

# RFC NEWS No 6

April 2008.

The start of the new season is with us and let us hope it will be good one for the Ribble Catchment. All the information in this Newsletter is with Clubs who are members of the RFCA.

## ENTREPOSE

Entrepose appeared at Skipton Magistrates Court 11<sup>th</sup> April and pleaded guilty to 18 cases with the rest taken into consideration. They have been sent to Crown Court for sentencing, probably Bradford. We understand that in mitigation they will plead that they did not really pollute the river and that in any case they have been badly treated by the EA pollution team in being prosecuted. They cite the example of a case in Wales where a company did a category 2 pollution, but were not prosecuted. We await the sentence and fine with some enthusiasm. Well done the E.A. Pollution team to finally get a conviction. The ACA has been kept fully informed of the situation and eventually there will be separate action on the behalf of those clubs and riparian owners who have lodged a claim with the ACA.

## POLLUTION

Sadly there are many incidents of pollution in the Catchment. Only by being vigilant and reporting any such incident will we be able to protect the Ribble system. The pollution reporting system we have set up has proved its worth. Please ring the EA Hotline first **0800 80 70 60** then ring Fred Higham for the Ribble and the Hodder on **01200 423314**, and Graham Parkes for the Calder **07861 696813**. They will follow it up and we have really good links with Pollution Team Leader Central, Helen Nightingale, who does a really good job.

## POACHING

The E.A. are to work with the police to examine ways of tackling poaching – both game and coarse – and to this end there will be a publicity campaign early in June. The police and the E.A. will urge all members of the public to report anything suspicious and always ask for a crime number so that the numbers of potential crimes/offences is logged. If there are sufficient loggings then the police will allocate resources to tackling the problem. We have been urged to report incidents even if they happened a few days previously. If we can then encourage people to contact Bruce Spedding we can set up a system, like that for pollution, and seek follow up information and feed back.

While not on the same scale as pollution there is a poaching problem at certain times of the year. Again if you see anything please report it on the Hotline and then let our poaching officer Bruce Spedding know on **0776 6441952** or by e-mail **bruce-spedding@tiscali.co.uk**

Below is a suggested what to do if you see anything. We are hoping there will soon be small laminated cards with this information on - **0800 80 70 60** and **08451 253545**.

## POACHING Update.....

Recently Council received a very illuminating presentation from the police and E.A., who are to launch a publicity campaign in June 2008. Further details will be circulated to clubs and members as they are known but the basic premise is to enlist as many members of the public as possible.

However, there are some principles that have been made very clear:

- No angler should put himself into a potentially dangerous situation, merely observe and report as soon as possible.
- Where any degree of Fish Poaching activity is observed the matter must be reported immediately to the E.A. on their number - **0800 807060**
- Where there are any problems with this number, or getting through, or obtaining a response then the matter MUST be reported immediately to the Police - **08451253545**. **Always ask for a log number.**

Then, if appropriate, ring other persons you may think have an interest in the matter Angling Club Secretary or Owner, RFCA Poaching Officer, Bruce Spedding on **0776 6441952**

Please Note:

If the situation is either dangerous or potentially dangerous (e.g. threats of violence or actual violence being used) then the matter, if deemed appropriate by the caller, may then be a 999 call.

The Environment Agency will understand that poaching is an offence and will handle your call as an incident.

If you are dealing with the Police, always ask for a log number and clearly state that Poaching is a Criminal Offence. Any Police Officer can deal with Poaching Offences however most would seek the advice or guidance of one of the Constabulary Wildlife Officers. Be prepared to have to explain the Poaching legislation to the communications officer or even the Police that attend, the WCO will take calls off Police Officers asking for advice on a 24/7 basis.

