

North Wales Fisheries Byelaws

Third LFAG consultation February 2011

Aims

In July 2010 and November 2010 we consulted the Local Fishery Advisory Groups (LFAG) on proposals to change fishing byelaws in North Wales. The main aims were to:

- Protect migratory fish stocks, particularly salmon
- Increase angling and the revenue it generates
- Simplify angling regulations

Objective

Our overall objective is 'more fishing; less killing; more fish'. To achieve this we recognise we need a joint approach with Agency byelaws supported by Fishery / Club rules.

Consultation

The papers stimulated a great deal of debate. We are grateful for the comments we received; many had put a great deal of thought into their responses.

The feedback was very diverse. There was support for the aims and objectives but little agreement about how they should be achieved. We were persuaded by arguments on four key points:

Bait fishing – Most acknowledged that worm fishing could have a disproportionate impact on kill rates. However, the majority also thought that the opportunity to bait fish was important, particularly for older / disabled anglers.

Bag limits – Initially there was broad support for bag limits. As the consultation progressed there was a growing view that they could be seen as a quota or target and therefore be counter-productive.

Method Alignment – without the alignment of methods for salmon and sea trout there would be 'loopholes' when salmon would be caught and killed unintentionally or otherwise. A number of respondents also suggested that the sea trout season should end earlier.

Delaying the start of the season until 1st April – this would have a significant impact on sea trout catches on the Glaslyn.

Timescale

The purpose of this paper is to set out, on the basis of the feedback we received, how we believe the aims can best be met in North Wales. At this stage these are **recommendations** and before any changes in the byelaws take place there are a number of stages we must go through:

- **Regional Review** of fisheries byelaws across Wales.

- **Regional Fisheries and Recreation Advisory Committee (FERAC)** consider review proposals and make recommendation.
- **Welsh Assembly Government Minister approval** to sign off changes to byelaws.

Therefore, whilst we cannot be specific about the timescale, no changes would be implemented before March 2012.

Approach

We are proposing a simple, clear and harmonised set of byelaws for the whole of North Wales. These should be seen as **minimum exploitation controls** to which we hope clubs and fisheries will add in a **co-ordinated manner** to avoid the need for further regulation in the future.

Recommended byelaws - all North Wales rivers:

Salmon		
Open season	Method	Period of use
20 th Mar – 31 st Oct	Fly and spin (C&R)	20 th Mar – 15 th Jun
	All methods	16 th Jun – 7 th Oct
	Fly and spin (C&R)	8 th Oct – 17 th Oct
	Fly and spin (C&R) main river only	18 th Oct – 31 st Oct
Sea trout		
Open season	Method	Period of use
20 th Mar – 7 th Oct	Fly and spin	20 th Mar – 15 th Jun
	All methods	16 th Jun – 7 th Oct

Key points:

- Maximum alignment of catchments.
- Maximum alignment for salmon and sea trout to avoid 'accidental' infringements; to achieve this bait fishing for sea trout starts later and the sea trout season will end 10 days earlier.
- Bait fishing for salmon is not disproportionately affected.

We estimate that in the short term at least 4% more salmon will be caught and 9% more salmon will spawn (see appendices). This will strengthen stocks to provide more fish and improved angling in the future.

Trial Season extensions - At present there are 2 trial season extensions operating up until 15th November. If the trials show there is an exploitable stock component we would only consider consolidation in the byelaws **if** it was linked to other concessions eg. catch and release from 1st October.

Local Conservation Initiatives

As part of the consultation we were impressed with the proactive approach that many clubs are taking in managing their fisheries. Some commented that they would be willing to go further and some excellent suggestions for additional rules were made. We provide a list of options for clubs to consider:

1. Tackle and bait restrictions:

- **Bait fishing** – circle hooks only, prohibited below low water marks
- **Spinning** – single hooks only, no doubles or trebles
- **Lures** – mounted with no more than 1 hook
- **Prawn** – not allowed

2. Protecting fish close to spawning

- **Early closure of spawning areas** - after 30th September.
- **Hen fish** – no hen salmon to be taken after 14th September.
- **Coloured fish** – none to be taken; posters in angling huts to show exact colouring that cannot be taken.

3. Measures for sea trout

- **Catch and release** – for sea trout after 14th September
- **Minimum Size Limit** – 12"

In some areas River's Trusts have also run successful catch and release campaigns to increase release rates.

Bag Limits

Some clubs already have seasonal or daily bag limit schemes and their proactive efforts are to be commended. Although the benefit of bag limits may be questionable they may still be appropriate in catchments with anglers who kill excessive (>10) numbers of salmon in a season. Direct targeted action by clubs to modify the behaviour of these individuals could be simpler and more effective than bag limits.

