

# Management of Pike in Designated Wild Brown Trout Fisheries

In Ireland we have the unique privilege of being the location of almost all of the great European lake trout fisheries.

At the outset it should be recognised that our Designated Wild Brown Trout Fisheries constitute a tiny fraction of all our countries lakes and rivers. However, these fisheries attract a disproportionately high percentage of the total angling effort. A further factor which must be recognised is that trout anglers specialise in this aspect of angling and generally will have no interest in pike fishing. For that reason the degradation of these trout fisheries is likely to see a huge reduction in angling activity and a diminution of their attraction as a tourist destination. This would have a hugely negative financial impact in parts of the country where jobs are scarce and these great fisheries give them a unique tourism product.

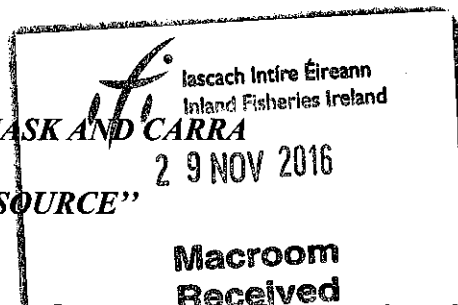
## Impact of Pike on Trout stocks

Based on the scientific conclusions of Central Fisheries Board's

*"FISH STOCK SURVEY REPORT FOR LOUGHS CORRIB, MASK AND CARRA  
and*

*FUTURE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR THIS FISHERY RESOURCE"*

*Dated: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1996*



## Estimated predation by Pike (year 1995) based on fish stock surveys and autopsies

- Number of trout eaten by pike in Upper L. Corrib in 1995 = 182,000
- Number of trout eaten by pike in Lower L. Corrib in 1995 = 74,000
- Number of trout eaten by pike in L. Carra in 1995 = 4,700
- On Mask the average large pike would consume 39 lbs of trout per year

Based on these figures and given L. Carra's extremely high level of suitable pike spawning and nursery areas along its shoreline, the cessation of pike control would lead to an overwhelming increase in pike numbers. As the diet of pike in Carra is almost exclusively trout, there would be a huge increase in trout predation and L. Carra would cease to be a premier trout fishery within a few years. The Lower Corrib is a similarly suitable for habitat for pike and would suffer similar devastation. Upper L. Corrib and L. Mask would survive as diminished trout fisheries due to the extensive areas of deep water where large populations of trout feed on Daphnia in the upper layers of water and are relatively secure from ambush attack by pike. However, the Springtime migration of trout into the bays to feed on hoglice, shrimp and chironomids at a time when pike are congregating for spawning will lead to massive predation of trout stocks.

The theory that pike control pike is totally refuted by the evidence of autopsies as only 2 pike were found in stomach contents. On the contrary the findings prove that pike feed preferentially on trout over all other prey fish.

## Impact on Rivers

The tributary rivers of the Western Lakes would suffer particularly catastrophic damage as the deep pools would become infested with pike. Every juvenile trout as it migrated downstream would have to get past every pike in every pool in the river. The Robe River was so over-run by pike in the early 1990's that it was no longer worth fishing for trout. Intensive annual electrofishing (removing hundreds of pike annually) together with the investment of TAMS funding has resulted in the full recovery of its trout stocks. Is all this investment in time and money to be wasted as the Robe reverts to a pike fishery.

The lower stretches of many of the major river tributaries of the Western Loughs are slow flowing and will become a death trap for ascending spawning trout and descending juveniles as they become infested with pike. If this seems like an exaggeration then look at the status of the small lakes on some of the best spawning tributaries of our trout fisheries eg. Annes River on Carra and Aille River on

**Mask. The small lakes on these river systems are exclusively pike fisheries as trout are incapable of existing where there is excessively intensive predation by the large pike stocks.**

**From the point of view of Partry Anglers the money we collected from hundreds of anglers for investment in the Robe River and Carra/ Mask Streams will be wasted if the pike control measures were to cease.**

### **The future for Trout Angling**

**In the event that the pike populations are allowed to escalate with no controls it will have a catastrophic effect on our trout stocks. As this leads to a huge decline in trout angling effort, will there be an adequate compensatory increase in the numbers of pike anglers. Every year tens of thousands of anglers return to these trout fisheries, spending hundreds of millions on their sport.**

**Given that there are hundreds of pike fisheries of the highest quality throughout the country, representing the overwhelming majority of our water-bodies, then adding a few more would be of little consequence.**

**So why is there so much pressure for the cessation of pike control on the few remaining premier trout fisheries. The answer can only be that specimen pike hunters recognise the potential that their big trout stocks offer as a food source for pike and the possibility of producing big specimen pike.**

**The policy question to be answered is whether we are ready to allow this fabulous fishing resource be fatally damaged for the benefit of a small number of specimen pike anglers.**

### **Conclusions**

**All the scientific evidence from years of research by IFI scientists demonstrates the extremely negative impact of pike predation on trout stocks, with the recommendation that on-going pike control is an essential part of the management of our Designated Wild Brown Trout Fisheries.**

**A policy decision by IFI to cease pike control measures in direct opposition to all the scientific research of its own scientists and as a consequence jeopardising our trout fishing industry, would seem bizarre at best.**

**Inland Fisheries Ireland are the custodians of the Designated Wild Brown Trout Fisheries and it is incumbent on the current staff to protect and enhance that fabulous resource.**

**Martin Feerick  
Partry Trout Anglers  
Partry  
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