

From Loughrea Anglers Ass.

Regarding consultation process of management of wild brown trout fisheries re predator control.

Loughrea Lake is situated beside the town of Loughrea in Co. Galway and is a karst limestone lake of approx. 660 Ha. It is a private fishery with a very long term lease.

It has a population of wild brown trout, perch, rudd, stickleback and eels. These stocks can be verified by IFI's own data on our lake.

Because our lake's main spawning streams are outflowing we trap and strip some of these trout and place ova in our hatchery and they are then released back into our system as unfed fry. This we find really increases our stocks and was always encouraged by the scientists of IFI, in frequent correspondence over the life of our club.

Indeed the same correspondence encouraged us to cull our predators (pike) with gill nets and this practice is carried out every year with some success under the auspices of IFI.

From our/your data we have undisputed proof of the damage pike have on our stocks, i.e. photos of the stomach contents of netted pike which are predominately of trout even though there are good stocks of perch and Rudd. This can also be verified by research by Dr. Paddy Gargan on Lough Sheelin which states that pike will predominately feed on salmonids before all other fish, even when there are large volumes of other species available to them. To date there has been no data to refute this science. So the question is; do we rubbish science and go with the populace belief for better PR. We say no!

We would be in favour of doing both methods, electrofishing and gill nets.

We are not naïve to think that we could eradicate these predators from our system but that control is the key, as the whole local community and club are in favour of a wild brown trout fishery.

We would recommend the following for the future policy of pike management in game fisheries.

1. Identify wild brown trout/ game fisheries. Have them designated as such.
2. Identify coarse fisheries. Have them designated as such.
3. Implement culling procedures for predators in game fisheries in a realistic manner.
4. Culled fish should be utilised, i.e. transferred, or used as food, not rendered for dog food or buried. Even though we would be afraid that movement of fish could lead to the spreading of disease and indeed would upset the whole eco-system of the receiving waters.
5. Work with local communities as to what they want in their area regarding socio-economic benefits of their fishery and not dictate as to what IFI want. As far as we can see there is no person that is an expert on game fish, coarse fish, sea angling, in the structure of IFI. There used to be, Martin O'Grady, etc. now IFI have head of research and that's it.
6. Use the management of predator fish as a monied resource for IFI. Indeed charge clubs for the electrofishing of pike in their area and we are sure they will pay.
7. Employ a scientist that clubs can talk to, regarding information on management of their systems. Help clubs understand what is going on in their system and what needs to be done to improve it, and most importantly help them improve it.
8. Stop pandering to pike anglers in game fisheries and stick by the science that has taken years to accumulate and proven to be correct. All anglers have their place, if I want to go salmon fishing I will go to a salmon river, likewise for wild brown trout and pike. Other countries will promote their strongest resource, whereas IFI are still struggling to realise what a unique resource we have in our wild fisheries.
9. We would ask IFI to stick by their mission statement.
10. Open up a discussion regarding the predation by cormorants.

Yours Sincerely,

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John Hannon (Chairman)

