

# STATUS OF THE BALTIC SEA TROUT STOCKS IN 2006

## Finland

### P.M. Status of the Finnish sea trout stocks in 2006

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### Electric fishing

In autumn 2006, the status of the natural sea trout stocks was monitored by electric fishing in two rivers draining into the Bothnian Bay. In the tributaries of the **Tornionjoki** river, the densities of 0+ parr dropped in 2003 being low since then and this year they still were low, e.g. in the Pakajoki on average 3 parr/100 m<sup>2</sup>. The status of the sea trout in the **Lestijoki** river is critical, and no 0+ parr were found there.

In the **Isojoki** river, the Bothnian Sea, the mean density of 0+ parr was about 4 parr/100 m<sup>2</sup>, which represents the long-term mean value in this river.

In the **Ingarskila** river, Gulf of Finland, densities of 0+ parr have increased to a moderate level due to restoration, stocking and fishing regulations in the river, at the river mouth and in the sea. In the **Mankinjoki** river, the density of 0+ was moderate, similarly to earlier years. The status of the **Sipoonjoki** sea trout stock is critical as during last years only some few individuals have been found in one rapid of the tributaries. In the **Kymijoki** river densities of 0+ parr ranged between 0-22 parr/100 m<sup>2</sup> in 18 areas.

In addition, small amounts of 0+ parr were found also in some former sea trout rivers along the Finnish coast due to releases of parr and smolts in these rivers.

### Effects of the dry summer 2006

Summer and autumn 2006 were exceptionally dry and many rivers especially in northern Finland broke their minimum discharge records. In all rivers low discharge restricted the ascent of spawners to the spawning grounds and may thus reduce the offspring in next year. Many brooks dried totally and lost their populations of brown trout. The situation was worst in rivers where bottom dams totally prevent the ascent during low flow periods. Instead of ascending rivers sea trout were subjected to coastal fishery in front of the rivers. There was widely heavy rains in late October allowing the spawning migration into the rivers, but e.g. in the Isojoki river the flooding occurred too late to let the ascent to the spawning grounds upstream of the dams. The heavy rains in late autumn (November-December) resulted in very low pH values (pH 4.5-5.5) in rivers flowing on acid Litorina clay soils in the central parts of the eastern Gulf of Bothnia coast between the Siikajoki and Isojoki rivers.

### Management measures

The Supreme Administrative Court enforced 18 August 2006 the decisions given earlier by the Uusimaa and Southeastern Finland Employment and Economic Development Centers. In the sea outside the private owned village waters, the minimum legal size of sea trout is 50 cm (TL) and the minimum mesh size (bar length) 65 mm in gill net fishing of sea trout in the Gulf of Finland. Most of the local private fishing areas have enforced similar restrictions in their own water areas in the Gulf of Finland.

There are some petition proceedings starting or going on regarding fish ways crossing dams in the Isojoki and Lestijoki rivers. River restoration works were going on in the former sea trout river Koskenkylänjoki, Gulf of Finland.