and potential newcomers (especially youngsters) who try sea angling, quickly lose interest when they catch nothing.

Elsewhere around the globe, where specific marine fish stocks of interest to anglers have been restored, the increase in angling activity by both long-term anglers and newcomers to the sport has been remarkable. There is every reason to believe that the same would be true throughout the British Isles.

We shall hear more of this potential later.

Further evidence of the demand for angling opportunities and in particular the link with tourism, exists in the fresh-water angling sector.

In Cornwall and Devon, up until the mid-seventies, there was only sea angling and game fishing. Coarse angling was something that was done up in Birmingham or Sheffield, but of course those who had ponds, farmers perhaps looking for diversification, saw the market for angling and met this demand with coarse fishing venues, stocking their man-made ponds with species such as carp, rudd, perch and tench.

In the latest edition of the 'Get Hooked Guide to Angling in the South West', which is published in co-operation with the Environment Agency, there are over one hundred such waters, many of which are attached to camp sites or farmhouse bed and breakfast accommodation. This surely confirms that the demand for angling exists here in the West Country.

This leads us to highlight what can only be PERCIEVED as discrimination.

Freshwater anglers have a Government agency, the Environment Agency, who has responsibility for the fish and for the promotion of and development of recreation. For saltwater anglers the situation is profoundly different. Responsibility for sea fish stocks lies entirely with Defra and the EU Fisheries Commission. As previously stated, the track record of both regimes as regards looking after fish stock resources can only be described as 'less than successful' and since neither perceives itself as having any remit for the recreational sector, the sectors requirements remain unrecognized and unfulfilled.

Defra have clearly stated that they recognize their responsibility for managing fish stocks impinges on anglers but that they have no responsibility for the sport of sea angling. They point out that the responsibility for the 'sport' of angling actually lies with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), who are also responsible for tourism. It is difficult to see how the DCMS will ever be able to discharge their responsibilities effectively to sea anglers (or to tourism) when they have no input or participation in the management of the most essential ingredient of recreational saltwater sport angling, fish!

So what is to be done?

Fish stocks continue to decline, the commercial fishing industry appears unstoppable in its determination to self-destruct, and in any event no government department takes effective responsibility for our affairs.

Anglers would like to see a complete alteration to the emphasis of fisheries management - one that puts the resources first.

"It is now time to think more clearly about the objectives of the CFP and to prioritise them," states the Green Paper. The CFP currently focuses on the welfare of the commercial industry to the detriment of the resources and other stakeholders. The focus must alter towards the resources and the environment.

If the resources become the priority, then the long-term sustainability of all exploitation - be it commercial or recreational - is far more secure.

The concept of regarding the welfare of resources as the absolute priority is not new.

Doug Kidd, past Minister of fisheries in New Zealand, whose term of office transformed New Zealand fisheries from virtual collapse to what is now regarded as a global example of sustainability, adopted as an over riding principle, 'fish first-people second'.

We do not need to travel as far as New Zealand to find this concept. Professor Lynda Warren, who oversaw the Government's recent Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review, confirmed the same principle in her foreword, **"We decided that fish conservation must take priority over exploitation, if stocks are not properly conserved there will be nothing to manage."** If this underlying principal is essential for Salmon and Freshwater fish, then why should it not underpin the management of our marine species too?

Finally, I would like to demonstrate to you, some element of the appeal of angling. I would like to read a few words from a book written by Michael Wigan who also writes for *The Field*. He published a book some years ago called 'Last of the Hunter Gatherers' and it was really concentrating on the crisis facing global fishing fleets and fish stocks as over-fishing has been allowed to take place.

There is a chapter headed 'Sport Angling'

"One of the most attractive ways to use a resource is to enjoy it and then leave it behind."

Sport fishing has this unbeatable, quite unassailable virtue. It does not harm the stock. Either the numbers caught and retained are so low as to be irrelevant or, as in the USA, where sport fishing has been taken further than anywhere else, the fish are played and then put back.

In sport fishing Mecca's like the Florida Keys, fishing guides report that almost nothing is retained by anglers any more; even potential record breaking specimens are being returned unmeasured.

As an unimpeachable way to exploit the fish resource, sport fishing has few equals. Except, that is, for reef viewing through a glass-bottomed boat. The socio-economic characteristics of sport fishing are highly favourable. It provides relaxation in the open air on the earth's least pressurised surface. It can be performed by anyone of any age, regardless of handicap.

In Florida, bonefish are ALWAYS released.

It provides, if a sample of the catch is retained, top-notch food for the table - fresher than it could be procured any other way.

Its environmental impacts are almost zero; for those who fish off their own feet from the rocks or the beach - literally zero.

Sport fishermen are the best and the most numerous early warning reporters of anything peculiar affecting the environment they use. With their catch and release habits, sport fishers are in a perfect position to tag fish at the same time. American scientists have fulsomely acknowledged the role of the sport in accumulating data for vital stock assessments.

For reasons like these, plus the one that salt water angling can be challenging, thrilling, dramatic and as soul refreshing as any other activity, its popularity is growing.

Furthermore, salt water angling has had a major affect on fish stock conservation. Several species have been saved by the angling lobby.

All in all, armed with these points, it is possible to face the fact without incredulity, that in America the value of the recreational salt water fishery, taken as a whole, hugely exceeds that of the entire American Commercial Fishing Industry.

Our next presenters, Andy and Gil, will prove how valid these statements are. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

How it could be! A USA experience. - **Andy Loftus & Gil Radonski** (**Consultants from Recreational Fishing Alliance, USA**)

Gilbert C. Radonski

Gil has a wealth of experience in fishery matters in both the political and scientific arenas. Including a three-year term on the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council, three terms on the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), which advises the Secretary of Commerce on marine fishery issues. He was also charter member of the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, which advises the Secretary of the Interior on recreational fishery issues. Gil has travelled throughout the United States, Japan, Canada, Europe, United Kingdom, the Azores, the Caribbean, Russia, and Australia in his professional capacity. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Natural Resources Council of America (seventy-plus national environmental and conservation organizations) serving a term as its Chairman. He is currently Vice-Chairman of the United States, Central and Eastern European Environmental Foundation. He is a *Certified Fishery Scientist* by the American Fisheries Society and a *Fellow* in the American Institute of Fishery Research Biologists.

Andy Loftus

Andy has twenty years of experience in the natural resources environment. He has worked for state agencies, business trade associations, and universities. Andy has experienced, technically oriented training, combined with strong applied experience in public policy, government affairs, and communication. He has extensive experience in planning and developing management programs that meet the needs of businesses and agencies dependent on healthy natural resources. He has an in-depth knowledge of the striped bass recovery programs and regularly presents to federal and state agencies on the socio-economic value of sustainable use of aquatic resources.

The United State of America

Perhaps nowhere else in the Northern hemisphere, is the value of fish stocks to the recreation and leisure sectors, coastal economies and marine servicing industries better understood and managed accordingly, than in the US. In many parts of North America, federal and state legislation offer protection for many species of fish that are important to recreational anglers.

It wasn't always like this.

Due to both commercial and recreational over-fishing, during the 80's, many fish stocks were at the point of collapse and draconian measures were introduced to save some species from the brink. Due to a better understanding of the economics of fish resources, central, state and user-funding, along with altered management thinking, have saved those species under threat and have ensured the restoration of important sport-fish such as red drum, snook, speckled trout, bluefish and flounder. There can be no greater success story, however, than the recovery of the striped bass (*Morone saxitalis*) and the multi-billion dollar tourism and recreation beneficiaries that have flourished, along with the striper's comeback.

Striped bass resemble the European sea bass in many ways, not least in the way that they generate interest and passionate affection amongst sea anglers, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Twenty years ago, the plight of the striped bass was thought to be beyond recovery due to over fishing.

