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Chris Sherwood
Chief Executive
RSPCA

25th June 2019

Dear Mr Sherwood

RSPCA hardliners 'to seek a ban on angling'

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Angling Trust - the national representative body for all forms of recreational fishing - to seek clarification as to your future intentions in respect of angling following this week's press reports of a possible change in policy.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rspca-hardliners-to-seek-a-ban-on-angling-xtx5k3tk9>

We are grateful to your Press Office for sharing with us your rebuttal of these claims but it would be helpful and reassuring for both our members and the wider angling public to hear from you directly.

The Angling Trust, our sister organisation Fish Legal, and angling clubs throughout the country work hard to protect and improve the freshwater and aquatic environment across the United Kingdom. Without a healthy environment wildlife will suffer and die - something on which all our members would surely agree.

This work has recently included:

The publication of the report, Saving the Earth, with WWF and the Rivers Trust, highlighting the plight of our waterways from the impact of soil degradation, runoff, and agricultural pollution on our wildlife and river health. This followed a successful judicial review against the government over its failure to protect the most important freshwater habitats from degradation, thus failing in their duty under the Water Framework Directive.

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/saving-earth-sustainable-future-soils-and-water>

Continuing to press for reform of abstraction licences which are having a devastating impact on rivers, in particular, England's chalk streams. England has 85 per cent of the world's chalk streams. These globally important habitats are under constant threat. We are working tirelessly to highlight the threats to these iconic rivers and the wildlife that depends upon them.

www.anglingtrust.net/Chalkstreams

Fish Legal currently has 13 outstanding court cases related to the impacts of pollution on our rivers, often resulting in massive fish kills and the destruction of complex, multi-layered ecosystems. Successes have included action against Anglia Water for a major pollution incident following the failure of a sewage treatment works on the River Cam, and compensation paid by a farmer in Gloucester after polluting seven kilometres of the River Leadon, killing tens of thousands of fish, after allowing hundreds of tonnes of digestate fertiliser to leak into the river.

<https://www.fishlegal.net/news.asp?section=1481§ionTitle=Latest+News+from+Fish+Legal>

Angling provides an army of volunteers who respect the environment and can play a huge role in keeping our freshwater and coastal habitats free of litter which threatens wildlife, pollutes the natural environment and damages the communities which rely on tourists attracted by the rich and diverse natural beauty of the UK.

Our 'Take 5' campaign encourages anglers to remove five items of litter or take 5 minutes to remove any litter after fishing. If every angler in the country supported the Take 5 campaign just once over the course of a year, anglers alone would be responsible for removing 15 million items of litter from the environment. We were pleased to see the RSPCA actively promoting this initiative in North Wales - <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/local-news/anglers-under-fire-hooked-seagull-16427437>

<https://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=1773§ionTitle=Take+5>

In summary, far from launching attacks on anglers and angling we would hope those who care for the future of our wildlife would want to work with us and other conservation bodies on countering the myriad threats caused by pollution, over exploitation, abstraction and habitat destruction.

It would be good hear confirmation from you directly that the RSPCA does not intend to seek to ban angling and to criminalise up to two million people who currently enjoy this healthy pastime.

With Best Wishes

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