Both the police and the E.A. have asked that all parties keep each other in the loop. To this end always circulate the Police log numbers of Poaching incidents via email. **N.B. Email is NOT suitable to report incidents in the first instance.**

We would like to congratulate E.A. Fisheries who prosecuted 4 men found fishing without a licence Aug/Sept last year. They came before Leyland Magistrates Court and were fined £325 +£ 300 costs and £60 victim surcharge. Also, a further 21 men from Liverpool and Merseyside were fined £1175 + £1550 costs + £315 victim surcharge

## **NETTING LIMITATION ORDER (NLO)**

A reminder to all salmon anglers that 2008 is the second year of the NLO. There is a 2 salmon kill **bye-law** in operation. It is also the second year of the three-year pilot-tagging scheme. Although voluntary it is an officially backed E.A. pilot and many clubs have made it part of their rules that anglers must have a tag through the gills of any dead salmon. Prince Albert members who fish the Ribble would have 2 tags on each fish since they have their own national scheme. Prince Albert are to be commended for this scheme.

**PLEASE NOTE: There is an increase in the number of outlets where tags can be obtained.**

The following tackle shops have tags already there. Carters in Preston, Vareys in Clitheroe, Anglers All in Colne. The new outlets are Burnley Fishing Tackle in Burnley and N.W.Angling Centre, Hindley, Wigan. Tags can also be obtained from E.A. at Lutra House. Some fishing clubs have also made arrangements to distribute tags. Remember that you will need your salmon licence to obtain tags since it will need stamping by the outlet. The colours this year are anglers blue, nets yellow.

Built into the NLO was a three yearly review period rather than the normal five. It has always been our view that the monitoring /review should be as transparent as it can be. Meetings have taken place with the E.A. and substantial progress made on this. We will inform everyone of the model adopted and the dates that go with it. We promised in an earlier Newsletter that we would keep anglers informed as to how the river is performing in meeting its targets.

We are. Therefore. delighted to report that under the Compliance Assessment of Annual Salmon Stocks 2006 the status of the Ribble has moved into category 2 from cat 3. That is predicted "Probably not at risk in 2011" (5%- 50%). It is our hope that given the excellent run in 2007 the Ribble will move into Cat 1 Predicted to be "Not at risk". If this is so then it represents a lot of hard work on everyone's part.

## **BARRAGE /HYDRO POWER**

For the moment at least the threat of a Barrage has retreated. All the groups who came together to oppose the Barrage have promised to keep in touch and maintain a watching brief. However, another potential threat has appeared. A Green Group wishes to build a **Hydro scheme** at the weir in Settle. We understand other schemes are also being considered for the Ribble. Representatives from the RFCA and angling clubs who had been alerted by us attended a public launch of the scheme at Settle. We put our point of view across and have invited representatives from the group to our AGM to give a presentation. A representative from the RFCA went to the Joule Centre Annual Conference, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Rheged Centre, Penrith. This Conference was to consider Small Hydro Schemes in the North West of England – Overcoming Barriers. A document on the Conference has been produced and if anyone wishes an electronic copy go to the RFCA website and use the email link to request one.

## **LICENCE FEES**

A member from one of our clubs asked us to take up with the E.A. the fact that the concessionary licence had gone up by a greater amount than the ordinary licences. We asked the E.A. for an explanation and here it is:

"The level of concession will decrease from the current 50% to 33% for senior and disabled anglers. We reviewed the concessions other organisations offered and it appeared we are out of step in offering such a large concession. We feel that we should still have a concessionary licence but most other organisations only offer a concession in the region of 0% to 10% so our proposed 33% is still quite generous."

We consulted our 8 statutory national committees; the Regional Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committees in April 2007, and many regional and local Fisheries Consultatives around the same time. All the feedback from the RFERACS was supportive of the proposed changes. Our area committees also advised us that disabled and senior anglers actually have more time to use the fisheries resource and therefore should contribute fairly."

## RIVER STATE

As expected 2007 was a good year for the salmon run. The figures for the counters at Waddow on the Ribble and Winckley on the Hodder are as follows.

| Year | Waddow | Winckley | Total |
|------|--------|----------|-------|
| 2007 | 4983   | 4986     | 9969  |
| 2006 | 3717   | 1329     | 5046  |
| 2005 | 2471   | 3591     | 6062  |
| 2004 | 4751   | 2426     | 7177  |
| 2003 | 4188   | 3478     | 7666  |

### PROVISIONAL FIGURES FOR RIBBLE DECLARED ROD CATCHES 2007.

Please note provisional.