In 1981 the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) developed and adopted a fishery management plan for striped bass off the Atlantic coast from Maine to North Carolina. Because of migration patterns, co-operative management between States was necessary and during the 1980s the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act was signed into Federal Law, forcing States to comply with provisions of the ASMFC plan.

Drastic action was taken, involving a moratorium on striped bass fishing in some States, or severe restrictions on fishing in other States. By 1989 it became clear that the stocks were beginning to rebuild and a transitional fishery commenced in 1990. Compared to Europe, where fisheries management legislation is routinely disregarded, legislation for striped bass in the U.S.A. is both severely precautionary and rigorously enforced.

As the stocks of striped bass improved, sport anglers successfully persuaded legislators to take full account of the socio-economic impact of recreational sea angling and some States, in recognition of the much superior socio-economic returns from recreational sea angling, now manage towards the needs of the recreational user.

Recreational sea anglers are limited to retaining one fish per day in most States and the minimum size limit is 71 cm to ensure that all fish will have reproduced.

In 1988 it was realised that a loophole in the management plan was the commercial fishing that took place in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) that extends from 4.8 kilometres from the coast out to 322 kilometres. A total moratorium on striped bass harvesting in this offshore zone has been implemented and this is still in force today.

The recreational fishing industry has grown at an enormous rate, bringing wealth and jobs to the coastal zones beyond anyone's wildest expectations. It shows that the economic benefits to be gained from planned sustainable exploitation through promotion of the species as a recreational sport fish far outweigh those to be derived from commercial netting. As expected from 1981 to 1996, inflation adjusted angler expenditures on striped bass trips increased from \$85 million to \$560 million, a 35% annual growth in revenue.

In the State of New Jersey, which has a coastline equivalent in length to that of the County of Devon, the total annual catch of striped bass increased steadily and dramatically from 1.8 million fish in 1990 to 15.6 million fish in 2001. 86% of the fish were returned! Also in the State of New Jersey the number of marine angling trips increased from about 1 million in 1981 to 7.48 million in 2001 (Source - National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Statistics & Economics Division).

A recently published study, authorised under the 'Sustainable Fisheries Act,' in the U.S.A. confirmed that the value of sea angling expenditure is 13 times greater than the value of commercial landings in the United States, despite the fact that this value only represents 3% of total fish mortality. Commercial landings account for 97% of fish mortality. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

50 Years of the Sport Fish Restoration Program.

In 2000, The American Fisheries Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, celebrated 50 years of the Sport Fish Restoration Program. The American Fisheries Society produced a special supplement to their monthly membership magazine, 'Fisheries' to celebrate 50 years of sport fish restoration, published with

funding from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program.

Two of the articles contained in that supplement, of particular relevance to this synopsis, are reproduced below. The copyright for these articles is held by the American Fisheries Society, and we would like to thank Gus Rassam, Senior Editor, for permission to reproduce the articles on this web site.

Article 1

Atlantic Coast striped bass recovery: Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration in support of interstate fishery management. - RONALD J. ESSIG and ROBERT E. BEAL

(Ronald J. Essig is the fisheries program chief, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Northeast Region, Federal Aid Division, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley; MA 01035; 413-253-8504; <ron-essig@fws.gov>.

Robert E. Seal is the fisheries management plan coordinator, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 1444 Eye Street N.W, Sixth Floor; Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-6400; <rbeal@asmfc.org>).

Atlantic coast migratory striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), have supported important recreational and commercial fisheries from Maine through North Carolina for centuries. Steady declines in the abundance of striped bass in the 1970's resulted in coastwide commercial landings (the only reliable measure of abundance at that time) declining from 6,785 to 1,585 metric tons from 1973 to 1983 (Field 1997). To stem the decline, individual state management actions and coastwide management measures were implemented through the 1981 Atlantic State Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for the Striped Bass (FMP) and subsequent amendments. The Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act of 1984 allowed the ASMFC to recommend federal imposition of a moratorium on striped bass harvest in states that failed to implement FMP provisions, thereby providing a degree of enforcement to this plan.

Since the primary reason for the fishery decline was the harvesting of more fish than the stock could produce, termed recruitment overfishing (Richards and Rago 1999), the striped bass population responded well to these strict management measures. Various assessment programs conducted by the states and funded by the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) program tracked the recovery (Figure 1). The Chesapeake Bay stock of striped bass, which supports the greatest portion of the Atlantic coast fishery, was declared fully recovered by the ASMFC as of January 1995.

While some SFR striped bass projects are short-term and provide answers to specific management questions, most involve long-term monitoring. These programs are mandatory for states to be in compliance with the FMP. This article documents ten years (FY 1989-1998) of SFR expenditures on Atlantic Coast striped bass by type of project (Figure 2) as accessed through the Federal Aid Information Management System (FAIMS).

Population Surveys

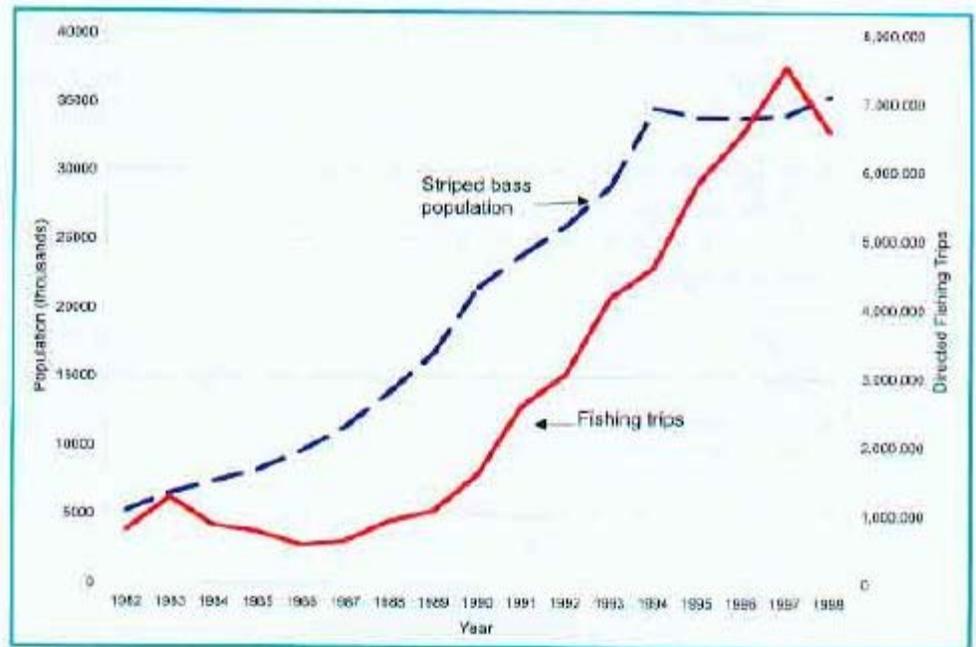


Figure 1. Relationship between Atlantic coast striped bass stock size and targeted recreational fishing trips, 1982-1998 (ASMFC 1999; NMFS 2000).

Atlantic Coast states utilize SFR funding to monitor

relative abundance of juvenile striped bass near spawning areas, typically with beach seines. The Maryland juvenile striped bass index survey has been funded through SFR since 1954. Other juvenile index surveys are conducted in the Virginia portion of Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, Hudson River (New York) and the Kennebec River.

Populations of spawning adult Atlantic Coast striped bass are generally assessed through fishery-independent gill net or electrofishing surveys on the spawning grounds. These have been conducted in Albemarle Sound (North Carolina), Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River and the Hudson River. Information on age, size, sex composition, and year class abundance of the adult spawning stock is incorporated into coastwide stock assessments that are critical for management decisions. Similar data are also collected for non-spawning striped bass in other fishery-independent sampling such as gill netting premigratory fish in Chesapeake Bay.

