



Galway & Corrib Anglers Association



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38 DEVON PARK, SALTHILL, GALWAY

Policy Review,
IFI,
Sunnyside House,
Macroom, Co. Cork

27 November 2016

Dear IFI,

I am writing on behalf of the Galway and Corrib Anglers' Association. We were founded in 1934 and our primary interest is trout fishing on Lough Corrib. We welcome the opportunity to place on record our view on the control of pike on Lough Corrib and the other great trout fisheries.

Let's start by considering something that should never have happened. Pike were introduced to the Owenriff system a short while ago. This system is a chain of lakes and streams that flow into Lough Corrib downstream of a waterfall in Oughterard. The lowest estimate of the productivity of this system for Lough Corrib is that it produces one in six of the trout in the lake. Two of the small lakes in the Owenriff system, Préchán and Bofin, were excellent small trout fisheries: good lively spots where a young person could catch several fish in a session. No one should bring a youngster up there now as the stock of brown trout has been destroyed. This crash in stocks resulted from the introduction of pike to the system.

How should the fishery board respond to this vandalism? If one values the Owenriff system as a resident trout habitat and as a breeding habitat for trout and salmon, one should be free to act with all means consistent with overall environmental sustainability, to restore the system to its previous status. This should be done by the vigorous elimination of pike by all possible methods.

The above proposition should be self-evident to any reasonable person. The system enjoyed a clear status as a trout and salmon system. It has been damaged badly by pike. The pike should be eliminated to help restore the system to status.

The case of the Owenriff system provides one useful yardstick for evaluating proposals in relation to pike management and by this yardstick the implementation locally of a uniform set of national regulations for pike control is a nonsense.

Let's move on to consider the seven lakes managed by IFI as wild brown trout fisheries. They are trout fishing destinations of extraordinary quality. One will do very well to find lakes anywhere in Europe with trout fishing of such quality. What is patent nonsense on the Owenriff makes little more sense on these lakes. Pike management is necessary to support trout stocks on these lakes. Our club history records that efforts in the early years focused strongly on the eradication of pike from the lower lake because trout numbers were so low. The Fish House records at Oughterard record the dramatic upsurge in trout catches following the implementation of predator control measures by the

Inland Fisheries Trust in the early 1950s. Rather than constrain IFI and clubs on these lakes with regulations that may make sense in pike fisheries elsewhere the local IFI staff and the local angling clubs should be given the freedom to continue controlling pike numbers by whatever means they deem necessary.

Our club's view is this: The IFI mission in relation to these rare lakes should be to enhance their unique value as brown trout fisheries. The IFI should be guided by this principle and act accordingly. The actions should include the vigorous control of pike in the lake.

We note the IFI position set out in its August 2014 policy on brown trout fishing. IFI proposed that, in designated managed wild brown trout fisheries the prohibition on the killing of pike above 50 cm should be lifted. This was a very welcome development in view of the evidence that pike in this size range are substantial trout predators. We do not share the view that pike over 85cm should be returned alive (and indeed IFI in its presentation to the pike policy review group recommended a 90 cm cutoff). Pike of this size are seasoned predators and a substantial threat to trout. Neither do we share the view that the taking of pike in the 50cm to 85 cm size range should be limited to one fish.

We are indifferent in relation to whether pike should be killed or transferred to other fisheries except for this: if a requirement to transfer fish imposes a cost on IFI that interferes with its working effectively on pike control the requirement should be dropped.

Our view should be evaluated in the light of the broader national context. The question to be resolved is not one of the preservation of pike stocks and pike fishing. There are literally hundreds of locations in Ireland where the highest quality pike fishing may be enjoyed. The IFI Guide to Pike angling in the Erne and South Donegal lists 162 fisheries in this area alone. The national context is clear: there is abundant pike angling in a multitude of locations. If our concern is tourism, Ireland can be promoted as a top class angling destination for both trout and for pike, in separate fisheries. Our club's concern is for the small number of lakes that are particularly well suited to the more environmentally sensitive fish, that is trout.

Finally, we would like to comment on IFI. Our club and its members are as capable as anyone of criticism of IFI. But we see in the West that IFI are motivated by a clear wish to do the very best for our fisheries. We have seen locally their worth in tackling Lagarosiphon and in pike management over the decades. We support them, we want them to continue working effectively to enhance the great trout fishing in Ireland. Our club is happy to co-operate with IFI in this mission.

Yours sincerely,

Denis Healy, Club secretary