

## **Ecosystems and the economy – angling, access and pricing**

### **National aspects: the Government's view**

Defra are now committed to treating the environment as an economic entity (it is, of course, a biological, physical and social entity too). Thus, 'ecosystem goods and services' are what nature provides to us - currently free of charge but which we damage at cost. Defra wants that cost calculated. Environmental economics remains in the stone age but academics have methods by which they calculate the monetary value of our benefits from the environment and our spending on enjoying it – this is true for angling.

HMRC are working along a parallel line in assessing the benefits of ownership of a fishery in terms of the 'harvest' gained from the river and from selling/leasing angling. They are happy if a fishery is run as a business, notably in respect of inheritance tax (levied if angling is not registered as a separate business from e.g. farming).

The units of measurement are wages, profits, employment. An online internet questionnaire was used to collect information, followed by telephone surveys of a controlled sample of 3,000 anglers. Grossed up, the estimate is of 30 million angler days in England and Wales in 2005; coarse angling dominated with salmon and sea trout angling 'a relatively minor activity'. Angler expenditure across England and Wales was £1.18 billion; household income generated was £980 million and 37,386 jobs were generated.

Nationally, anglers spend £832,483,000 on trips: coarse anglers spend 83% of this, trout anglers 14% and salmon/sea trout anglers 3%. An approximate average for the proportion of this trip expenditure in the home region is 80%. However, the total trip value of anglers from other regions visiting the North East is £32,646,000.

### **The Environment Agency's view**

The Environment Agency produced the economic data above; they are keen to point out the value to the economy of all their fishery science, regulation and protection – to preserve the licence fee and their grant-in-aid. They are also keen to see river improvements (e.g. under the Water Framework Directive and those EU regulations relating to fish species). Currently they are spending significant amounts on improving fish migration by 'easing' obstructions. Bigger fish passage and better breeding habitat improves the harvest for angling and, paradoxically to some, a well-fished river yields more. In every way the Environment Agency is keen to increase the uptake of angling, its accessibility, tourism links and the 'modernization' of the image of angling.

### **Tyne Rivers Trust's view**

We support an improved, inclusive role for angling, playing its part in the regional economy. We are also bound in to local custom and practice, local knowledge and views, informing where relevant and reforming where appropriate. As a charity, dedicated to improving the Tyne river ecosystem, we are restricted by rules and funding streams as to what we can achieve. In terms of improving angling, and admittedly providing assistance to our charitable funds, we set up Fish Tyne, part of a bigger international group selling fishing. The aim of Fish Tyne is to gently introduce an efficient market for Tyne angling, principally salmon fishing. Through our Fisheries Consultant Aidan Pollard we react to invitations to broker efficient sales of Tyne fishing, filling in the gaps where local anglers are not interested, both

in space and in time. Syndicates are often more open to this optimisation than are clubs because modernisation may be a signal for landowners to raise rents: this hike causes resentment but is inevitable.

### **What happens next?**

Tyne Rivers Trust is aware of its multiple obligations – to the catchment, the river, migration, the fishery in the broadest sense and the angling community in the broadest sense. Modernisation is NOT going in the direction of golf – where you pay high prices to ‘arrive and play’. There the analogy ends. For angling we seek a realisation that the recovery of our rivers, notably the salmon fishery of the Tyne, leads to raised values of environmental goods and services, as well as the fish in hand. We have no intention to milk the inevitable rise in values and we are not at odds with Syndicates or Clubs.

Every beat is considered on its merits and at the request of the owner – TRT never ‘muscles in’.