

Anthony M. Duffy

From: Tony Duffy < >  
Sent: 14 November 2016 21:42  
To: POLICYREVIEW  
Subject: National Policy Review : Management of Pike in designated Wild Brown Trout Fisheries - submission

Dear Sir/Madam ,

I wish to make the following points to you concerning the above topic , namely the Management of Pike in Wild Brown Trout Fisheries .

I will make my points in "bullet point" format to aid conciseness and brevity .

Background :

Historically it is not known ( or is it ?) whether Pike are an indigenous freshwater fish species to the Island of Ireland . If not then clearly it has been introduced either deliberately or by accident into most water systems in Ireland . Unfortunately some of these systems were , and some still are , PRIME Brown Trout ( and Salmonid) systems where the Pike has , as an APEX Predator , decimated Brown Trout and Salmon Stocks ( through Parr attrition ) .

It is not possible to exterminate Pike from these systems altogether or so it seems . In some smaller , more acidic water systems it may be possible to eradicate them as they are fewer in number and perhaps the system lacks deep places for Pike to hide. However on the more extensive systems like Corrib and Mask , Conn / Carra / Cullen/ Melvin etc it is , in my view , extremely desirable to cull and control Pike ( and indeed other Coarse Fish ). The reasons for this are as follows

Reasons to control Pike numbers :

\* Once Pike reach a certain size they start to eat and predate brown Trout . Initially trout parr but as they ( the Pike ) get bigger their capacity to eat larger fish increases in proportion . Salmon Parr , as well as Brown Trout , fall victim to the predatory ways of Pike . Now I know that the same could be said about Ferox Trout but they are , I believe , far less in Number and as a "Game Fish " they are far more valuable to the local economy than Pike ( Opinion I know ).

\* The consumption of young and medium sized Trout by Pike is voracious . The potential weight gains are quite incredible ( see attachment / copy below of Monster Pike from Lough Derg on Shannon ) .

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I know that Pike are not exclusively Trout and Salmon Parr predators but their consumption is worrying .

\* Those Fisheries designated primarily or almost exclusively "Brown Trout" or "Game Fisheries" attract large numbers of Anglers from all around the world but mainly the UK and Mainland Europe. There is a REAL SHORTAGE of Prime Trout Fisheries and this is not the case with Pike Fisheries as Pike are more tolerant of pollution , low oxygen levels and slower canalised type rivers which prevail in Continental Europe and the Midland and South East of England. It is the prospect of fishing for truly WILD Brown Trout that excites many visiting Anglers who are prepared to spend large amounts of money and recreational time in pursuit of this particular fish.

\* Many of Ireland's most famous Brown Trout Fisheries are in relatively poor ( agricultural land ) areas in the West , South West and North West of our Island. These areas rely heavily on the influx of Anglers in pursuit of Brown Trout and Salmon during the April - September period in particular .

\* There are now a "surfeit" of Pike Waters all over the rest of Ireland with the Shannon system being the main Pike Waters . Whilst there is some Brown Trout fishing to be had on the Shannon System in certain designated spots at particular times of the year ( eg Islands on Lough Derg and Lough Ree ) I think it is fair to say that the pursuit of Trout is not really undertaken on the Shannon in general unless there is fast flowing water below weirs or where the river falls to create an environment that is more conducive to Trout rather than Pike who seem to prefer slower more languid waters .In other words we have a HUGE number / amount of Pike Waters all over Ireland so the few remaining designated Trout ( and Salmon ) Fisheries are precious in the extreme .

\* The ONLY "good" reason I have ever heard , as an Angler , as to why or how Pike could be considered "beneficial to Trout Fishing is the unproven opinion that Pike Prevent Trout going "deep" in Lakes and keep them up nearer the surface or in shallower water for safety thereby making them ( The Trout ) more accessible to the Trout Angler.

What to do with "Culled " Pike ?

\* Is it possible to either sell the dead Pike to Fish Markets where there is a massive demand on the Continent or to

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sell "live fish" to exclusively Pike Fisheries ? This would help defray the costs of having to control and curtail their numbers .Certainly it is a widely held view that since the arrival of Continental Europeans to live in Ireland from the mid 1990's that many Pike are now killed by such Anglers anyway and that some people have taken up "Professional " pursuit of Pike and other Coarse fish as a full time , if illegal and untaxed , occupation .

\* Scientific progress may allow us , as Fishery Managers , to genetically target undesirable species in the future.