Utilization Surveys

To comply with the FMP, states with significant recreational striped bass fisheries are required to estimate their recreational catch at a 20 percent precision level. Most states from Maine to Virginia have used SFR funding to increase the sample size of the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) for improved catch estimates to achieve this objective.

States also conduct other Atlantic striped bass angling surveys with SFR funding. North Carolina determines the sport harvest and size, age, and sex composition of striped bass in Albemarle Sound and the Roanoke River. Most states from Maine to New Jersey have striped bass volunteer angler logbook programs that provide length data on released fish that are not collected through MRFSS.

In order to adequately assess striped bass population characteristics, SFR funds are also used to collect biological information of striped bass harvested from directed fisheries or as bycatch in other fisheries. This

provides a cost-effective means to obtain information that is not available through other sampling programs. Age, size and sex composition of the catch from hook and line fisheries in Massachusetts, ocean trap net fisheries in Rhode Island, and gill net and pound net fisheries within Chesapeake Bay, along with information from striped bass by-catch from American shad fisheries in Delaware Bay and the Hudson River have been collected.

Other Activities

As part of restoration efforts through SFR funding, approximately 938,000 striped bass fingerlings have been stocked into river systems including the Kennebec (Maine), the Navesink (New Jersey), and the Pamunkey and Mattaponi (Virginia). Most states in the Northeast are scanning striped bass that are captured in their sampling programs for the presence of coded wire tags. These tags indicate a hatchery-stocked fish and the information helps to evaluate the success of stocking programs.

Although States have taken advantage of other funding sources to support research on striped bass (Richards and Rago 1999), they also use SFR funding. Most states tag striped bass as part of a coastwide program to monitor growth, migration and fishing mortality. Some states have investigated factors related to striped bass health. Maryland and Massachusetts have investigated hooking mortality associated with striped bass angling and are currently studying whether prey availability is limiting striped bass growth.

Between 1990 and 1997, seven states from Massachusetts to North Carolina contributed to a multi-state SFR grant to improve coordination of striped bass research, monitoring, and stock assessment for more effective interstate management. State personnel supported by SFR participated in interstate fishery management planning for striped bass, but these costs were typically combined with ASMFC work on other species, so they are underreported in this article.

Conclusions

Coastal states from Maine to North Carolina spent a total of \$25.6 million (\$18.8 million federal) from 1989 to 1998 on SFR projects directly related to Atlantic striped bass. During the same 10 years, these states received \$96 million in federal SFR apportionments for saltwater projects other than mandatory boating access. So they have invested approximately 20% of their available SFR funds on striped bass. Atlantic Coast striped bass populations and anglers have also benefitted indirectly from other SFR programs such as environmental permit review, fishing access, and outreach.

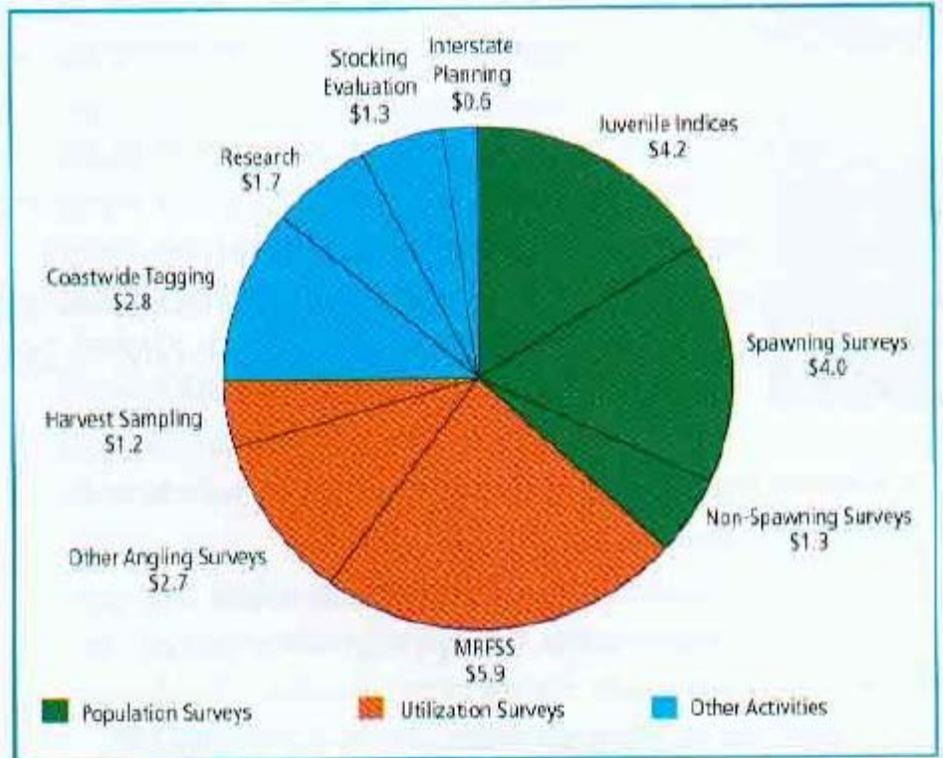


Figure 2. Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration expenditures (millions of SFR dollars plus state-matching dollars) on Atlantic Coast migratory striped bass by project type, Maine to North Carolina, FY 1989-1998.

These investments have paid off. The population of striped bass and the number of angler fishing trips have increased over 500 percent since 1982 (Figure 1). In 1998,

recreational anglers harvested 67% by weight of striped bass taken in all fisheries, as well as catching and releasing millions more. With this recovery, angler expenditures on striped bass fishing trips increased from \$85 million in 1981 to \$560 million in 1996 (Maharaj 1998).

Seventy-five percent of SFR funding on Atlantic Coast striped bass was for long-term population and utilization surveys (Figure 2) that are the backbone of coastwide stock assessment and effective interstate fisheries management. States have taken advantage of the long-term stability provided by the permanent funding authority of the SFR program to conduct the work necessary for recovery of Atlantic Coast striped bass. SFR funding is likely to continue to play a major role in ASMFC interstate fishery management to ensure quality fisheries for striped bass, as well as to rebuild other Atlantic coastal sportfisheries.

Article 2

Texas Gulf Coast Sport Fish program - Lawrence W. McEachron and Neil (Nick) Carter)

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Management of Texas coastal sport fisheries is very complex. Numerous marine species are pursued; methods and modes of fishing (both sport and commercial) vary widely. Sport angling in Texas exerts tremendous pressure on the marine resource with boat anglers alone fishing six million manhours and landing more than three million fish annually. More than \$850 million of direct expenditures per year is spent on angling, which equates to an economic impact of around \$2 billion.

In the 1970's and early 1980's, sport fishing along the Texas coast was declining. Commercial fishing, habitat destruction, and few angling regulations contributed to severe overfishing of many species. Some difficult decisions were needed to restore the populations. Biologists and key decision-makers foresaw needed changes in management, and experienced early objections to these changes from the commercial and sport-angling sectors. Long-term fishery independent and fishery-dependent monitoring programs were initiated in 1974 in order to base decisions on reliable data and sound science. This is where the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (SFR) came into the picture, with dependable appropriations of Texas anglers' and boaters' tax dollars.