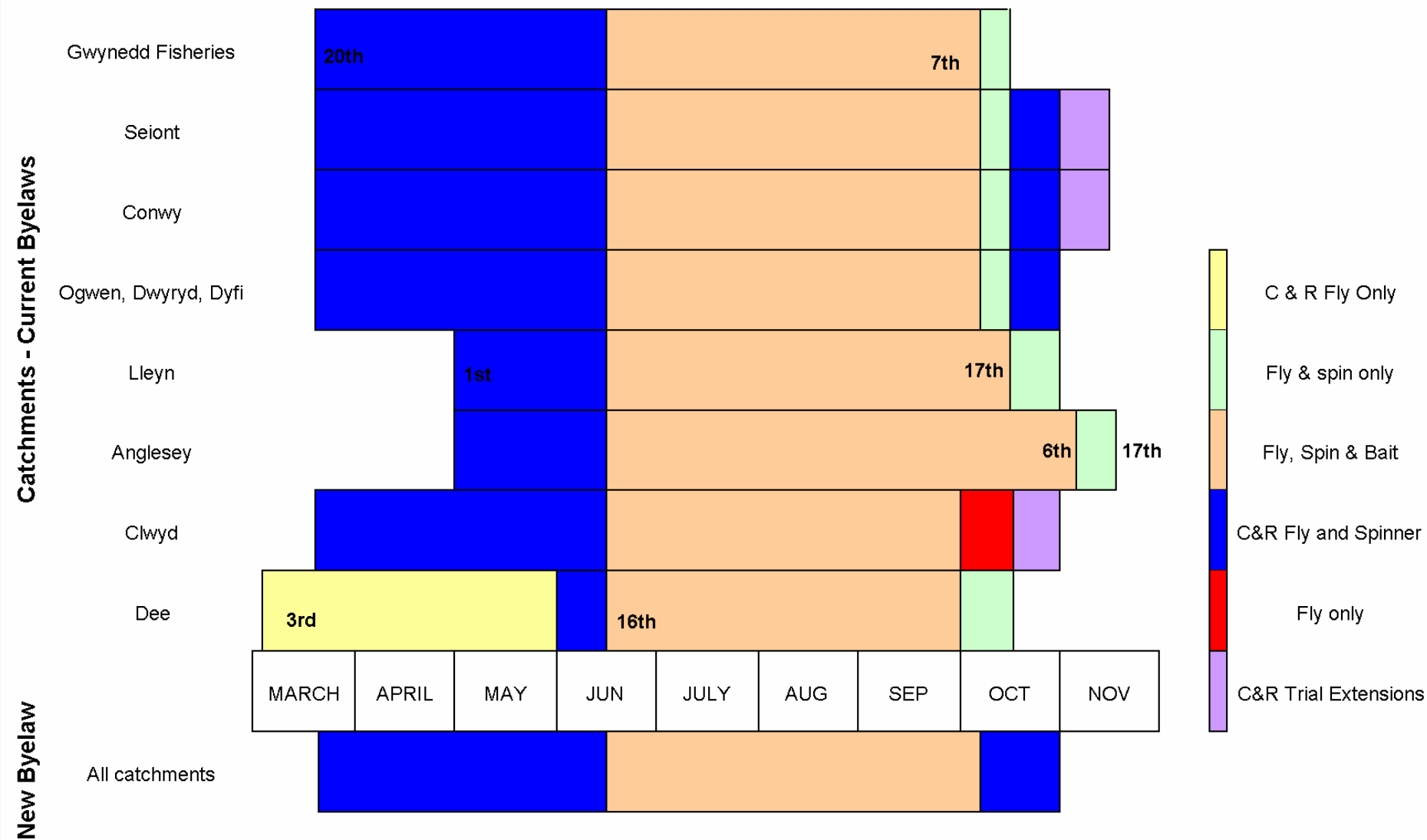
Where bag limits are used our view is that they should not exceed 1 salmon a day / 3 a season or 3 sea trout a day / 9 a season. If clubs wish to support their bag limits with carcass tagging schemes we will consider providing tags.

Co-ordination

By taking this approach we hope to encourage clubs and fisheries to play an active role in managing their fisheries. This will be much more effective if it is co-ordinated within and between catchments. We would like the LFAG's to discuss the most effective restrictions with a view to implementing changes for the **2011 season**.

Whilst we acknowledge that many older/disabled anglers favour worm fishing we also know that release rates of worm caught fish are low and that of those fish that are released many will die. As a priority clubs and fisheries may want to give consideration to allowing the **use of worm with circle hooks only**.

Appendix 1. Existing salmon byelaws and the proposed byelaws.



Appendix 2. Estimated impact of new byelaws for salmon catches towards the end of the season.

River	Avg. rod catch	Additional spawning fish released 8th to 17th	Additional fish caught 17th - 31st Oct
Clwyd	68	2	4
Conwy	178	11	0
Dee	639	66	34
Dwyfor	13	1	1
Dwryyd	19	1	0
Dyfi	128	11	0
Dysynni	3	0	0
Glaslyn	21	1	1
Mawddach	116	6	6
Ogwen	90	8	0
Seiont	38	6	0
N Wales	1313	113	46
	Percentage=	9%	4%

Appendix 3. Estimated impact of early end to the sea trout season.

River	Avg. rod catch	Additional spawning fish 8th to 17th
Clwyd	846	2
Conwy	439	5
Dee	240	2
Dwyfor	654	2
Dwryyd	132	1
Dyfi	1388	2
Dysynni	380	2
Glaslyn	502	1
Mawddach	910	2
Ogwen	118	2
Seiont	49	1
N Wales	5658	23