

. . . AND THE RESULT!

By Fred Croney

Guidelines for the management of aquatic invasives including the re-enaction of legislation for trout fishing – have been issued by the CSIR Foundation for Research Development. These are the result of a four-day symposium and workshop held in the Eastern Cape in September 1988 and organised by the Foundation in collaboration with the JLB Smith Institute of Ichthyology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown.

FOSAF East Cape chapter representatives at the proceedings were Fred Croney, Ron Pitt, Martin Davies, Bill Schattenberg and Giles Westcott. Display posters were exhibited by Ron Pitt, a paper was read by Martin Davies, and a paper on proposed legislation for the management and control of trout was prepared and distributed by Fred Croney.

In a 118-page document on the proceedings, edited by Mrs. Irene de Moor and Professor Mike Bruton of the JLB Smith Institute, it states that for control over the introduction and translocation of species (aquatic invasives) within South Africa, legislation should in principle be enabling rather than restrictive.

It adds that: Legislation protecting the rights of members of organisations who fish for certain exotic species such as trout should be re-enacted in non-sensitive aquatic ecosystems. This would not only provide control measures for those members of the public utilising the sport fishery, but should provide overall control and monitoring of these areas by conservation authorities.

To date only the Cape Province has de-regulated trout, despite considerable opposition by FOSAF and trout anglers all over South Africa. But the Foundation recommends the development of a uniform policy.

The report states, *inter alia*, that the present lines of communication between sport fishing and government conservation agencies is presently not well-defined and this has led to a certain degree of confusion.

It then goes on to list a series of recommendations in which angling representatives, among other organisations, would serve on bodies to liaise with government.

Among the tasks of these bodies would be, among other things, to:

- identify and review all national and provincial legislation;
- draft and evaluate recommendations for improvement in communication and control of alien species;
- communicate recommendations to government agencies and user groups;
- prepare guidelines to streamline control procedures.

The report also points out that a common national (sub-regional) policy is required, and that there is a need to produce more simplified interpretations of legislation which are understandable to the layman.

The report also focuses on the need for more research on the relationship between indigenous and alien species – a factor which FOSAF felt had not been given full consideration by the Cape Department of Nature Conservation in its lead-up to the de-regulation of trout.

Tacit acceptance of this fact was made in a paper presented jointly at the symposium by Dr. K.C.D. Hamman, of the Cape Department of Nature Conservation; Dr. C.J. Kleyhans, of the Transvaal Department of Nature Conservation; and Dr. O. Bourquin, of the Natal Parks Board, who said: It is unfortunate that little, if any, well-founded scientific research has been focussed on the actual impact of invasive aliens on South African aquatic ecosystems.

One aspect here is the cost/benefit analysis of established Southern African aliens (of which trout and bass form a part) and the activities they support. This was highlighted during the symposium by P.B.N. Jackson, of the JLB Smith Institute, who presented statistics to show that in 1985 terms (the last figures available) more than R3 million was spent annually in investment in fishing and ancillary equipment and R50 million annually in licences, travel and other tourist related activities.

Jackson further states: In view of the economic benefits of exotic species in freshwater angling by all sections of the community, such adverse environmental effects as they may have had should be countered by careful management rather than by unduly sweeping blanket prohibitions.

Sport fishing is of great importance to Southern African society, both from economic and social aspects. Exotic fish form such a large proportion of this industry that they cannot be done away with except at unacceptably excessive socio-economic cost, any more than we can do without exotics such as maize, wheat, potatoes and cattle from our economic scene, or horses from our sporting scene.!!