The Coastal Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) receives \$2.4 million annually from the SFR. About 40% of these monies are applied directly to long-term monitoring surveys, 11% to research, and 49% to sport fish culture and enhancement. Fish culture includes outreach programs (1,600 events annually) such as those held at Sea Center Texas to educate school children and anglers about responsible and ethical fishing practices. In addition to funding provided to the Coastal Fisheries Division, more than \$1.1 million of additional SFR monies are provided annually through other TPW Divisions for habitat protection, communications, and motorboat access projects benefiting the Texas marine sport angler.

Early in the program, Texas biologists developed a management program based on a number of general objectives designed to allow fishes to spawn at least once before entering the fishery, prevent growth overfishing, provide for a quality and/or trophy fishery, and ensure adequate recruitment each year. Stock assessment information garnered from harvest estimates, relative abundance indices, recruitment indices, and other population indices such as age, growth, and genetic characteristics are used to develop overall management strategies. In addition, surveys of anglers have become routine to ensure that angler attitudes, preferences, and desires are included in the management equation and that management approaches are designed to meet current demands.

The fishery monitoring and research programs justified and enabled more stringent bag and size limits in the 1980's and early 1990's, the banning of entangling nets, the designation of 'game fish status' to major sport fishes, and the stocking of bays. Each of these actions presented managers with unique social, economic, and biological obstacles that had to be overcome. There were some fierce battles fought within, as well as outside, the agency. Three court cases in the early years challenged the new regulations, but data collected under the SFR program and used in the court cases withstood all legal challenges. This achievement is attributed to the strong, cooperative partnership that this program has established between the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Division of Federal Aid and TPW. From this association has been produced one of the finest sport fisheries along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

The most dramatic illustration of marine sport fish restoration in Texas is red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*). This was the first species targeted by managers for restoration, with recovery efforts starting from 'ground zero.' Monitoring and research data showed that red drum

were severely overfished in the late 1970's and early 1980's. These data were used to implement increasingly stringent bag and size limits for recreational anglers (currently a bag limit of 3 fish daily and a slot size limit of 508-711 mm total length), to justify banning the use of entangling nets to reduce

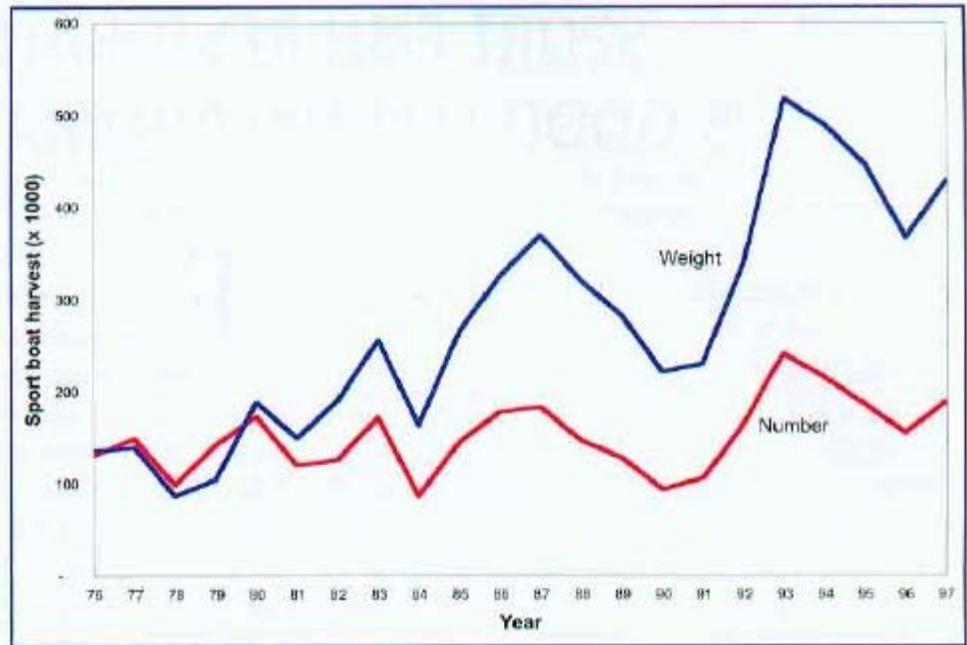


Figure 1. Number and weight (kg) of red drum landed by Texas sport-boat anglers.

unacceptable red drum bycatch, and to develop culture and enhancement protocol for stocking red drum. Throughout the same period, SFR dollars were used to fund needed research on red drum age, growth, mortality, survival, genetics, and life history. Today, the Texas red drum population is more than double what it was in the mid-1970's. The average weight of red drum landed by sport anglers has increased from 0.90 kg in 1978 to 2.27 kg now. Sport-boat angler landings by number increased 44% since 1976, whereas landings by weight increased over 215% during the same period (Figure 1). Because of the documented recovery of red drum, regulations were liberalized in 1994 to allow limited retention of larger red drum. Up to two red drum greater than 711 mm TL can now be retained per angler each year. This same year, sport anglers rejected a proposal to further liberalize the daily bag from three to four fish/angler because of their belief that three fish, weighing on average 2.27 kg each, is more than enough for anyone angler. This is a shining example of Texas's outreach efforts at creating a more environmentally aware public where conservation is a priority, not the number of fish retained. Sport fishing, as well as angler support and participation in management, has never been better in Texas.

This Texas marine fisheries management success story would not have been possible without the contributions and support from many sources, including: the state legislature, universities, other state and federal agencies, the work and sacrifices of field biologists and administrators, anglers, and the cooperative effort provided by the government, sport fishing industry, anglers, and boaters through the SFR program. Millions of dollars have been spent since the mid-1970's on culture and research, survey and inventory, fish hatchery construction, facility maintenance and operation, and educational/outreach efforts. This cooperative program works well and serves as an outstanding example of good legislation in action. It deserves all of our involvement and support to keep our outdoor heritage and traditions live. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

RSA Recognition - A wider view - **Andrew Syvret (Marine fisheries consultant from Jersey, CI.)**

Andrew Syvret was born in Jersey, the largest of the Channel Islands in 1968. Since birth he has always lived less than one mile from the sea. After leaving school in 1984, Andrew worked in the investment management industry until 1988. From then onwards the fishing industry was his principle source of employment, until 1992 when he returned to education undertaking four years study towards a degree in Fisheries Science at the University of Plymouth. During this period Andrew carried out research for the States of Jersey on the Island's lobster fishery and the University of Hawaii on reef fish and tiger shark ecology.

Upon graduation in 1992 he returned to Jersey and took up a post as Coastal Officer for the Island of Jersey. Andrew's principal role in that position, from 1996 until December 2001, involved managing the process that led to the designation of 32sq km of Jersey's inter-tidal habitats as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. At the end of 2001 Andrew gave up this full time post to devote more time to his own business, guiding visiting anglers to the fishing hotspots around the Jersey coast, and to environmental interests.

The wider view

It isn't just in the US that the potential value of Recreational Angling has been recognised, evaluated and utilised to benefit the tourism and leisure industries. Countries, as geographically and culturally diverse as Argentina, the Bahamas, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, the Falklands, Grand Cayman. I could go on. In Namibia, where there is little to lure tourists other than the country's unspoilt natural resources, the Silver Kob, an inshore sea fish, is sought by both local commercial fishermen and visiting anglers from South Africa and more recently the UK and Europe. The Namibian Fisheries Department have established that a Kob, caught on rod and line by a visiting angler, produces nearly three times the value to the local economy as a commercially caught fish [1] and is often released back into the fishery. Silver Kob are now subject to management measures specifically aimed at maximising their recreational value for the benefit of the Namibian peoples. [1] (Sumaila 2002)

The British dependency of the Turks and Caicos Islands has little or no commerce except for off-shore banking and salt production. It's main employer and revenue generator is tourism. Their natural resources, of clean beaches and abundant seas, are protected from all commercial fishing to ensure that diving and recreational sea angling are given absolute priority.

