




DECLINE OF DIADROMOUS SPECIES :

STOP USING ARTISANAL FISHING AS A SCAPEGOAT !

RECONCILING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBLE FISHING



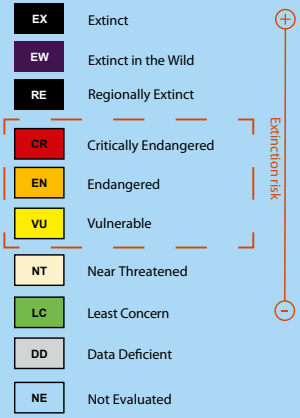

IUCN RED LIST AND PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE: TO BE USED WISELY!

On 11 July 2019, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) warned on the evolution of the status of freshwater fish species in France: “Nine years after the first assessment, the updated version of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species shows that the situation is still worrying”. According to IUCN, the destruction and degradation of natural environments are the main causes of the decline of freshwater species, particularly diadromous fish species. The degradation of their habitats and the multiplication of dams ‘‘jeopardise their migratory journey to the spawning areas’’.

Small-scale fisheries in continental and estuarine waters fully agree with IUCN’s diagnosis and have been reported this degradation of our aquatic resources for a long time. But what they do not accept is the attitude of certain management authorities who use the IUCN Red List and the precautionary principle as convenient justifications to ban small-scale fisheries from operating in ecosystems that have been degraded for several decades by many other uses.

If the IUCN Red List indicates an alert and a proven risk, this risk must be established on the basis of all existing expertise in order to set up an evaluation procedure, as required by the precautionary principle. It appears that this is not always the case, and **the small-scale fisheries who have real expertise are never being consulted for the establishment of this list.**

The use of the IUCN Red List by the French administration is completely contrary to the IUCN guidelines and the spirit of the global environment pact supported by IUCN. The IUCN Red List cannot be used as a pretext for restricting small-scale fisheries.



Indicators that are inconsistent with the real situation of the species, as observed by small-scale fisheries, lead to inappropriate management decisions:

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Allis shad: classified as "critically endangered" at national level, due to restrictive indicators, whereas the state of the population in the Loire basin, for example, shows a better situation, thanks to catch data and collaboration between scientists and small-scale fisheries.

Sea lamprey: classified as "endangered" at the national level, although data is insufficient to assess the trend in the abundance of this population and is not consistent with the surveys carried out in the Loire, as the influx of fish into the estuary is very high.

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Salmon: what can be said about the classification of salmon as a "near-threatened species" when this population is on the verge of extinction (despite the cessation of all fishing since 1994) in the Loire?

European Eel: how can eel fishing be allowed on the Rhône for several tens of thousands of recreational fishermen but denied to four small-scale fisheries, in the name of the "critically endangered" classification and without reducing the main causes of its decline?

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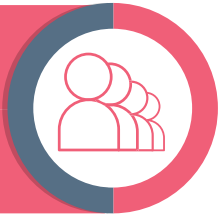
Until the early 1980s, the European eel was considered as a pest requiring eradication. It took the joint action of scientists and small-scale fisheries to finally protect it, even though the plundering of its habitat continues.




HOW THE USE OF THE IUCN RED LIST PRIVILEGES STRONG ACTORS AT THE EXPENSE OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

STRONG ACTORS
with generalized impacts

Energy, agriculture, urbanization, tourism...



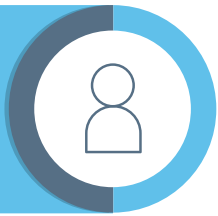
PLUNDERING OF ECOSYSTEMS

- *Physical, chemical & biological alterations to habitats*
- *Loss of 2/3 of French wetlands*
- *Numerous dams & barriers to upstream/downstream & lateral continuity*
- *Dredging, channeling of rivers...*
- *Urbanization, river transportation, agriculture, hydroelectric production*

MAIN CAUSES OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND COLLAPSE OF MIGRATORY FISH POPULATIONS

WEAK ACTORS
Small-scale fisheries

Depend on the quality of aquatic environments and the sustainability of the resources they support.