Until that day arrives we are limited with labour intensive methods such as netting and "traps" . It would be useful

if , from the raw data that exists from fishery operation , , we could see any correlation or trend in removal of Pike

to Trout Numbers and /or Size of Trout increasing . Does such data exist ? Also , whilst Failte Ireland may quote

general Angling visitor numbers to us , we need to break them down , if possible , between the FOUR main

categories namely Coarse Fishing , Brown Trout Fishing , Salmon and Sea Trout Fishing and Sea Fishing if we

are to understand the interplay between different categories of Anglers and what each categories actual average

spend is and where they tend to go on the Island of Ireland . It can be said that with disastrous over - fishing on

the high seas due to the issuance of large unsustainable quotas by "Brussels" that our inland Brown Trout Fishing

will become even more important for angling revenue .

Conclusion :

I do not think that ceasing to control Pike will improve or even leave Trout Fisheries as they are . The fear and

concern is that Trout Fisheries will deteriorate and if Anglers reach a "tipping point" where Trout catches become

scarce or non existent then they will , naturally , cease to visit such fisheries and then the economic impact will be

significant because we cannot expect exclusively Pike Anglers to take over the B& B , Hotel and Guest House

beds as they , the Pike Anglers , are already spread thinly over the rest of Ireland .As mentioned on a number of

occasions above , there is a strong overlap between Trout and Salmon Fisheries and the same points applied to

Brown Trout equally apply to Salmon and Sea Trout too if Pike are present in the waters.

In summary I see no alternative but to continue and redouble our efforts in Ireland to control Pike numbers on a

limited number of designated Brown Trout ( and Salmon) Game Fisheries .

Yours Sincerely

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Lough Derg pike's weight rose by 19lbs in six years Wednesday, 9th September, 2015  
10:07am Jump to  
comments Lough Derg pike's weight rose by 19lbs in six years The catch of a very large pike on Lough Derg by an angler in Killaloe has sparked an animated discussion among local fishing folk about the growth rates of such fish. Kevin Grimes (pictured with his catch), a member of Saint Flannan's Fishing Club, Killaloe, caught a massive pike weighing just over 22lbs (10 kilograms) while fishing in the Lower Shannon in a spot close to the Ardclooney River, downstream of the bridge at Ballina-Killaloe. When he brought the fish on board his boat he noticed that it had an identification tag attached to it. Before releasing the fish he took the details from the tag and subsequently contacted the Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) staff in Limerick to ascertain when the tag was put on the fish. On checking their records the IFI was able to confirm that the pike had been tagged six years and two months previously. At the time it weighed just 3½lbs (1.65 kilograms). The fact that it increased massively in weight – by almost 19lbs – in the space of six years has left anglers all around the lake speculating on the growth rate of pike in Lough Derg, a water body believed to be rich in food that pike eat, such as roach, perch and trout. "There's a lot of stuff we don't know about the pike in the lake because we have yet to have proper surveys carried out," said Kevin, who would like to see more research done. "We have a good number of anglers fishing on a regular basis who would gladly take part in a survey which is badly needed, but it seems you need a degree in zoology now, which is crazy," he added. Kevin said there were anglers and gillies on the lake who were catching very big pike on a regular basis. "It would be nice to know if these are repeat catches of the same big fish or different fish being caught all the time." Current laws on the tagging of fish are strict and any survey in this area would have to be carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland. Another interesting statistic about Kevin's catch is that it was landed around 7km downstream of where it had been tagged six years before, at Ballyvalley, Killaloe. This seems to contradict local angling lore that pike are territorial and stay in the same area of water all their lives. Commenting on his catch, Kevin said: "At least this pike has provided us with the first bit of solid information

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about the growth rates of pike in Lough Derg. Up to now it has been all speculation." In times past Lough Derg has yielded even much larger pike. Kevin's grandfather, Willie Joe Lucas from Derrycastle, a gillie and angler all his life, was credited with a pike of 50lbs. Indeed, Derg is said to have produced the world record for the heaviest pike. On May 9th 1882 two local anglers, Patrick Sheehy and John Naughton, caught a fish of 90½ lbs while trolling at Derrycastle. The fish measured 5ft 8 inches long – more than the average height for a human male at the time. The catch is recorded in the book, 'Doomsday Book of Mammoth Pike', by Fred Buller, who claims it is a world record that stands to this day. Buller, following his worldwide travels recording catches of monster pike, is convinced that the catch of the Lough Derg monster is authentic. "The measurements given are in accord with the measurements that one would expect to find of pike weighing 90½lbs. They impress the stamp of truth on a report about a fish caught in an age when nobody had a notion (even had they wanted to fabricate a story about a big pike) of how to relate a pike's weight with its length," Buller claims. The claim that such a massive pike could have existed in Derg was further strengthened when an officer of the English Army in a letter to the Field wrote that he and his brother had come across a monster pike in shallow water in Portumna, in the upper reaches of the lake. "The fish was dead, possibly killed in a great storm the night before. We brought it to the public weighing scales on Portumna Bridge and it weighted in at 84lbs." IFI has no plans for a pike tagging programme at present, much to the disappointment of local anglers like Kevin who dearly wish to see more research carried out.

Attachments area