**Total Salmon Rod Catch 1062 fish.**

Number of released fish 828 = 78%. This is up from the year before when it was 75%. Since a figure of 75% was built into the NLO this is excellent news and anglers are to be congratulated. There is no question that the huge increase in catch and release over the last few years is having an effect in terms of meeting the spawning target. The breakdown in terms of river is as follows:

**Ribble 958**

**Hodder 104**

### TOTAL SALMON DECLARED NET CATCH

Salmon killed **266**

Sea Trout **15**

Sea Trout figures are as follows:

**Total rod catch 1173 fish**

Number of fish released 855 = 73%, which is down slightly from last year.

The breakdown in terms of river was:

**Ribble 840**

**Hodder 333**

Interestingly 75% of sea trout were released on the Ribble as to 66% on the Hodder

## SEA TROUT

Our friends in the Hodder Consultative have flagged up a concern with the state of sea trout in the Hodder. In the light of this and in conjunction with them and the E.A. we have sent out a catchment wide survey asking for information from clubs and riparian owners irrespective as to whether they are members of the RFCA. We want to get peoples views on the state of sea trout. Once this information has been analysed we will have a better view as to how to proceed if this necessary.

## RESOURCES

We are still lobbying for money from fines for pollution and poaching to find its way back to the Catchment and not just go to the Treasury. It is quite obvious that the lack of resources makes the job of the E.A. impossible leading to continual friction between stakeholders. The new requirements of the Water Framework Directive make it imperative that new sources of funding are accessed. Our view is that the polluter should pay.

## SIGNIFICANT WATER MANAGEMENT ISSUES (SWIMIs)

We are delighted to see that after considerable lobbying on our part and all other Consultatives and clubs in the North West Water Resource management was added to the list of SWIMIs. Having initially been omitted by the River Basin Management Group and it was only after considerable pressure that it was included. This is an excellent example of how by working together we can affect changes.

## UNITY

The last item is a good example of what may happen on a much larger scale if the proposed amalgamation of major angling bodies finally comes to pass. The financial clout, the lobbying clout will be enormous and is something that angling has long needed. One has only to look at the influence of the RSPB to see what could be achieved.

## **PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

Renewal of the current bylaws relating to Spring Salmon (Hopefully in place by Dec 2008)

Proposal to ban the sale of rod caught salmon in England and Wales (Start of 2009 season)

Proposal to carcass tag all salmon and sea trout caught by nets and fixed engines. This applies to licensed net or trap fishermen.

In 2006 321 such individuals were licensed in England and Wales. The example in N. Ireland 2001 and the pilot scheme on the Ribble 2007 were cited in evidence.

Other proposals – support the ban on the use of tailors (England), which are already banned in Wales.

A limit on the size of mesh for landing nets.

There would be additional protection for stocks as necessary so that rivers can meet their targets, initially voluntary but then mandatory.

A new policy to stock only with infertile triploid brown trout. Under this policy the E.A. will stop giving consent to stock fertile farmed brown trout into rivers and most lakes in England and Wales from 2015. Targets have been set to encourage fishery managers to progressively switch to the use of infertile triploid fish to supplement trout stocks in these waters. The RFCA, along with all the other Consultatives and many clubs in the NW, opposed this proposal during the consultation period.

## **RFCA WEBSITE**

We have a website ([www.ribblefisheriesca.co.uk](http://www.ribblefisheriesca.co.uk)) which has information about us. If you wish to ask a question or ask for information, perhaps one of our papers go to the website, go to the email address and send your request. If you wish to become a member and your club do not do a block booking for its members send an e-mail via our website asking for individual membership. Our AGM is on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008 and all members are welcome. Guest speakers invited Lawrence Rankin, new Environment Manager E.A. of our region. He will be speaking on how the changes and amalgamations will affect E.A. work in our Region. Richard McIlwin, Fisheries Team Leader on the work of Fisheries, and Helen Walker speaking about Settle Hydro proposals.

**REMEMBER THE RFCA IS ONLY AS STONG AS YOU MAKE IT.**

Best wishes and tight lines for 2008