



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game Anglers

Game anglers, we need you! The English and Welsh Governments are currently consulting on their plans for the bass fishery, a fishery with significant overlap to both salmon and sea trout. This fishery management plan (FMP) is the first of its kind to consider measures to protect salmonids at sea.

The Angling Trust want the Bass FMP to:

- Phase out inshore netting
- Align FMP design around UK commitments to salmonid protection
- Begin data collection on sensitive species bycatch
- Follow scientific advice

We have prepared the following guidance document for recreational game anglers who want to respond to the consultation. It is important that you **make your response unique to you** and use it as an opportunity to share your views. This document is intended to be guidance only and only pertains to section 2 of the Bass Fishery Management Plan Consultation which relates to questions on the proposed fishery management plan. This document covers only the questions where salmonid management is relevant, and is for guidance only. For the Angling Trust full guidance on this FMP, [click here](#).

The Seabass Fishery Management Plan consultation closes on **1st October 2023**. It is important that as many members of the recreational game angling community as possible respond to the consultation with their views. |



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game Anglers

### Question 1 - Do you have any comments on the process for developing the Bass FMP?

YES...

- The Angling Trust supported the Policy Lab stakeholder engagement process as a way of gathering stakeholder opinions and consensus on the various aspects of the bass fishery management plan being considered by Defra. However, there was **considerable confusion**, and **subsequent tensions**, surrounding the **timelines of these processes** and the **publication of the results**. While we felt this method of compiling stakeholder views was superior to those used in other Fisheries Management Plans, it also **generated a significant amount of stakeholder fatigue**.
- We strongly encourage stakeholder engagement coordinators to **define a delivery and output timeline to maintain stakeholder expectations**. We also feel this **process must be streamlined to reduce stakeholder fatigue and burden**. Communication is integral to the effectiveness of fishery management plan stakeholder engagement, and **we encourage Defra and its associated arms-length bodies to invest in a communications delivery plan with aspects tailored toward the recreational sea angling sector**.
- Defra predominantly engaged with stakeholders via existing engagement groups: Regional Fisheries Groups and the Finfish Advisory Group. Whilst this is understandable in theory, in reality, **our view is that it didn't offer a balanced opportunity for stakeholders to engage largely due to a lack of representation from recreational stakeholders through these groups**.
- There **should be a tailored recruitment drive to promote these opportunities to recreational angling stakeholders**. Similarly, for Future Fisheries Management Live events, given their importance, these events should have been more widely advertised and tailored toward all stakeholders, not just the commercial fishing industry.



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game

### Question 3 - Do you agree that these goals are appropriate for domestic management priorities within the Bass FMP?

**NO...**

Overall we agree with the direction of travel for many of the Bass FMP goals; however, **they lack ambition for delivering a world-class fishery** and are vague which **creates concerns regarding Defra's intentions to deviate away from business-as-usual.**

Some key points to consider:

- There is **limited recognition of the socio-economic benefits recreational fishing can generate and contribute to coastal communities**, including salmon and sea trout fisheries, which must be taken into account in decision making.
- Defra's **domestic management priorities don't align with their domestic responsibilities** to safeguard species such as salmon and sea trout

### Question 4 - Do you agree that these actions are appropriate short-term priorities for the Bass FMP?

**NO...**

We agree that the follow actions are suitable and necessary short-term actions for the Seabass FMP that must be implemented within the first 3 years of the enactment of the fishery management plan.

- Encourage better monitoring, the use of gear modifications and engagement with relevant schemes to help reduce the incidence of sensitive species bycatch associated with bass fishing

**However,** We also want to see short-term actions focused on **increasing the minimum mesh size to reduce bycatch of endangered, threatened and protected species including migratory fish like salmonids.**



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game Anglers

### Question 5 - Do you agree that this approach outlines suitable medium-long term priorities for the Bass FMP?

**NO...**

We would advocate for the following action to be moved from medium-long term priorities to short-term priorities for the Seabass FMP:

- Reviewing the practice of shallow inshore and shore-based netting to determine whether additional protections are needed to prevent migratory fish bycatch.

We agree that the follow actions are suitable medium-long term actions for the Seabass FMP:

- Improving sector equality so that regulations apply to all those fishing for bass
- Encouraging participation in Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) early-adopter programmes where appropriate to improve data collection on discards and sensitive species bycatch

**However**, many of these actions focus on “reviewing” evidence or “encouraging” participation. **We need Defra to take decisive action faster including those which protect salmon and sea trout throughout their marine life stages, and maintain the UK’s domestic and international commitments to salmonid populations.**



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game Anglers

### **Question 6 - How would you like to be involved in the delivery of the plan and the future management of the English and Welsh bass fishery?**

The Angling Trust would like to **play an active role in management discussions for the bass fishery management plan**. Recreational fisheries are a newly recognised stakeholder under the Fisheries Act (2020) and as a result there are many opportunities and challenges facing the sector due to the growing need for recreational fishery engagement in policy, science and management, particularly within the fisheries management plan process. If the intention is for stakeholders to deliver aspects of a fishery management plan, then there is a dire need for **government to support the sector through investment in the financial resourcing required**.

We believe the government must **make stronger efforts to ensure engagement from game anglers, where relevant on issues impacting salmonids, through existing structures such as Defra's Regional Fisheries Groups are well supported**.



# Bass Fishery Management Plan

## Guidance Notes for Game Anglers

### **Question 7 - Are there any important connections with or links to other fisheries that we should consider when finalising this FMP or during its implementation process?**

An important connection that must be considered when finalising this FMP is the **overlap of bass fisheries and salmon and sea trout distributions**. The 2023 ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Seas) working group for North Atlantic Salmon highlighted distinct overlap between a number of England And Wales fisheries with the coastal habitats of Salmon. **Salmonids are highly protected species**, falling under a large swath of legislation and international agreements, including the UK's membership to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO). This means the **UK has an international responsibility to protect salmon and sea trout across freshwater and marine environments**. One example from the 2019-2024 NASCO implementation plan for England & Wales is the commitment to "1. Undertake a review of fishery enforcement priorities in England and Wales. 2. work with England's ten Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) and Welsh Government to secure better protection for migratory salmonids from netting activities". **This action is to be completed by 2024, highlighting the need for decisive action to follow through on our international agreements**. It is clear that when finalising and implementing this FMP, **Defra must consider the link to salmonid fisheries to upholds the UK's commitments to these species**.