Catch & Release – investing in the future

Again this autumn we are asking anglers to show maximum restraint in the numbers of salmon and sea trout they kill between now and the close of the fishing season. The vast majority of anglers are conservation minded - last year nearly 60% of salmon and 70% of sea trout caught were released following capture, however, release rates remain stubbornly low on a small number of rivers in North Wales including the Dyfi, Dwyfor and Llyfni.

Grilse concerns

In contrast to 2010, grilse runs appear to have been relatively poor this year with late runs reported in Ireland and poor grilse runs noted in Scotland. Fortunately, the larger two-sea-winter summer runs of salmon are generally much improved this year, but many of these fish will be getting stale now and should be returned to the river with care. An 8lb hen salmon will contain up to 6,000 eggs.

Sea trout scarcity

Sea trout stocks remain of general concern and we would like to see all sea trout released between now and the end of the season. These fish are of huge social and economic importance to Wales and we need to ensure that as many fish as possible are left to spawn so that future generations of anglers will be able to experience the thrill of catching them.

Best practice for Catch & Release

The majority of released fish will survive to spawn if the rules below are followed:

- Use barbless hooks (single and double hooks rather than trebles if possible)
- Play the fish quickly
- Keep the fish in the water at all times
- Support the fish in the water until it is has fully recovered
- Circle hooks for bait fishing will result in fewer deeply hooked fish

The future is in your hands

A huge amount of work has been carried out on the rivers of Wales in recent years to improve water quality and in-river habitat and much more is planned. We need to ensure as many fish as possible are allowed to take advantage of these improved conditions. Voluntary restraint now will pay dividends in the long-run.