

## **Catch and release championship proposal**

**The Proposal:** For the CFSA to run a boat and shore catch and release championship alongside current championship for a trial period of 1 year.

Reason: Many anglers have stated that they catch exceptional specimen fish but do not wish to lose these fish by weighing them on certified club scales in the conventional way as required under current CFSA rules. This approach therefore provides another opportunity to engage more anglers into the CFSA.

Within the South West there are a number of clubs and associations that have started to operate catch and release for fish weighing. As an example, Coombe Martin SAC are members of the Bristol Channel Federation and are solely based upon catch and release. They were suffering from falling numbers so introduced C&R in a bid to regain younger members and increase participation. They adopted a very similar system to what I have suggested and works perfectly well for them. They also have many more members than before and a much more active club.

### **The rules:**

1. All fish recorded for the CFSA C&R championship must be released back to the sea from or close to the location they were caught as soon as possible after capture. The purpose of this competition is maximising fish conservation and survival. Fish caught for this competition must not be retained for any reason e.g for food, other competitions where the fish is then weighed on certified club scales.
2. Anglers will be required to photograph the captured fish alongside a laminated card which will be provided from 1 January 2015 (to give scale)
3. Anglers must weigh the fish safely in a way that the weight of the bag or sling is deducted to obtain the final weight of the fish. Scales must be accurate and will be certified as accurate by the C&R recorder prior to any fish being recorded or accepted for this competition. Scales must be made available to check if requested by the C&R recorder. Weighing of boat caught fish on the boat must be confirmed by an independent witness to arrive at a fair estimate of the weight. Smooth hounds, and shark can be measured and the weight calculated. However, an individual fish can only be counted in one championship.
4. Returns to be made directly to the C&R recorder within 48 hours of capture via email with details of the capture and an attached picture. A monthly return will be sent to the shore and boat recorders at the end of the month to be received by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the following month.
5. Fish can only count towards the County C&R championship (not both) and will not count for any other award in the CFSA. Only fish species listed as current CFSA ratified records with an existing specimen weight will be counted in the competition.

6. Recorded fish are to be as free from sand/debris as is reasonably possible for weight and picture. The County shore and boat recorders and C&R recorder will ultimately decide if a fish has an unacceptable level of sand/debris.
  
7. Where possible, details of any witness to weight and capture should be provided
  
8. Any fish recorded must adhere to current CFSA qualification weight (75%). This will reduce the number of fish recorded and make it manageable.

Entry fee of £5 for club/CFSA members and £10 for non-club /CFSA members. Non-CFSA members paying £10 will be automatically enrolled as CFSA personal members of the CFSA. The entry fee levy will be donated to the conservation committee with the remainder going towards the additional running costs of the event (printing/laminating) with any unused balance also going towards the conservation committee at the end of the year.

### **Recording:**

I would suggest a dedicated C&R recorder (assistant recorder in the CFSA) to work alongside current recorder. To save any additional work for anyone I would be happy to take this post over the trial year. All fish photographs entered for this competition will be posted onto a dedicated page on the CFSA website.

### **Trophies/Prizes/Records:**

I am prepared to sponsor a modern, high quality trophy for the C&R championship which I will commission to be designed and manufactured by local craftsmen. I will also arrange for and sponsor a champion's smock to be printed with "2015 CFSA catch and release champion"

If it does prove successful then the CFSA could look at re-designating some of its 'multi fish' trophies to catch and release trophies.

### **Pro's and Con's**

<b><u>PRO'S</u></b>	<b><u>CON'S</u></b>
A chance to set an example of how it can be done.	<b>Cheating-</b> Anglers will just have to trust one another. What we can do is make the rules so it's as hard as possible to cheat. If it doesn't work out then we won't run again and no one has lost anything.
Increased participation and membership in the county (younger anglers and lure anglers)	<b>Inaccurate scales-</b> Scales will have to be made available to anglers and if they are over 10% that fish would not count. But again we will need to trust anglers.

It's optional. No one has to enter or participate	<b>Anglers bypassing club's</b> -this is a possibility where fish are recorded directly but this is only a partial solution so if it does work then maybe clubs will not look at how they record fish too. Any fish recorded that are not weighed on club certified scales do not count for any CFSA awards.
Reduces wasting of fish (wrasse/rockling etc)	Having to record fish electronically- We are in the 21st century. The preference must be for decreasing workloads for county/club officials and recording electronically is the way to do it.

Improves the image of anglers, angling and the CFSA	
Little extra work and zero extra cost for the county	
It's easier to record fish-anglers don't have to take fish to the scales	
It keeps the breeding/specimen/territorial fish in the sea (wrasse)	
It's forward thinking. Anglers have to play a role in conservation.	

**In closing:**

It is my opinion that, in order to survive, the CFSA and club anglers as a whole must take a more proactive stance in conservation and I see this as the first step towards that.

Nothing really changes. Those that want to weigh fish can still do so. All that this proposal does is to enable those that don't wish to kill fish to compete too. It just gives people the option to do what they want to do.

This also addresses the issue of funding for the conservation committee as anglers with an active interest in conservation will pay towards the expenses of those lobbying on our behalf.

Here is now a chance to give it a try. It might not work, anglers might not like it, people might cheat, but at least we have tried. Then again it might work and it might completely change the way that club, county and country angling is conducted. And I think that it would be a change for the better.

