

# EASTERN SEA FISHERIES JOINT COMMITTEE

**Matthew Mander**  
*Clerk and Chief Fishery Officer*

*Over 100 years of Fisheries Management*

*Established 1894*



6 North Lynn Business Village  
Bergen Way, King's Lynn  
Norfolk, PE30 2JG

TEL: (01553) 775321  
FAX: (01553) 772031  
E-Mail: [mail@esfjc.co.uk](mailto:mail@esfjc.co.uk)  
[www.esfjc.co.uk](http://www.esfjc.co.uk)

Ms Nicola Clarke  
Coastal Waters Policy Branch  
Area 7e  
3-8 Whitehall Place  
London  
SW1A 2HH

7<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Dear Ms Clarke

## **Consultation on measures to increase the number and size of Bass available to commercial and recreational fishermen**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Defra consultation on measures to increase the number and size of Bass available to commercial and recreational fishermen.

The members of the Joint Committee considered the proposals at the Statutory meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005. The Officers of the Joint Committee had previously held meetings with recreational and commercial interests and the views and opinions raised were reflected in the Officers' supporting paper for the Statutory meeting. (enclosed).

The members of the Joint Committee considered the five options in the consultation at great length. It was acknowledged that the principle of allowing the female bass the opportunity to spawn at least once was desirable. However some members held great reservations in the manner in which this was being attempted and the implications for the current exploitation of the stock.

All members were in agreement that the measures should ideally be applied to all fishing methods and all fishing sectors across all EU states. The fact that the measures would only impact on UK vessels and in particular English vessels caused the most concern. If the proposed measures had been farther reaching then there is a belief that there would have been a much higher level of acceptance.

Despite these reservations, other members believed that there were benefits to be had by introducing the proposed measures as laid out in the consultation. It was argued that the long-term sustainability of the bass stock and the presence of greater numbers of larger fish available to all sectors justified the short-term reduction in bass catches and the implications to other commercial fisheries.

It was based on the perceived unfairness of the proposals and in particular the potential adverse effect on the inshore, under 10 metre fleet, that instigated the first amendment to the Officers' proposal and to support Option 1 in the consultation. The motion was defeated by 8 votes to 5

Highlighting how polarised some members' opinions were, a further amendment to the Officers proposal was to support Option 2 in the consultation. The motion was defeated by 7 votes to 4.

On balance, the members agreed that the Officers' recommendations provided sufficient safeguards whilst at the same time, potentially providing a significant boost to the local bass stocks. The Officer's proposal was carried by 7 votes to 5 with one abstention.

It was therefore Resolved that the Joint Committee would respond to the Defra Consultation by recommending that Option 4 would be the best option for the fisheries within the Joint Committee's District with the proviso that in the first instance the minimum landing size would be increased to 38cm and the minimum mesh size for enmeshing nets would be increased to 100mm.

I look forward with great interest to the findings of the Consultation and the recommendations. In the meantime, please do not hesitate in contacting the office if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Mander  
Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer

Enc