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for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear Daniel,

Thank you for your email of 18 March on behalf of your constituent, Bernie Jones of the Leighton Angling Society, about regulations affecting salmon fishing in the River Severn. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Following a national audit of all salmon stock assessment data and an in-depth review of the River Severn salmon stock assessment calculations, several over-estimates had been identified and revised in 2018.

Having reviewed and corrected the River Severn salmon stock assessment it was clear that Severn salmon stock achieved just over 65% of its conservation limit in 2018. This indicated significant deficits in spawning stock compared to the pre-corrected data assessments.

This means that the Severn salmon stocks are 'Probably at Risk' of failing conservation limits in 2023 by a much larger margin than previously estimated. Even with the previous assessment, the salmon stock would still have been classed as 'Probably at Risk' in 2023 and needing protective measures to give this stock the best possible chance of stabilisation and recovery.

The assessed Severn salmon stock status further deteriorated in 2019, hence the need for an urgent application by the Environment Agency (EA). This was made to Defra and approved to extend the 2019 Emergency Byelaws for a further season.

It is accepted that there are a range of factors which contribute to the decline of salmon. However, due to the severity of the depletion of the salmon stocks in the Severn, the permanent removal of fish is unsustainable and contributes to the problem. Defra is grateful that anglers and netsmen play their part in the solution.

For sustainable stock levels, the Severn needs returning adult salmon to run into the thousands rather than hundreds. Catch and release contributes towards supporting conservation limits targets.

I appreciate the frustration that the EA was not able to fully engage with anglers to discuss salmon stock levels and options for protection. This was due to major flood events between October 2019 and March 2020, and then the COVID-19 restrictions.

For this season, the EA will seek to ensure that everyone with an interest in River Severn salmon stocks are included within the forthcoming Net Limitation Order and Byelaw consultation process.

As with the Emergency Byelaw notification, they will also endeavour to send a direct communication to all anglers that have made a River Severn rod catch return within the last three years, and for whom they have contact details. This will be taking place over the coming weeks.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,



VICTORIA PRENTIS MP