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## **NBAA CONSERVATION REPORT 2021:**

### **1. 2021 in Hindsight**

With relatively stable water levels since the last rainy season, it was eventually a quite difficult fishing year for most, with some national tournaments testing the skills and patience of our anglers to their limits.

Some tournaments though showed promising numbers reaching the wells, especially at the start of the year, with keeper sized fish dominating the tournaments. The summer tournaments as we all know, is accompanied by blazing heat, and the keepers had a tough time staying alive, and some significant fish losses were realized.

The cold fronts and windy conditions experienced over that last couple of months seem to have either lengthened and somewhat put the spawn on hold, and we did not fishing wise experience the heaviest spawn ever, although some better fish have been caught the last 2 to 3 weeks.

### **2. 2021 Conservation Events:**

Although there were no major orchestrated fish management and conservation related events during 2021, the executive committee did implement the following:

#### **2.1 Fisheries management initiative**

##### **10 Fish Bag Limit – Culling on the scales**

Due to several tournaments being dominated by keeper sized fish, the 10 fish bag limit was re-implemented, especially after several fish losses during the first summer tournament. The 10 fish limit allowed anglers to cull on the scale and get the smaller fish that does not keep well in the summer heat back into the water quicker. This proved to help with major fish losses during the subsequent tournaments, and most anglers made use of the opportunity to weigh their bags and get all fish back in the water when passing by the weigh station

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#### ***Executive Council:***

*Alec Williams (Chairman) • Johan Coetzee (Vice Chairman) • Neels van Tonder (Treasurer) • Vacant (Secretary) • Duan Kotze (Conservation Officer) • Andrew Hall (Public Relations Officer) • Neil Engelbrecht (Development Officer) • Richard Grant (Tournament Director)*



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## 2.2 Paul Opperman Barbel Project

Paul has in his personal capacity in conjunction with the NBAA started a barbel harvesting project, by which he will harvest the legal quantity of fish in his own time. Paul has launched one trip during to the colder months, but due to the cold conditions the numbers of barbel caught were dismal. Toward the end of the year Paul and his team will again make more efforts to harvest barbel in the warmer temperatures and looking at past results during the warmers, we should start seeing improved stats.

## 3. Future considerations

Given the rise of the Keep-Net trail, there have been some deliberation on whether the format could potentially benefit the NBAA during national tournaments, if implemented on specific tournaments, like spawn tournaments for example. This would allow big females to remain in their spawning areas, and very importantly ensure that fry guarding males return to do their jobs immediately after being caught. This consideration will be discussed during the AGM for potential future implementation but could be a powerful tool to help our conservation efforts to protect our numbers by resorting to measures within our control, as much as we can.

Overall, I am sure you will agree with me that the numbers of fish seen in both our dams, either noticed swimming around or being caught is encouraging, and it seems that our populations and fisheries are in a healthy state. The 2021 spawn, irrespective of the number of fish caught and whether we missed some of it, looked to be successful given the amount of fry seen throughout the spawn. The fact that the shallows are being overrun by fingerlings and just-undersized bass currently, shows that the future keepers are well on their way.

Tight lines

Duan Kotze  
Conservation Officer

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