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EUROPEAN CHARTER of RECREATIONAL FISHING



EUROPEAN ANGLERS FEDERATION



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I. WHAT IS RECREATIONAL FISHING ?

We generally go in for recreational fishing with a fishing line and rod, fit out or not with a reel. The line is fitted with one or more natural baits or artificial lures. Angling is quite varied and made up of several techniques which can be classified in relation with different non-exclusive parameters or with a combination of those different parameters : the species or group of species one intends to catch, the type of water, the material used, the sort of bait used and the type of prospecting chosen.

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE SPECIES OR GROUP OF SPECIES BEING LOOKED FOR : coarse fish, carnivorous fish, trout fishing, carp fishing, migratory salmonids (salmon and sea trout), line fishing of flat fish, rock fish and other species, big game fishing (big predatory sea fish).

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF WATER : running water (brooks, medium and wide streams, rivers, estuaries), closed waters (canals, ponds, lakes) and sea line fishing.

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE WAY OF PROSPECTING : roving or spot fishing, from the bank or wading or from a boat, fishing under the ice, long or short distance fishing, trolling, fishing under the rod.

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE MATERIAL USED : fishing with the long rod, the English way fishing, Bolognese fishing, fly fishing (dry fly, wet fly, nymph, streamer), spinning, frame fishing, vertical fishing, surf casting, trolling, fishing under the rod.

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE BAITS : natural baits (alive or dead), artificial bait fishing (imitating or inciting lures : imitations of fish, spinners or spoons, supple lures, spinnerbaits...).

Beach fishing on foot and crayfish fishing with specific material (scales) are two types of fishing you go in for without a line or a rod. They are also to be recorded among the techniques of leisure fishing.

Under the aegis of the General Association of International Sport Federations and of the International Confederation of Sport Fishing and of the different associated sections of the International Federation of Sport Fishing (IFSF ed – IFSF fly – IFSF sea), international fishing competitions (World championships, European championships...) are organized in the following techniques : spot fishing, carp, black bass, carnivorous fish with artificial lures from a boat, carnivorous fish from the bank with artificial lures, trout fishing with natural baits, under the ice.

This diversity of techniques makes recreational fishing extraordinarily rich and it has developed as many different profiles of fishermen. This has been particularly true for the last twenty years when the main tendency is : one exclusive method of fishing.

Recreational fishermen can be distinguished by their favourite techniques but also by their varied wishes which cover the following domains : well-being and relaxation, going back to the sources, sharing of a common passion, contact with the fish, acquiring techniques and skills, self control, perseverance, sense of competition, surpassing of oneself, harmony with natural environments, the open air, looking for exceptional fish, taking of natural food...

How much a fisherman is satisfied depends on the total or partial fulfilment of his expectancies, some of which have been described here above, but no one should forget it is also linked to the number and the quality (measurements and shape) of the catch.

The E.A.F. encourages fishermen to respect each other, whatever the techniques used, and the expectancies of everyone. It also encourages fishermen to respect other users of the aquatic environment. Finally, the E.A.F. is aware that the number and the quality of the catch remain an essential element of the satisfaction of the fishermen and wishes the national and regional authorities, as well as the anglers' associations, to take that parameter into account.

I. Angling can be classified in relation with different non-exclusive parameters, among which the species or group of species sought.



2. FISHING AND RESPECTING A REALLY ADAPTED LAW

Recreational fishing, especially on public waters, is ruled in every country by a national law, sometimes a regional law as in Belgium. In a general way, that law and its applications determine the fishing licence, periods and hours of the day when fishing is permitted, fishing spots, fishing material, catch limits, legal catch sizes as well as numerous particular specifications. The law also determines the sanctions to be applied when it is not respected.

Moreover, in lots of cases, the recreational fisherman must respect the regulation of a fishing association or club, which can be stricter than the national rules. The leisure fisherman is supposed to respect those regulations as well as the national laws for fear of sanctions or even exclusion. On private ponds, fishing is generally ruled by the owner or his legal beneficiaries.

National or regional laws are above all passed to avoid angling harming fish populations and aquatic environments as well as their surroundings. Other laws also focus on fishing methods : boating, nature preservation, environment...

The regulations of associations and clubs have the same objectives, but they also tend to ensure a fair access to the waters for the different members and a harmonious cohabitation among them.

The E.A.F. believes that aquatic environments and their fauna must absolutely be protected, on the one hand because of their patrimonial value and, on the other hand, because we consider it as an indispensable condition for keeping and developing leisure fishing. However, we underline the fact that fishing rules will be even more relevant, efficient and accepted if they correspond to present time situations as well concerning the state of fish populations and the existing fishing techniques (including the necessary material they require) as the expectancies of fishermen.