SUSTAINABLE & RESPONSIBLE EXPLOITATION

- *Environmental watch, whistleblowers*
- *Resource management (population transfers, catfish regulation, etc.)*
- *Knowledge contribution*
- *Fishermen/scientists partnerships*
- *Contribution to society's well-being (gastronomy, supply of local products...)*

CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS TO REDUCE FISHING MORTALITY (REDUCTIONS IN FISHERMEN NUMBERS, QUOTAS...)

CONDEMNATION OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES BY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES IN THE NAME OF "ACCEPTABLE ECONOMIC COST" AND WITH THE MISUSE OF THE IUCN RED LIST

WEAK CONSTRAINTS
FAILURE OF MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES TO REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF THESE ACTORS

- *Non-compliance with national and European regulations (WFD, EU1100/2007, PGA...)*
- *Refusal to implement the principle of preventive action for economic reasons.*

SEVERE CONSTRAINTS
SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE DECLINE IN MIGRATORY SPECIES BY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

- *Increasing constraints*
- *Suppression of fishing rights*
- *Sharp reductions in fishermen numbers*

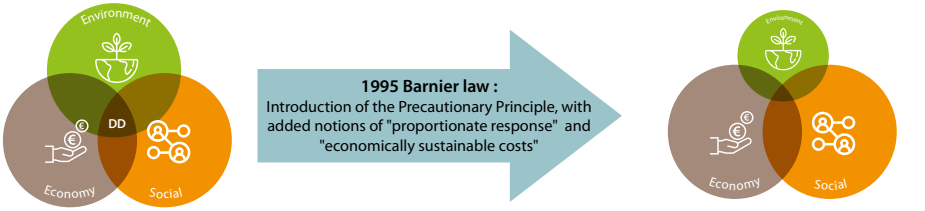
SOLUTIONS EXIST:

- **APPLY THE POLLUTER PAYS PRINCIPLE**
- **COMPENSATE THE CONSTRAINTS ON FISHING WITH ACTIVE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND POSITIVE RESTORATION OF FISH POPULATIONS**
- **PROMOTE PARTICIPATORY SCIENCE**
- **INVOLVE FISHERMEN IN ESTABLISHING THE IUCN RED LIST**

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE BIASED IN FAVOR OF STRONG SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTORS

Who speaks for Nature? Who speaks for future generations? Who takes into consideration the economic and social dependence of small-scale fisheries on a healthy environment?

Anthropocentric governance ignores Nature and those who live off it.



Sustainable development :
At the confluence of three constituent parts

The environmental sphere becomes inbalanced in regards to the other two

Small-scale fisheries in inland, estuarine and coastal waters who depend directly on the quality and productivity of aquatic environments, **demand that the ecological footprints of all uses that exert expenditures of nature be effectively reduced, and not just those of a few.**

Environmental governance that gives priority to economic interests leads to the indiscriminate exertion of multiple pressures on aquatic environments. For many years, artisanal fishing communities have been pointing out this plundering, which sometimes leads to irreversibly damages on environmental goods and services (flow regulation, filtration of pollutants, biodiversity reservoirs), and whose impact is amplified by the context of climate change.

These degradations affect the spawning and breeding areas of fish resources, in particular diadromous species.

This is the sad reality of many of our ecosystems which can no longer support the existence of small-scale fishing communities that depend on them and who are blamed for the disappearance of species that they historically harvested.

But what weight do these small-scale communities have in a governance process that is designed to be an economical “win-win”, and in which they have no voice?

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES KEEPS ON PAYING A HEAVY TOLL TO THIS ENVIRONMENTAL OVEREXPLOITATION

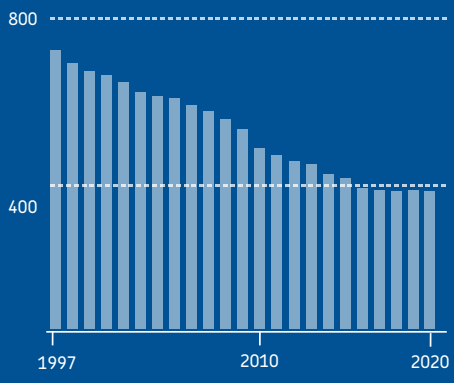
In the biased negotiation process of establishing a sustainable development policy, small-scale fisheries are used as an adjustment variable to disguise the failure of management authorities to manage and protect aquatic environments.