The UK recently pledged £500,000 to the T.C.I to develop and further protect their marine conservation areas for their tourism value.

In Denmark, the availability of world-class salmon and sea trout angling attracts attention from anglers from around the globe, much as the recreational salmon fishery of Scotland once did. Denmark, on the other hand has taken steps to protect its salmon stocks, having realised that a commercially caught salmon was worth approx. £30, whilst that same fish, caught by a visiting angler, was worth approx. £2,000. In England and Wales, each angler caught salmon is worth £3600 (Radford et al. 1999)

In Australia.

Australia has a forward thinking policy when it comes to protecting and developing its natural resources, and recreational sea angling is no exception.

The Federal Government's, 'Commonwealth Review of Recreational Fishing Policy 2001,' has recently been published. The study recognises the role the individual States play in managing recreational fishing activity in Australia and the need to take an ecosystem approach to total stock management. Recreational fishing is undertaken by millions of Australians each year and is also an important component of international and interstate eco-tourism.

Western Australia is one of the Australian States that has a well-developed policy towards recreational sea angling. Its vision is to have a Western Australian recreational fishery based on sustainable aquatic ecosystems and fish stocks that provide a diverse range of high quality and valued experiences. It achieves this by having fishery management measures based on research advice, risk management and precautionary principles. These measures include bag and size limits on species of fish, closed seasons to protect spawning aggregations, fishing licences for some species and closed areas of fisheries to protect stocks considered at risk of over-fishing.

A debate has now emerged within Australia on the broader issues of rights of access to fish stocks by other Australians, based on a legal understanding of their right of access to shared resources.

During 2001, the Federal Government provided the following statement in relation to recreational fishing in Commonwealth waters:

"That recreational fishing must be an integral part of Commonwealth fisheries management and must be provided with rights and responsibilities".

This statement was then developed at a workshop, held in Coolangatta Queensland, in October 2002, which sought to establish:

The Principles and Strategies to underpin the development of Recreational Fishing Rights and Resource Allocation in Commonwealth-managed fisheries.

The issues the participants of the Workshop were asked to address were:

To identify and develop principles of recreational fishing rights and responsibilities.

To develop frameworks for resource sharing for the recreational fishing sector, consistent with the principles applying to other sectors and ecologically sustainable development.

To develop possible mechanisms/arrangements for rights-based management for the recreational fishing sector that is compatible with the frameworks applying to other sectors.

The Coolangatta workshop's recommendations and suggestions for moving the process forward, included:

- That, as a matter of urgency, appropriate management arrangements are established among the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory;
- That the Marine and Coastal Committee, through the Australian Fisheries Managers Forum, set up a sub-committee - representative of all interest groups - to examine the issue of resource sharing and advance the Coolangatta workshop's other recommendations and that this should involve organising a separate workshop with appropriate stakeholder participation;
- That, as a matter of priority, the question of funding the recommendations - with a clear focus on the 'user pays' principle - be assessed and resolved; and that a high priority is placed on Commonwealth fisheries research and monitoring programmes.

The Federal Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Ian Macdonald, said,

"The Workshop on Recreational Fishing Rights and Resource Allocation in

Commonwealth-managed Fisheries involved Federal, State and Northern Territory fisheries agencies, as well as representatives from the commercial, traditional, aquaculture, game, tourism, charter and recreational fishing sectors.

It will now deliver on the Federal Government's commitment to ensure that, in close consultation with peak bodies such as Recfish Australia, recreational fishing becomes an integral part of Commonwealth fisheries management."

There seems, in our opinion, to be a disparity between the forward thinking fisheries management practices of some members of the commonwealth and our own, here in the UK.

But closer to Home:

Ireland.

Since the 1980's, Ireland's bass stocks have been managed with a view to long term sustainability of the resource, and recreational angling's contribution as an income generator through local and long distance tourism. National legislation supports this strategy by prohibiting all commercial exploitation of bass. As a result, many thousands of anglers, often with their families, travel to Irish shores each year. The Department of the Marine values sea angling tourism at £17 million per year.

The Irish Government continues to see the development opportunities for recreational angling and in February 2002 the Marine Minister Frank Fahey launched a 39 million euros (£24 million) investment plan for the angling sector in Ireland.

The investment is intended to cover recreational angling, training, promotion and marketing.

Numbers of Irish inshore commercial fishermen are considering a change to the lucrative charter sea angling business which is booming in Ireland.

In Spring 2002 the Irish Government invested in an international advertising campaign aimed at attracting 30,000 or more recreational sea anglers to Ireland and increasing the annual income, generated by sea angling, by a further £12 million. Studies have shown that an angler spends a minimum of £650 per visit.

The Channel Islands.

Jersey

The Island's Fisheries Authority have formally recognised that the economic value of the recreational sector likely dwarfs that of the commercial sector and consequently, have recommended that an 'audit' of recreational activity be carried out. In exit polls, conducted when visitors leave the island, 9,500 visitors replied that quality sea angling would be a principal reason to visit Jersey and 14,000 said it would enhance their visit.

The sea angling potential of Jersey has been marketed for upwards of 20 years using the phrase "where owning a fishing rod is second nature".

In 2001, despite very modest advertising the Jersey Bass Festival (225 competitors total) welcomed 40 visitors to the island from S Africa, France, Ireland and the UK - last year saw 150 competitors and visitors. 2003 will see a new Jersey Tourism supported week long angling competition in June, together with the launch of a new tourist targetted angling web site and guide book.

The Jersey Junior Sea Angling Festival has been running for 25+ years and each year (weather permitting) has up to 200 competitors - sponsored by local tackle outlets, Jersey Tourism and a number of other commercial interests - very much part of the annual programme - 'everyone' started there and it is not uncommon to see three generations of anglers from the same family together on the breakwater with picnics, etc.

Alderney

Alderney has had an annual angling festival each October for over 15 years - their second largest revenue generating tourism attraction each year - Island pop. 2500 - max. number of participants = 200+ (100+ visitors)

Guernsey

Guernsey likewise has an annual bass festival that hosts 30+ visitors each year, additionally they also regularly receive NFSA delegations of anglers and stop-over angling boat charters (as does Alderney).

This is all taking place 'as things are'. However, with restoration/regeneration of stocks and better RSA recognition, angling could do for coastal communities what surfing has done for Newquay.

Wales

The Welsh assembly and the Countryside Council for Wales commissioned a study into the relative values of inland and coastal fisheries. Here are some values and observations:

Recreational sea fishing, employing 471 persons, was valued at £28.7 million Inshore commercial fishing, employing 598 persons, was valued at £8.8 million.

"Little statistical information has been hitherto available for the scale and economic worth of sea angling, and despite its obvious popularity, it is often over-looked when tourism and coastal development matters are debated.

We have been able to estimate that the sport in Wales involves the participation of approximately 12,000 locally resident anglers, and upwards of 28,000 visiting anglers. Despite the considerable scale of the industry as is, there remains room for improvement in the quality of the fishing available and the economic benefits that the sport can generate."

(Nautilus Consultants 2000 - For more details of this report, see below)

So, what of England and Wales?

Studies into the Economic Importance of the Recreational Sea Angling Industry.

In 2000 a 'Study into Inland and Sea Fisheries in Wales' was prepared for the National Assembly for Wales by Nautilus Consultants Ltd in association with EKOS Economic Consultants Ltd. The study found that Sea Angling made a gross contribution to the coastal economy of Wales of over £28 million whereas the contribution made by inshore commercial fishing was valued at £8.8 million and offshore commercial fishing was valued at £11.8 million.

