

European eel's recovery requires political action on more than just fishing

Brussels, 19 December 2018. The EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council has agreed to increase eel protection by extending the three-month closure of fishing to all stages of the European eel's lifecycle, including glass eels, and not only for commercial fisheries but also for recreational fisheries. From SEG's perspective, this is a positive but small step towards eel stock recovery and it is time for the EU to step up its efforts to ensure the eel's sustainable management and with broad stakeholder involvement.

On the one hand, any increase in protection is welcome but, on the other hand, legal fishing induced mortalities are only a minor part of the problem. SEG is concerned that the EU Council's agreement this week will be misperceived as solving the problem and thus reducing political motivation to act. Meanwhile, the environmental issues, such as loss of wetland habitat, blocked migration pathways including turbine blade mortality from both hydropower turbines and water pumps, remain largely unaddressed.

Certainly, Fisheries Ministers can only decide on issues within their fishery competence. Consequently, a holistic approach taking into account all mortalities is urgently needed. The European eel's recovery remains unlikely until the non-fishery mortalities are rigorously addressed and trafficking in glass eels has been eliminated.

The issue is broader than fisheries and concerns the way humankind manages its water, whether its coasts, wetlands, rivers, lakes, or all waterways. In this context, SEG encourages support for the #ProtectWater campaign from 100 NGOs (<https://www.livingrivers.eu>) which aims to defend EU water law and protect its rivers, lakes, wetlands and wildlife they house. SEG urges the EU to address the issue of water management with same conviction that it uses to manage fisheries.

Protection of the European eel is subject to a dedicated EU Council Regulation (1100/2007) and SEG encourages all stakeholders to contribute to the European Commission's consultation process on that legislation's effectiveness and assessing how matters can be improved.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-1986447/public-consultation_en

CONTACT

Andrew Kerr (Chairman)
Phone: + 44 (0) 7887 993924
Email: a.kerr@SustainableEelGroup.org
Web: www.SustainableEelGroup.org