How can we believe that by simply closing a fishery we can remedy the consequences of the destruction of nature? Why do we not act on all the other uses which, by the accumulation of their impacts, plunder the fields of exploitation of small-scale fisheries? This management policy, even when combined with a ban on artisanal fishing, has long since shown its limits... as demonstrated by the failure of salmon restoration in the Loire, where a relict population remains, whereas on the contrary, the salmon is maintained, or even thrives, when management is carried out in a coherent manner by restoring habitats (Brittany, Lower Normandy and Gave basins), even with the existence of recreational or artisanal fishing.

The principle of preventive and remedial action implies using the best available techniques at an economically acceptable cost to avoid or reduce the extent of damage to biodiversity and the services it provides, and finally to compensate for it (L110-1 of the French Environmental Code). **This principle must be applied in order to avoid encouraging an overly sectoral management**, of which one of the inevitable consequences could be the disappearance of artisanal fishing communities.

Decline in the number of artisanal freshwater and estuarine fishermen over the last 20 years:

consequence of a policy privileging strong actors at the expense of those who need the productivity of the environment to make a living.



RESPONSIBLE FISHING: WHISTLEBLOWERS, ENVIRONMENTAL WATCH AND KEY MANAGEMENT ACTORS

Sustainable fishing is only possible if the environments in which fishermen operate are respected by other actors. For many years, small-scale fisheries have been trying to alert management authorities to its overly sectoral approach and its inability to implement the coordinated action necessary for sound environmental management.

How can we talk about sustainable fishing under these conditions? It is preferable to refer to a responsible and committed fishing, whose vocation is to:

Provide as many people as possible with high quality local fish, with a low carbon footprint, at an affordable price, which our society needs for its well-being and to maintain a vital connection with nature. Small-scale fisheries thus contributes to the gastronomic reputation of our territories.

Ensure environmental surveillance and a whistle-blowing role, to highlight the dysfunctions caused by an overly sectoral approach to environmental management.

Contribute to the management of resources and ecosystems by providing unique knowledge, know-how and expertise through fishermen/scientists partnerships, which is essential for the implementation of the principle of preventive and corrective action.

The disappearance of small-scale fisheries does not solve the issue of protection of aquatic ecosystems. On the contrary, it deprives society of fishermen's unique positive contributions, such as participatory science, in a context worsened by climate change. It symbolizes an admittance of failure from management authorities, who are unable to protect a natural heritage to be left to future generations.

Some examples of fishermen/scientists partnerships for "responsible fishing"

Estimation of silver eel flows in Grand-Lieu lake between 2015 and 2017

This study showed an exploitation rate of 20% by small-scale fisheries and that inappropriate management of a dam was preventing 80-90% of silver eels from returning to the sea.

Regulation fisheries for European catfish in the Garonne and Dordogne between April and June 2021

The catches (914 catfish caught for a total weight of 27.5 tons) are aimed at reducing urgently the predation pressure of European catfish, a critical threat to diadromous fish. Combined with the disruption of aquatic ecosystems, the catfish proliferation causes a major faunal imbalance.

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The National Committee for Professional Freshwater Fishing is the representative organization of French continental professional fishermen.
https://www.lepecheurprofessionnel.fr/

ARA France
Repeuplement Anguille France

ARA France aims to ensure the success of the eel restocking operations, as foreseen in the French Eel Management Plan. **https://www.repeuplementanguille.fr/**

Société franco-japonaise d'Océanographie

The French-Japanese Society of Oceanography France contributes to the improvement of relations between French and Japanese professionals concerned with research, development and exploitation in the ocean field.
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