(Please note, the report states that shellfish represent 34% of the total commercial catch value, mainly from the inshore fishery. Also, when you consider that the commercial catch includes many other fish species, which are not targeted by anglers, high value species, such as, monkfish, hake and megrim, then the comparable total value of the commercial fisheries falls significantly, to prove that the Recreational Sea Angling Industry makes a contribution to the economy of Wales, which is considerably greater than that of the commercial fishing industry.)

The Study found that Sea Angling *"offers considerable potential for growth and expansion and that relatively little public investment in low risk support areas would stimulate considerable gains."*

Furthermore *"It underpins the high environmental designations of much of the Welsh coastline and encourages the conservation of fish stocks and the marine environment."*

However the Study expressed concerns, such as, *"Generally poor recognition of the economic importance of this sector (Sea Angling) resulting in limited official support to the sector and its requirements."*

Another concern was *"Heavy commercial fishing pressure on various species - particularly illegal netting for bass - under-mining resource base for recreational anglers."*

(a full copy of report can be viewed on the [Nautilus Consultants](#) web site)

An independent report by Professor Symes entitled, 'Inshore Fisheries Management in England & Wales - Facing up to the Challenges of the 21st Century,' was commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales and English Nature and published in April 2002. An extract from the report is quoted below:

*" We can only hazard a guess at the real economic value of inshore fisheries. Inshore boats (10 m and under) make up most of the fishing fleet, accounting for around 80% of all registered fishing vessels in England and Wales, and around 60% of active fishermen work the inshore waters. The best estimate for the value of commercial landings from these waters is about **£35 million**, or 25% of all landings into England and Wales by UK registered boats. But **the real economic value of the inshore waters is a good deal higher. Around one million sea anglers fish the inshore waters of England and Wales at least once a year, generating an estimated £ 140 million income for the coastal economy.** Revenue from inshore fisheries is particularly important in some remoter rural regions, though by contrast with parts of Scotland very few areas south of the border can truly be called fisheries dependent."*

(A full copy of the report can be viewed on the [English Nature](#) web site)

We would ask; Why are studies such as these undertaken and their findings then ignored?
And of the South West?

In the spring of 2002 Devon County Council released a draft proposal document entitled: 'Our Coast; Our Common Asset'. DCCC's supposition, in 3.12 of the draft, that: **'there is a hidden but highly significant contribution to the economy of coastal areas from recreational angling'** and that **'the benefits accruing from additional visitor spend within an area linked to generally sustainable fishing activity require investigation.'** is, we are sure you will agree, worthy of some serious consideration, based on what we have now shown.

Historically, the coasts of Devon have been viewed as a national treasure by the country's estimated one

million sea anglers. The quality of the sea angling that has been available to the generations of local and visiting anglers is legendary. We would like to list a few of the many examples of where Devon's coasts and inshore waters have offered, quite literally, world class sea angling.

The North coast from Lynmouth to Hartland, with its breathtaking, rugged scenery, offers superb access to both rock outcrops and surf beaches. This relatively short length of coast is renowned for the quality of angling for conger eels, rays, tope, dogfish, spurdog and bass during the spring and summer along with cod and whiting during the winter.

The South coast of Devon, with its wealth of estuaries, coves, rocky points and shingle or sand beaches offers virtually every species of fish that anglers aspire to catch.

The port of Lyme Regis gives ease of access to Lyme bay, famous for its inshore sport for mackerel, bass, rays, bream, conger and pollock.

The beaches of Seaton, Sidmouth and Exmouth are synonymous with shore fishing for bass, as are the Exe estuary, Dawlish Warren and the Teign. During the winter and early spring the Teign estuary is rated as the best place in the country to fish for specimen sized flounder.

Babbacombe, Torquay and Paignton offer the visiting angler varied sport a few steps from their caravan, tent or hotel. This area is renowned for its potential for a record-breaking ballan wrasse and grey mullet.

At Brixham harbour, the breakwater offers access to deep water for the shore based angler or, for those who prefer a day at sea, a range of charter boats cater for reef, wreck or drift fishing. Mackerel, mullet, garfish, bass, black bream, Pollock, coalfish, cod, conger, sole and rays are the species sought in the Torbay area.

Dartmouth, apart from offering good angling within the estuary for flatfish, mullet and bass, is also the departure point for those wishing to fish aboard a charter boat over the famous Skerries bank. The Skerries has, or perhaps had, a reputation second to none for the plaice fishing. Enormous plaice 'the size of dinner plates' have been caught whilst drifting the Skerries from April, through to June. Anglers have travelled the length of the country to fish with Lloyd Saunders and Barry Lingham who have based their businesses in Dartmouth for 30 - odd years. Drifting over the shell and sand banks of Start bay for bass, turbot, brill and blonde ray during the summer months follows the plaice season. In the autumn and early winter months, a steam out to the wartime wrecks is rewarded with big Pollock, ling, coalfish, cod and perhaps a heavyweight bass.

Start point and Prawle point, Salcombe and the Yealm estuary are also renowned for their ability to offer varied species, particularly bass, mullet, rays, conger and mackerel.

No mention of Salcombe would be complete without making reference to its speciality species. Gilt-head bream, normally a Mediterranean inhabitant, have set up residence within the estuary. This is one of the few places in the U.K that this species is to be found and its presence attracts attention from sea anglers from around the country.

Plymouth is probably the port from which more British rod-caught records have been established over the past 50 years. Huge wrasse from the breakwater and Drake's Island.

Monster bass from Saltash and the Eddystone reefs. Record breaking conger, pollock, coalfish, stone bass

(wreck-fish), cod, turbot and ling from the offshore wrecks that litter the channel. Plymouth has an unsurpassed history of record-breaking catches, made by sea anglers from far and wide.

We hope that this resume of Devon's wealth of sea angling opportunities, many of which are unique within Europe, confirms that the county has a resource that is currently being significantly undervalued especially as a basis for tourism.

Cornwall too, has an equal reputation for offering wealth of sea angling possibilities and when matched to some of the best beaches in the country, scenic harbours and secret coves, is sure to be high on the holiday list of most sea anglers.

Sadly, as is the case elsewhere, unregulated and unsustainable netting has all but wiped out the once prolific stocks of bass for which the Eddystone, the Manacles and the Runnel stone reefs were once justifiably famous. The charter boats based at Brixham, Dartmouth, Salcombe Plymouth, Looe and Mevagissey have witnessed the same fate for their target species over the local wrecks and now have to rely on providing trips to the Channel Islands to sustain their businesses.

The decline in the inshore fish stocks, due mainly to commercial over-fishing, has had a detrimental effect on the quality of sea angling everywhere and Cornwall and Devon has not escaped the serious repercussions associated with the lack of foresight that has prevailed under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and regional fisheries management policies.

Changes to the CFP are imminent and greater stakeholder involvement is being promised. Those wishing to promote the sustainable use of our natural resources will be better able to argue their case and may have the financial backing of the Commission where the development of selective, low impact, environmentally sensitive methods of management and use are employed to maximise the value derived from resources, especially if this involves recreational use and tourism to re-deploy those displaced from the commercial sector. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

Added Value - The hidden value of sea angling - *Russell Weston* (Managing Director of Snowbee UK, the South West's largest Fly Fishing Tackle Distributor, based here in Plymouth)

You are probably asking yourself:

'What's a Fly Fishing Company got to do with Sea Angling?'

Well, we'll come back to that later, but first, let me first give you some background details and all will become clear.

I graduated from Plymouth University's School of Maritime Studies in 1979 with a degree in Fishery Science. During that course, I worked on both commercial trawlers and angling charter boats out of Plymouth and also happened to write the world's first biological Synopsis on the European Sea Bass - *Dicentrarchus Labrax*, such was my early love of this mysterious and magical fish !

