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EAA resolution adopted at EAA General Assembly in Helsinki 28 August 2010

The critical condition of wild Baltic Salmon stocks – EAA urges additional conservation measures

The European Anglers Alliance, representing 11 European nations and over 3 million anglers, held its 16th General Assembly in Helsinki, Finland 28 August 2010, and discussed the critical condition of wild Baltic Salmon stocks.

Despite efforts to restore wild Baltic Salmon a number of stocks remain in a poor condition with several river stocks tenuously low. Most alarmingly, we have received information that spawning returns to several key rivers during the 2010 season are at 50 % of previous years. Several wild salmon rivers are still reliant on less than one hundred spawning fish to survive while at the same time sea fishing is being carried out on these stocks. STECF last year advised that no salmon fishing can be carried out at sea on mixed stock without a risk of extinction to the most seriously threatened river stocks¹. STECF (June 2010) – in line with ICES advice – proposes a TAC of less than 120,000 salmon for 2011. However, STECF deems the Baltic Salmon a “category 6 stock”, which means that the change in TAC from one year to another shall not deviate more than +/- 15%. The quota (TAC) agreed for 2010 was 294,246 Individuals. The quota (TAC) agreed for 2011 cannot be set lower than 249,900 individuals (15 % decrease) no matter that both ICES and STECF find a TAC less than 120,000 is needed as to ensure recovery of the Baltic salmon stocks.²

Key reasons for the precarious state of our salmon populations are:

- too high and increasing post-smolt mortality from unknown factors in both reared and wild salmon is now a very serious threat
- mixed stock fishing by commercial fishing vessels in the Baltic Sea with an extremely large expansion in long line fishing in the last two years. Long line fishing has now increased to levels similar to the 1980's a period when wild salmon stocks collapsed.
- continued mortality caused by the M74 syndrome
- regulated and unregulated overfishing in the river estuaries

¹ <http://sin.seafish.org/cms-service/file?uid=dfa31f6e-0e1f-4c04-8629-2f37bb2aabe2>

STECF report, Nov 2009, p. 116: “STECF advises that in the current situation with a number of wild salmon stocks being at low levels, any fishery on mixed stocks offshore or coastal will most likely constitute a risk of collapse of more than 5% to the weakest stocks. STECF therefore advise that under the 5% risk criteria no commercial or recreational fishing of mixed salmon stocks should be allowed until the management target (recover all stocks to 80% of maximum smolt production) has been reached for all stocks.”

² https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=571acf7e-5a86-46b1-a305-1d9d3a347166&groupId=1416

P. 22: “In order to ensure recovery of the salmon stocks ICES recommends for 2011 a TAC of not more than 120 000 salmon... STECF agrees with the ICES advice. STECF notes that with a TAC of 120,000 salmon as advised by ICES, the predicted total catch (reported and unreported commercial catch + recreational catch), would be 201,000 salmon...; With reference to the EC Policy paper STECF classifies the salmon stock as a category 6 stock. Applying the TAC rules for this category would result in a TAC for 2011 of 249,900 specimens. (15 % decrease).” (note: see full text in ANNEX IV to this EAA Resolution)

Therefore, in compliance with the European Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the EAA urges the Commission and Member States, to take a precautionary approach to the future management of this important species by adopting the following principles:

1. The commercial fishing in the Baltic Sea on mixed salmon stocks should be prohibited. The fishing pressure on wild salmon at sea should be kept to a minimum for conservation reasons and as a measure to sustain and increase the added socio-economic benefit for recreational and tourism angling in rivers. All wild salmon should be allowed to return to their natal rivers.
2. Salmon in rivers create jobs and have a high positive economic impact on all river interests. More salmon is a prerequisite for seizing more of the huge growth potential – sustainable growth - to the benefit of local communities and to secure engagement in much needed river restoration projects.
3. The Commission should take into account the very large difference in socio-economic output versus the biological impact from various kinds of salmon fisheries. Commercial fisheries still captures around 85% of the total catches of salmon around the Baltic Sea. The value of salmon in recreational angling fisheries amounts to several hundred euros/kg, whereas the corresponding figure for commercial fishing is very much lower. More detailed statistical material is needed in order to describe the total catches in relation to the economic turnover from commercial as well as from recreational fisheries to improve the management of the salmon in the Baltic Sea.
4. EAA urges the Commission and Member States to take into account the various management guidelines agreed by NASCO for Atlantic salmon. The EU is a signatory to the NASCO convention. NASCO guidelines on the precautionary approach to salmon management, including mixed stocked fisheries and socio-economic guidelines, represent a vast pool of knowledge, which should be taken into account during the revision of the Baltic Salmon Action Plan.
5. EAA urges the Commission and Member States to take fully into consideration the information provided in this resolution and the advice of ICES and STECF, including a TAC of less than 120 000.

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Notes for editors:

- EAA leaflet: “Baltic salmon Problems, threats and solutions”

http://www.eaa-europe.org/fileadmin/templates/uploads/Positions/A3-brochure_Baltic_salmon.pdf

- ANNEX I – Subdivisions in the Baltic Sea

- ANNEX II – Salmon Rivers in the Baltic Sea

- ANNEX III – Potential salmon rivers - Baltic Sea

- ANNEX IV – Opinion of STECF for Fisheries by Written Procedure Advice on Stocks in the Baltic Sea - June 2010

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- for fish, aquatic environment and anglers

The European Anglers Alliance (EAA) is a European NGO serving its members in 11 European countries with 3 million affiliated members and defending the interests of all Europe's 25 million recreational anglers. Recreational angling in Europe generates some 25 billion euro in socio-economic value. The tackle trade business alone has a turnover of about 5 billion euros supporting some 100,000 jobs across Europe.