



## Recreational fishers showcase their nature restoration work in the European Parliament ahead of key decisions for the future of aquatic ecosystems

*“Which other user group cares more about life below water than recreational anglers? There are few - if any - that do” – Prof. Rob Britton*

On 30 November, a European Parliament Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment event co-Chaired by **MEP Niclas Herbst** and **MEP Soraya Rodriguez Ramos** brought light on the diverse initiatives carried out by the Recreational Fisheries sector, considering the upcoming discussions on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL).

The NRL aims at translating the declarative EU Biodiversity Strategy targets into compulsory objectives for the EU member states' authorities. **MEP Niclas Herbst**, Chair of the EP RecFishing Forum, noted that *“anglers are essential not only to monitor fish populations but also to maintain biodiversity. The best thing we can do as decision-makers is to help them in their fight against biodiversity loss and urging Member States to reduce river fragmentation. Otherwise, the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy won't be achieved”*. Indeed, the EU recreational fisheries sector supports the inclusion of more ambitious goals for the protection and restoration of rivers and marine ecosystems.

*“Angling is more than just catching and killing fish, it's also about taking responsibility for ensuring that there are fish for future generations. That's why we restore rivers, remove obstacles and plant eelgrass in marine environments. Anglers also massively collect wastes [...] 12,000 kilos were collected by angling clubs in Germany in just one year. said **Kaare Manniche Ebert**, Fisheries Biologist at the Danish Sportfishing Association and member of the European Anglers Alliance (EAA). The involvement of younger generations in these habitats' restoration projects is furthermore key for the future of aquatic ecosystems.*

The fishing tackle sector is also committed to the very same objective: *“Without fish, there is no business. Therefore, it is only natural that our companies commit to nature restoration projects”* said **Oliver Portrat**, CEO of the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA). **Ross Honey**, Managing Director, Angling Spirit (EFTTA) also recalled the efforts that the Manufacturers and Wholesalers of fishing equipment are doing to reduce the use of plastics and chemicals in their products.

The NRL will define protected and strictly protected areas, in which human presence will be restricted. However, anglers should be encouraged to be on the ground and help authorities protecting aquatic biodiversity. The new obligations that will be introduced by the law will oblige the EU Member States to engage in habitats recovery projects, but the voluntary work carried out by anglers represents massive costs that Member States would have to cover if they prevented them from accessing protected areas. In addition, **Professor Robert Britton** from Bournemouth University (UK) underlined the usefulness of recreational fishers in the conservation of marine species. Anglers have been crucial in alerting scientists and authorities since decades about the status of fish species through citizen science.

**Bettina Doeser**, representative from the European Commission in charge of the Nature Restoration Law appreciated how recreational fishermen understood the essence of the Commission's proposal, which is not only to protect biodiversity but also to create the conditions for its restoration.

The RecFishing Forum Secretariat is provided by [EAA](#) and [EFTTA](#)  
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*“It was proven that voluntary targets for nature restoration are not enough [...]. We need to act now! EU maritime environment and freshwater ecosystems are in a degraded state. [...] Many fish cannot find place to reproduce, especially when dams block their migratory routes, for instance.”* **MEP Soraya Rodriguez Ramos**, shadow rapporteur for Renew Europe in the Committee on Environment concluded.

The Nature Restoration Law proposal will be discussed in the European Parliament and the European Council of Member States for several months. The recreational fisheries sector will continue working in Brussels with the MEPs and some allies such as the [Living Rivers Europe](#) coalition to include much needed measures for the protection of fish and their environment.

### **Note to the editor:**

#### About the event:

You can read more about the event on [this page](#). The agenda of the event can be downloaded [here](#). The panellists' presentations and the report of the event will be published on that page.

**Up to 10 million Europeans go fishing recreationally at sea every year**, generating an annual [total economic impact](#) of **10.5 billion euro** and supporting **100,000 jobs in Europe**. Angling provides many **social and health benefits** and **income diversification** for Europe's coastal and remote communities. It also increases the **knowledge of the marine environment** and the **commitment to protect it**.

This event comes at an important time, as the PECH and ENVI Committee are currently working on their report on the Nature Restoration Law. Those reports will then be discussed by the Council in view of implementing the objectives of the [European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#).

#### About the Forum:

The Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment (RecFishing Forum) was created in 2014, at the beginning of the previous European Parliament legislature. **By providing a cross-party discussion platform**, the Forum has been an essential tool for the **Members of the European Parliament to establish a direct connection with the recreational fishing community, its network of scientists, in-house experts and other representatives of the sector** in order to gather knowledge, information and data on the topics that were discussed in the European Parliament.

More information about the Forum [here](#).

#### About EAA and EFTTA:

The **Secretariat of the Forum is provided by two associations working together**: the [European Anglers Alliance](#) (EAA) and the [European Fishing Tackle Trade Association](#) (EFTTA). The EAA and the EFTTA work at the EU level and beyond to improve the aquatic environment, to achieve sustainable management of the fish stocks and to protect and promote recreational angling (rod and line fishing) in Europe. They also advocate for recreational fisheries to be managed in a fair and equitable way with respect to the other fisheries sectors.

The **European Anglers Alliance (EAA)** is a pan-European organisation for recreational angling, which defends European recreational anglers' interests at the European level and beyond. EAA was launched in Brussels in 1994. There are about 3 million affiliated members to EAA's 17 member organisations and affiliates from 15 European countries.

The **European Fishing Tackle Trade Association** was established in London in 1981 with a clear purpose: to support the European sportfishing tackle sector – the manufacturers and wholesalers, the importers and exporters. Every year, EFTTA organises EFTTEX, the leading European Fishing Tackle Trade Exhibition.