I specialised in commercial fishing gear technology and after graduating, worked for 3 years in the SW selling commercial fishing gear. In 1984 I started my own company and for 10 years we imported and supplied commercial fishing gear to the SW fleet, specialising in long-line and gill netting gear, so yes, to some extent,

I'm a Poacher turned Gamekeeper, BUT I do now speak from a position of experience and authority on both Commercial AND Sport fishing.

During the early years of the business, we moved into angling equipment and this side quickly grew and outpaced the commercial division. It was clear to me, even then that the UK Commercial industry was doomed, in it's present form and so, in 1994, I took the radical decision to close the commercial division and concentrate 100% on Sportfishing gear, specialising in Fly Fishing. A decision I have never regretted.

My experience in both camps, commercial and sport fishing, has taught me one clear lesson – that the long term interests of fish stock conservation are far better understood and supported by anglers than by commercial fishermen. For commercial fishermen, to some extent this situation is forced upon them, by the problems of trying to make a living from ever decreasing stocks. For them, every fish returned is lost income.

The angler, on the other hand has the luxury of being able to enjoy his or her sport and choose whether or not to return fish, based on conservation, not financial considerations.

Let's look at the direct financial contribution to the UK GDP from both sides of the Fishing Industry.

Firstly Commercial Fishing :

In 2001 the total value of all types of fish landed in the UK by commercial vessels was £423 million. However this figure includes shell fish and a number of other species such as hake, monk, lemon & megrim sole, some pelagics etc, the first hand sale values of which are £235 million and which are of no direct interest to sea anglers. The natural resources that support recreational angling generate a first hand sale value of considerably less than £190 million in commercial value. According to a report commissioned by English Nature, published in 2002, £35 million of the total came from inshore waters, the same waters that the vast majority of angling takes place in the same year, the total value of all types of fish imported into the UK was just under £1.3 BILLION!

Sport Fishing:

The real economic value of our inshore waters is not appreciated.

Around one million sea anglers fish the inshore waters of England and Wales at least once a year, generating an estimated £ 140 million income for the coastal economy. (source: 'Study into Inland and Sea Fisheries in Wales' prepared for the National Assembly for Wales by Nautilus Consultants Ltd in association with EKOS Economic Consultants Ltd.)

Whilst there are many differing reports on the subject, they do all conclude that the recreational sea angling sector is worth at least 3 - 5 times as much as the commercial sector for those fish targeted by anglers. For species such as bass, this differential is significantly wider.

The most recent survey, of the value of UK Fishing Tackle Sales, was conducted last November by Tackle & Guns magazine, our main UK Trade Publication. They concluded that the Value of all UK Tackle Sales at RETAIL was in the region of £615 Million! Of this around £100 Million, was spent on Sea Angling Equipment.

Although impressive, this figure is only the tip of the iceberg, as it only represents RETAIL SALES. If you include the Wholesale Supplies of this business the figure grows to £929 Million and if you then include the importers, distributors and manufacturers in the supply chain, you have a total contribution of almost £1.2

BILLION to the UK GDP. Of this, approximately £195 Million is contributed by sales of Sea Angling gear.

But it doesn't stop there. These figures are based purely on the sales of Fishing Tackle and equipment. Of the estimated 1 Million UK Sea Anglers, many are not as privileged as us, in living on or around the coast. The modern day sea angler will travel to the coast to fish regardless of where he lives. Many will take their families with them, staying in rented accommodation/B&B/Guest Houses/ hotels, contributing much to the local economy during their stay.

To cater for this demand a thriving Charter Boat Industry has developed and it is now estimated that there are more angling charter and privately owned sport fishing boats in the UK, than Commercial Fishing Vessels. Add to this the vast numbers of privately owned boats used primarily for Angling and you begin to see the REAL value of this trade. Take into account all the Boat builders, who specialise in Angling & Charter Boats, the Engine manufacturers, marine electronics suppliers, safety equipment, fuel, maintenance, mooring fees, insurance and the true value of this trade becomes apparent.

The following list of Companies:-

Ammo Baits	Roger Bayzand Sports Fishing
Breakaway	Cox & Rawle
Daiwa	Fenwick
Fulling Mill Flies	Gemini Tackle
Harris Angling Company	Hopkins & Holloway
Leeda	Masterline
Orkney Boats	Partridge
Penn Fishing Tackle Europe Ltd	Pure Fishing
Shakespeare	Stewart Smalley ('Aldeburgh Angler')
Snowbee	Titan
Total Sea Fishing	Veals Mail Order
YYS International - Fladen lures	John Wilson

represent just a few of the businesses who have identified that one of their key requirements, for continued prosperity, is the availability of healthy fish stocks. All of these are stakeholders, in and are affected by, fisheries management policies.

Coming back to my earlier question, What's this got to do with Fly Fishing?

Well, it might surprise you to hear that Saltwater Fly Fishing is the BIGGEST GROWTH area in our sector of the trade!

Historically, Fly Fishermen have always travelled for their fishing Ð primarily for Salmon. However, with the decline in numbers of Atlantic Salmon returning to our rivers to spawn, these anglers are having to look elsewhere.

It is estimated that up to 10,000 UK fly fishermen are now travelling overseas to fish for Saltwater Species. AND WHY?

The reason is simple, they are travelling to areas of the world, such as Florida and other parts of the USA,

where the true value of Recreational Sea Angling has been recognised and good Fisheries management practices implemented. The result - plenty of fish and after all is said and done - that is what this market is all about!

There is only so long that a Sea Angler will stand on a beach, if he or she's not catching fish.

There are only so many times a Fly Fisherman will return to Scotland, the Rivers of North Devon, or wherever to fish for Salmon, if he or she comes away empty handed.

Remember the fish availability threshold, of which Malcolm Gilbert spoke?

Fish such as the European Sea Bass, Mullet, Wrasse, Flounder, Ray and some of the Shark Family, all receive the attention of sea anglers. However it is the Bass, with its 'game fish' like qualities, which captivates many, including the Fly Fishing fraternity. Anglers will travel long distances, spending large amounts of money, just to try and achieve the ambition of a lifetime - the capture of this superb 'wolf of the sea'. No coincidence, that the French name for Bass is Loup, The Wolf. Invariably after capture, the bass will be returned to the sea, to live and fight another day.

Make no mistake, this business is all about FISH and to ensure plentiful fish stocks, we MUST have effective fisheries management. These 10,000 anglers travelling overseas are ALL lost business for the UK Economy. Look what has been achieved in places such as the USA, as we have heard earlier from Andy & Gil.

We COULD AND SHOULD be doing this here. We have all the necessary infrastructure, facilities and resources to make the South West a first class Saltwater Game Fishing area, where anglers would travel to, from all over the world. All we need is Government backing to protect our most valuable resource.

Make the European Sea Bass the FIRST officially recognised Saltwater Game Fish, to give it the protection it deserves and it WILL happen!

Please don't let us miss this opportunity and live to regret it. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

What can be done? - ***Some conclusions and useful information***

Clearly, something has to be done in order to ensure the survival of our fish stocks and the recreation, businesses and livelihoods dependant upon them. ALL stakeholders in the marine environment have the same rights and the same responsibilities.

It would be tempting to suggest that fish stocks are subject to common ownership but, of course, no one owns them. We are merely looking after them for future generations.

Firstly, this huge responsibility needs to be acknowledged and, as we have heard before where fish stocks have been rescued and restored, the corner stone of future fisheries management policy has to be THE RESOURCE MUST COME FIRST.

Secondly, recognise the wealth of opportunity that sea angling offers to coastal communities.

Increase funding and develop improved angling stakeholder participation in local Sea Fisheries Committees, so that their remit to manage, regulate, develop and protect fisheries is inclusive of the recreational fishery.

