



**DEUTSCHER
ANGELFISCHER-
VERBAND e.V.**



Danmarks Sportsfiskerforbund



Sportfiskarna

Concerning ICES advice for recreational fishing for Baltic salmon 2022.

Common position statement from Deutscher Angelfischerverband e.V. (Germany), Danmarks Sportsfiskerforbund (Denmark), and Sportfiskarna (Sweden) for Baltic Sea salmon 2022.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) published its catch recommendation for salmon in the Baltic Sea (SDs 22-31) for the year 2022 on the 15th of September. The advice from ICES contains suggestions for urgent measures to strengthen and protect weak salmon river stocks by closing the mixed stock sea fishery, both recreational and commercial, and only allowing a limited coastal fishery within 4 nm in the Åland Sea, Gulf of Bothnia and Bothnian Bay (SDs 29N-31).

The national angler associations of Germany, Sweden and Denmark share ICES' analysis that the current management strategy based on a mixed stock sea fishery with a single common MSY goal that encompasses all 37 wild river stocks may not sufficiently protect individual salmon river populations. All current scientific information including the latest ICES advice show clear problems for several river stocks and that the majority of weak salmon populations occur in assessment unit five in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In line with ICES we believe that the current management involves a risk for extinction of several weak river stocks. We are therefore in agreement with ICES about the status of Baltic salmon and the need to change salmon management in the Baltic Sea region.

The European Anglers Alliance (EAA), national angling organisations and individual anglers have always been deeply involved in the health and wellbeing of our unique and iconic Baltic salmon. Angling organisations are actively involved in the restoration of rivers and invest large amounts of time, money, and energy into the goal of restoring rivers and salmon populations. Anglers have a

vested interest in Baltic salmon and agree that it is important to change current Baltic salmon management, but we believe that angling opportunities should be maintained. All anglers are well acquainted with, understand and respect regulations connected to their fishery including daily harvest limits (bag limits), seasonal closures and minimum size and slot limits. Angling keeps our members, a huge pool of voluntary labour, engaged in river restoration, water quality monitoring and fisheries control. This stakeholder involvement is essential if we are to keep European citizens involved and supportive in the wellbeing of salmon and the environment in general.

Associated with the social importance of angler engagement is the economic importance of the recreational salmon fishery in the Baltic Sea. The trolling fishery is an important sector for income and jobs for coastal communities. Research by the Thünen Institute of Baltic Sea Fisheries has shown that in Germany alone salmon anglers spend 2,750 € per person and year, for a total expenditure of 5 million €, corresponding to 1,000 € per salmon that is being harvested. The EAA believes that sea angling for Baltic salmon, if regulated correctly, can have minimum effect on river stocks while maintaining angling opportunities and associated important regional economic activity.

Currently EU member states have differing regulations concerning minimum size limits and daily bag limits for recreational sea angling:

- Denmark, voluntary agreement of a bag limit of two salmon per person and day preferably adipose fin-clipped fish (compensatory released salmon) and a minimum size of 75 cm.
- Poland, a bag limit of two salmon per person and day, minimum size limit of 60 cm.
- Finland, a bag limit of two salmon per person and day, minimum size limit of 60 cm, and 50 cm in the Bothnian Bay.
- Germany, a bag limit of three salmon per person and day, a closed season, and minimum size limit of 60 cm.
- Sweden, only adipose fin-clipped fish (compensatory released salmon) can be harvested.
- Latvia, a bag limit of one salmon per person and day, minimum size limit of 65 cm.

The national angling associations of Germany, Denmark and Sweden are of the opinion that a harmonization and general reduction of the bag limit for the recreational salmon fishery at sea will

have a positive impact on Baltic salmon stocks while maintaining the ability for European citizens to fish for salmon in the Baltic Sea.

The signatory national angler associations would like to underline that of equal importance to fisheries management actions are actions to allow for free migration of salmon in rivers, both up and downstream, and actions to prevent overexploitation by predators.

All migrating fish have problems with small scale hydropower, disused mills, weirs, and other man-made obstructions. If we are to reach our common goals for Baltic salmon smolt production and thereby sustainably develop both the commercial coastal and the recreational fishery and realise the huge economic potential of sportfishing for salmon, then we must together prioritise removal of barriers for fish migration. We therefore strongly support the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 goal of restoring to free flowing at least 25,000 km of rivers.

Another significant issue for weak populations has been the exponential growth of cormorant predation within rivers and estuaries. Research conducted by the Danish Institute of Aquatic Resources (DTU Aqua) shows mortality of wild salmon by cormorants of over 50% during several consecutive years in salmon rivers (Baktoft et al., 2008). Predation of large numbers of salmon in a very short time by large flocks of migrating cormorants can be especially problematic as this is difficult to solve on a local or even national level highlighting the need for a regional cormorant management.

These are the suggestions from the Deutscher Angelfischerverband e.V. (Germany), Danmarks Sportsfiskerforbund (Denmark), and Sportfiskarna (Sweden) concerning Baltic salmon regulations for 2022.

- **A bag limit of one salmon per angler and day for sea anglers in SD's 22-31.**
- **A common minimum size limit for salmon angling at sea.**
- **Utilise more EMFAF funding for river restoration and the removal of fish migration barriers.**
- **A Baltic wide program should be initiated to achieve a balanced regional management of cormorants.**