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PRESS RELEASE

Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland



SSTRAI affiliated members of the European Anglers Alliance welcomes the news that the European Parliament adopts with an overwhelming majority a resolution on a pan-European Cormorant Management Plan.

The European Anglers Alliance (EAA) is extremely happy about yesterday's plenary voting on MEP Dr. Heinz Kindermann's report "on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture."

As many as 558 MEPs voted in favour of the report and its resolution calling on a pan-European cormorant management. Only seven MEPs voted against!

This exceptionally strong backing from the European Parliament puts heavy pressure on the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to put forward the request for a pan-European management plan and all the basic elements needed for a smooth and effective implementation of such a plan.

These elements include more and better data, improved co-ordination between Member States, greater involvement of stakeholders and a clarification of some of the legal terms and the terminology in use.

We and other fisheries interests have asked for such a management plan for more than a decade.

The resolution has 12 calls on:

- ... reliable and generally recognised data on the total size and structure of cormorant populations in Europe, their fertility and mortality parameters;
- ...an annually updated database on the development, size and geographical distribution of cormorant populations in Europe;
- ...the Commission to put out to tender, and finance, a scientific project aimed at supplying an estimation model for the size and structure of the total cormorant population on the basis of currently available data on breeding population, fertility and mortality;

- ...the Commission and Member States to foster the creation of suitable conditions for bilateral and multilateral scientific and administrative exchanges, both within the EU and with third countries, identifying the origin of the findings, communications, contributions or publications, and in particular the statistics, in such a way as to make clear whether they come from academic or official sources or from associations, in particular nature and bird conservation associations;
- ...the Commission to carry out a comparative study of the contradictory conclusions concerning a cormorant management plan reached by REDCAFE, on the one hand, and FRAP and EIFAC, on the other;
- ...the Commission to set up a working party to carry out within one year a systematic cost-benefit analysis of possible cormorant management actions at Member State level, to assess their plausibility on the basis of logical and scientific criteria and to submit a recommendation; the composition of the working party should reflect the degree to which the stakeholders are affected;
- ...the Commission to submit a cormorant population management plan in several stages, seeking to integrate cormorant populations into the environment as developed and cultivated by man in the long term without jeopardising the objectives of the Wild Birds Directive and Natura 2000 as regards fish species and marine and freshwater ecosystems;
- ...the Commission, in the interests of greater legal certainty and uniform interpretation, to provide without delay a clear definition of the term 'serious damage';
- ...the Commission to produce more generalised guidance on the nature of the derogations allowed under Article 9(1) of the Wild Birds Directive;
- ...the Commission and Member States to promote the sustainable management of cormorant populations by means of increased scientific and administrative coordination, cooperation and communication, and to create appropriate conditions for the drafting of a Europe-wide cormorant population management plan;
- ...the Commission to consider all the legal means at its disposal to reduce the negative effects of cormorant populations on fishing and aquaculture and to take into account, when developing its initiative for the promotion of aquaculture in Europe, the positive effects of a Europe-wide cormorant

population management plan and to propose solutions to the cormorant problem in this context;

- ...the Commission and Member States to make some of the funds earmarked in the EU budget for data collection in the fisheries sector, in particular under heading 11 07 02: 'Support for the management of fishery resources (improvement of scientific advice)', available for investigations, analyses and forecasts of the cormorant population on the territory of the European Union, in preparation for the future regular monitoring of these species;

In the run up to the voting on the 5th Dec in the Parliament, the European Commission has also engaged in the cormorant issue. The Commission has stated in public that in the past they had not been adequately aware of the scale of the cormorant problem. The Commission now has promised to set up some form of stakeholder forum or platform next year.

In this regard we urge strongly that the forum deals with the cormorant problem alone and doesn't extend to all kinds of other birds and environmental problems. Otherwise we fear more years passing by with talks only but no action. That is not acceptable. The cormorant problem is severe and we have waited long enough.

Also the Council of Ministers has been rather outspoken and forthcoming on the cormorant issue.

In January 2003 the following request was included the Council's Conclusion on a strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture: 'It is also necessary to develop a common strategy on fish eating animals (for instance, cormorants).'

In June this year France wanted to take the strategy further. France presented to the other EU Member States a Memorandum on the Development of Aquaculture in Europe. With regards to cormorants the memorandum includes: "...as far as cormorants are concerned, a European management plan could help to control and regulate the cormorant population and at the same time enable fish farming to be retained in water, rural and coastal areas."

The Memorandum got 2/3 of the ministers' signatures - 18 out of 27.

Very recently at the latest Council of Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers meeting 18-20 November aquaculture and cormorants were on the agenda again. A strategy for the sustainable development of aquaculture in Europe was discussed and it was minuted that: "several countries were interested in the prospect of a management plan for cormorants, to balance measures to protect the species with measures to ensure the viability of producers."

Non-official sources have it that 14 Member States were in favour of European level cormorant actions and measures. It would be interesting to know how many and which of the remaining 13 countries were explicitly against - if any - and how many were just abstaining because not being affected or awaiting more detailed information.

We have reason to believe that a Member of the Parliament will pose this exact question to the Commission in the very near future.

The Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland ask that the Dept of National Parks and Wildlife (NPW) to seriously consider and closely monitor the European Parliament decisions on the cormorant issues. In addition, we request the NPW to show leadership and adopt a management plan inline with the points above.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

Report "on the adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture",

Dave Forde

**PRO
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