Stop all fishing in areas of known aggregations of all immature or breeding fish. (This would include the closure of the Winter Offshore Bass Fishery and its associated cetacean by-catch that continues to litter the beaches of Devon and Cornwall with the pitiful corpses of dolphins and porpoises each winter.)

Consider the introduction of 'No Take Zones', protected by artificial reefs. Greater use should be made of artificial reefs as it has been scientifically proven that they encourage the establishment and development of marine species, particularly in areas of the sea where marine life was previously low.

Did you know that in 1997 the Labour Government issued, 'A Charter for Anglers'?

In it they stated policies from their existing commercial fisheries policies which have considerable relevance to the leisure sector. These pledges include:

1. Introducing a Coastal Zone Planning Policy that will recognise important areas for sports fishing.
2. Introducing closed areas for spawning and preserving breeding stocks. The introduction of artificial reefs, (possibly on the edge of closed areas to protect them from illegal trawling)
3. Protecting existing public access to coastal areas.
4. Introduce stronger conservation measures, including tighter enforcement and possible control of certain types of gear (traps and monofilament gill nets) where there are problems with over-fishing, particularly by part-time fishermen.
5. Consult with both the industry and sports anglers about the introduction of sensitive areas where nets will not be allowed close to the shoreline.
6. Ensure there is full consultation with angling organisations on restrictions on bait digging for conservation reasons.
7. Encourage Sea Fisheries Committees and Defra to increase minimum landing sizes to ensure more fish have a chance of spawning at least once, especially where the migration patterns of a species suggest future benefits will accrue to exploitation inside 12 miles.
8. Better enforcement of the landing of large quantities of Sea Bass under the guise of leisure fishing.

(An interesting point, the former Fisheries Minister, Elliot Morley MP was one of the signatories to the UK Government's 'Charter for Angling').

All of these pledges are in line with our recommendations, yet none have been enacted.

Changes are needed in sea fishery management policies.

In rivers and inland waters, the Environment Agency has responsibility to protect, promote and develop fisheries. It also has responsibilities in salt water for migratory salmonid fish, out to six miles. Sea fish stocks up to six miles out, however, are managed by Sea Fisheries Committees under the umbrella of Defra and EU legislation, although funding comes from local councils.

An increasing body of evidence suggests that the socio-economic impact from recreational sea angling (the vast majority of which is done inside the six miles i.e. in the area that is controlled by Sea Fisheries Committees) actually exceeds that of commercial fishing.

Many of the resources, such as shellfish and crustaceans, that are targeted by commercial fishing are of no direct interest to the recreational sea angling sector and therefore the disparity in 'value' between the two sectors increases and in terms of fishing mortality and/or negative environmental impact, the sea angling sector really does generate the optimal benefits to the coastal economy.

Despite this, representation by the commercial fishing sector on Sea Fisheries Committees, dramatically exceeds that of recreational angling representation and historically Sea Fisheries Committees are perceived as an extension of Defra who sponsor the commercial fishing industry.

The recreational sea angling sector therefore currently has no government department or agency for the specific remit to promote and develop its sector and there is a both urgent and rational case for this bizarre situation to be addressed by the government. Therefore the sport of sea angling is unique in that it has to compete with a commercial industry for its essential ingredient, that of fish and because of this its needs are not taken into account when discussions take place at the highest level on fishery matters. In contrast the coarse and game anglers have the Environment Agency to protect and promote their interests.

Therefore there is a case for the sea angler, who needs a similar commitment to their branch of the sport.

Better enforcement of our sea fisheries bye laws would require government support to strengthen their powers, this would enable fishery officers to bring the perpetrators to court. It may be that a change in the legislation to permit being 'in possession' as criteria for prosecution instead of proof of capture or landing of fish could be considered.

There is a need to identify and recognise the species that interest the Recreational Sea Angler and ensure that they are managed on a precautionary basis and that their optimum value is obtained. There is a growing concept amongst the RSA that a fish is too valuable to catch just once.

Anglers target species, such as cod and whiting, during the winter months. We are all aware of the reliance that the commercial fishermen have with cod and whiting but it should not be forgotten that these species are also a valuable source of income to the Recreational Sea Angling Industry. Many angling charter boats/bait suppliers/tackle shops/guest houses/b & b establishments rely on income from this source to see them through the winter months.

In recent years, numbers and size of many of the species traditionally sought by anglers have started to decline. Some key species for anglers such as wrasse and flounder are of minimal value to commercial fishing but are now being caught as incidental by catch or even being targeted for use as shellfish pot bait. This represents an extreme waste of what are very valuable resources, for the inshore recreational fishery.

What can YOU do?

Hopefully, by now, you will agree that there are alternatives to the unsuccessful fisheries management practices that have prevailed. We trust that you also feel empowered to challenge the out-dated concept that our natural resources come way down the list of priorities when we consider how we use what is not truly ours to over-exploit.

If you are part of the Tourism Industry.

Please reflect on what you have just read.

Defra's current exclusivity, as regards, are natural marine fish stock resources must be robustly challenged. If you work within tourism, please ensure that your local tourist board, councillors and the Minister for tourism, take recreational sea angling seriously.

There are considerable financial opportunities to be had. Let us not have the same scenario that existed with the 'Foot and Mouth' tragedy in 2001, when the farmers received the sympathy and compensation, but the real sufferer was the Tourism Industry.

If you are a district or county councillor within an area that has a coast line.

Please reflect on what you have just read.

There is tremendous scope for investment from the wealth that will be created if Recreational Sea Angling is taken seriously by the UK Government and the European Union. Anglers are prepared to travel long distances to enjoy their sport. At the moment many UK anglers, with their families, visit Ireland and the U.S.A. where their recreational requirements are catered for.

The opportunity to 'tap' into this valuable source of income is available to you, if only you will realise that you have a wealth of opportunity right on your own doorstep; your coastline and the fish that inhabit it.

There is one very important step you can take immediately, that is to review your local by-laws, allowing the use of gill nets on your shoreline. Many are illegal and may infringe local health and safety by-laws by being positioned too close to the shore line where the general public participate in a range of recreational activities including surfing, angling, wind sailing, canoeing, diving and bathing.

If you are a Fishing Tackle Manufacturer/Wholesaler/Retailer/Mail Order Company.

Please reflect on what you have just read and ask yourself this question, "Am I doing anything to conserve and protect the interests of my customers, employees and shareholders?"

Please do something. Get involved. Help to protect the future of sea angling.

Remember: NO FISH = NO ANGLERS = NO TACKLE SALES = NO PROFITS.

If you are an MP/MEP.

Please reflect on what you have just read.

There is no doubt that action needs to be taken NOW to save and protect the fish stocks around our shores. The revised CFP, with additional provisions for the recognition of the socio-economic importance of RSA,

needs to be implemented. You, as politicians, are the only people who can make it happen. We, the electorate, have put you where you are and we are asking you to take decisive action. The time for political bickering and 'fudging' is over, some serious decisions have to be taken; not only at a local level within the UK, but also at a European level. One very important decision is to start by recognising the huge social and economic benefits that Recreational Sea Angling makes to the economy worldwide. It is time that the UK and Europe enjoyed the benefits of the wealth that is created by a proper formulated and funded policy towards Recreational Sea Angling.

If you are an angler.

Respect our coastline and it's abundant natural wealth. Cherish the heritage of your sport and the prosperity that it generates. Recognise your place as a stakeholder in our fish resources and the future management of fish stocks. Value your contribution to the economy, for if you don't, no one else will. Join the NFSA and help them to help you.

Thank you. - [Return to contents list at top of the page.](#)

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