2. The number and the quality of the catch remain an essential element of the satisfaction of the fishermen.

3. FISHING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For a long time recreational fishermen have been the guards of our waters, streaming or closed. They were among the first to denounce, and they continue to do so, all types of aggressions to the streams (all sorts of pollution, straightening of courses, dams, destruction of spawning sites, destruction of isles, drainage off of wet sites, commercial overfishing...).

From that point of view we can say that anglers' associations play an important role as to the preservation of nature, specifically that of the piscicultural environment. Anglers are consequently real actors of the *sustainable development*. They are represented in numerous national and European authorities responsible for the management of streams.

Through their national representatives, they take an active part in the application of the *European Directive on Water (2000/60/CE)* which fixes the objectives of a sustainable water policy in the EEC, by contributing to the achievement of water management plans. They also contribute to the implementation of the Natura 2000 network.

However, it is probable that some actions taken previously by recreational fishermen had *negative consequences* (e.g. the trapping of otters, the introduction of undesirable species or the excessive removing of *some* species), which, combined with other causes of damage, may have caused an impoverishment of the biological diversity of the piscicultural environment. Those actions are open to criticism and must now belong to the past.

Thanks to a better scientific knowledge of the piscicultural environment and of ecological principles, thanks to an enormous will for action in the field, some recreational fishermen *fight for the defence of the piscicultural environment*. They do so in partnership with the authorities in charge of the management of watercourses : rehabilitation of spawning spots, restoring the free circulation of fish, protecting local varieties of species, restoring the natural aspect of the watercourses, bringing action against polluters, advising about hydroelectric plants...).



3. Fishing rules will be even more relevant, efficient and accepted if they correspond to present time situations as well concerning the state of fish populations and the existing fishing techniques as the expectancies of fishermen.

Even if they are probably more attentive than other users of watercourses, not all recreational fishermen are as sensitive to the idea of sustainable development. This is probably even more the case if their socio-economic and cultural levels are weak. That's why sensibilizing people in favour of a high quality environment or of the health of the piscicultural environment remains necessary, for example :

- never leave any sort of waste on the fishing spots : plastic bags, cans, nylon threads ;
- keep the fishing spots quiet ;
- respect the vegetation on the banks ;
- never take too many fish, especially those that have become rare or are especially coveted ;
- ...



4. With the help of scientists, the anglers' associations can take part in the expert evaluation of the piscicultural environment and contribute to its improvement.

The E.A.F. invites all leisure anglers to pay attention to a quality environment and to the integrity of the piscicultural environment. With the help of scientists, the anglers' associations can take part in the expert evaluation of the piscicultural environment and contribute to its improvement.

4. REMOVAL OF THE RESOURCE

Among the species of fish of watercourses and lakes, some are much sought after, in particular because of the quality of their flesh and their culinary value. It is the case of the trout, the salmon, the grayling, the pike, the pikeperch, the perch and the eel. Some species are even called « noble » with a view to their culinary quality or to the quality of their fishing.

On the contrary, numerous species, among which lots of cyprinids, are less taken away by anglers. There are still lots of important cultural differences or feeding habits from a country to another. For example, carps are not often eaten in Western Europe whereas they are considered exquisite in Central Europe.



National legislations on leisure fishing can impose measures that make it possible to protect the most removed species : legal sizes of the catch, catch window, catch quotas or even a ban on fishing. Where it is possible, some fishing regulations imposed by anglers' associations can even be stricter than the laws.

5. The no kill fishing development must be accompanied by efficient communication directed to society as to the positive effects on the fish populations that are most sensitive to removal.

This is the case where no-kill fishing (catch and release) is imposed and where it is forbidden to take away any fish. Such a regulation imposed by an association intends to protect the fish population, to ensure a sufficient number of fish (especially the bigger ones), or both at a time. Generally, no-kill fishing is reinforced by regulations as to the fishing techniques and material used : they intend to release the fish in the best conditions possible for its survival : fly only, barbless hooks or with a crushed barb, lures with 3 hookpoints at most... Catch and release pools can be found essentially on salmonid waters and they intend to protect brook trout, rainbow trout and grayling.

The no-kill attitude is step by step gaining ground in Europe, also where it is not imposed on the anglers. This happens among salmonid fishermen and among specialists of carnivorous fish, especially the youngest of them. Besides the achievement of the objectives detailed before, no-kill fishing provides fishing with an image of pure leisure where taking away fish does not exist anymore. Fishermen and their representatives must however be aware that no-kill is not always appreciated by a part of our society which does not admit that a form of leisure takes place at the expense of animals...

The E.A.F. advises a reasonable removal of the resource, i.e. one that does not endanger the fish populations and makes it possible for every angler to take advantage of it in a fair way. We favour no-kill when it is imposed in a consensual way and provides fishing with an image of full leisure activity. However, we believe that the development of that habit must be accompanied by efficient communication directed to society as to the positive effects on the fish populations that are most sensitive to removal.



6. It is essential to shorten the drills as much as possible so as to avoid any long stress and to ensure the releasing in the best conditions.

- the use of barbless hooks or with a crushed barb so that unhooking is easier and faster ;
- to shorten the drills as much as possible so as to avoid any long stress and to ensure the releasing in the best conditions ;
- to release the fish immediately if it is not intended to be consumed and if its provisional conservation is not necessary (competition, freshness) ;
- if the provisional conservation of the fish is necessary, to place them in keep-nets that are large enough and conceived to avoid any injury and to ensure a sufficient oxygen level ;
- to kill the fish in a clean and fast way if it is intended to be consumed.

The organization of international fishing competitions (International Federation of Sport Fishing) imposes regulations in favour of the respect of the fish. So it is, for example, that the regulations of international fishing competitions in fresh water require the use of fine mesh keep-nets that are more than 4 meters long with a diameter of at least 40 cm if they are round or a diagonal of 50 cm if they are rectangular.

All fishing mode in which the catch is not the direct result of the feeding behaviour of the fish is not considered an act of recreational fishing and is banned (harpooning, fishing by hand, by net or with a hoop net...).

The E.A.F. sees to it that the fish be treated with respect during catch, conservation and death.

6. PISCICULTURAL AND FISHING MANAGEMENT

Piscicultural management should not be confused with fishing management.

Piscicultural management intends to ensure the preservation and the development of the fish populations.

It is based on scientific data assessing the fish populations and quality indications of the fish environment (water quality, quality of the habitat, biological indications, fish productivity, dynamics of the fish populations, damaging elements...). It does not integrate leisure fishing except in its impact on fish population.

For a few years, patrimonial management of fish populations has been gaining ground, especially for salmonids. Thanks to a better knowledge of fish genetics, patrimonial management intends to preserve and develop populations that have been identified as local and are considered best adapted to their environment.

Piscicultural management distinguishes itself from fishing management : the second aims at the preservation and development of the fish populations and also at the preservation and development of leisure fishing. It is obvious that fishing management cannot exist without an active cooperation between fishermen and their representatives.

The E.A.F. pleads for the acquisition of more scientific knowledge of the fish populations, for the following through and the rehabilitation of fish populations and of aquatic eco-sysyems as a whole. However, we believe it is necessary to join to piscicultural management all considerations concerning leisure fishing so as to achieve a real fishing management.



7. Piscicultural management distinguishes itself from fishing management.

7. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FISHING

Leisure fishing is an activity that provides people who go in for it with well-being. It also develops direct and indirect economic consequences. It is not always perceived as such by the political authorities, sometimes because they don't know, sometimes because no official data are available. That is why it is frequent that leisure fishing does not enjoy the attention it deserves from the authorities, with all the consequences implied for its development and future.

Even fishing associations are not always conscious that recreational fishing creates an economic activity, for example tourism, or they totally neglect that aspect of things.

The E.A.F. invites fishing associations to consider fishing as a leisure activity with socio-economic effects on regional or national scale. We encourage them to try to obtain an estimate of those effects through socio-economic surveys and to inform their regional or national authorities about those data.



8. Recreational fishing creates an economic activity.

8. INTRODUCING SPECIES – RESTOCKING WITH

Like other animal and vegetable species, fish species are sometimes transferred to geographical areas where they were unknown. There was even a time (end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th) when foreign species were sought after in order to « add value to water courses ».

In the Middle Ages carps were imported from Asia. Now they are considered adapted.

However, there are not only voluntary introductions, natural or accidental movements of species also exist. As a result, the fish population of water courses is in evolution and « new » species appear in geographical areas where they were absent.

We do not always know the impact of those species (sometimes they can be quite invasive) but sometimes we can measure it thanks to scientific research or experiments. We must admit though that in case of negative consequences, our means of reaction are often quite limited... and then we hope some new natural balance will occur if ever it is not too late. Moreover, interactions with other animal or vegetable species, some of which can also be invasive, must also be taken into account.

One can fear diseases or even changes in the composition or the structure of the fish population. This can have important effects on fishing.

*Consequently, the E.A.F. recommends the highest cautiousness : let us try to limit as much as possible the accidental introduction of species. For example, one can avoid to use as live bait, or even ban, non indigenous species like American minnows (*Pseudorasbora parva*) or sun perch.*

Restocking with fish will be subjected to authorization and will occur under the control of the authorities.



9. Restocking with fish will be subjected to authorization and will occur under the control of the authorities.

The final version of the text was approved by the EAF Presidential Council in Milan on 3 October 2015.

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