

AQUATIC INVASIVES SEMINAR . . .

By F. Croney

When the Foundation for Research Development of the CSIR in Pretoria and JLB Smith Institute of Ichthyology in Grahamstown got together to present in September a two-day symposium in Grahamstown on the management and control of invasive aquatic animals, trout anglers were expecting yet another official onslaught on their sport.

After all, it was a symposium in Grahamstown in April 1986 which culminated in legislation by the Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation removing all control and protection of trout in the province.

But trout played only a minor role in the September seminar at the 1820 Monument where the debate ranged on invasive aquatics from parasites, plants, insects, molluscs, birds and many species of fish, particularly aquarium exotics, other than trout.

Lack of proper communication by the Research Development Foundation and JLB Smith Institute meant that the Federation of East Cape Trout Angling Clubs was unable to be officially represented on the agenda. Nevertheless, the Federation was formally represented at the symposium by the chairman Ron Pitt and two officials, Giles Westcott and Bill Schattenberg, and also by FOSAF president and FECTAC hon. president Fred Croney, and was able to take part in question and answer debate.

Also, a striking illustrated poster setting out the views of the Federation and trout anglers in general was prominently displayed in the main foyer of the seminar venue and attracted a lot of attention. A written paper was informally circulated among delegates with a direct



Tom Sutcliffe (guest speaker) makes a point to CPS President, Dr Frank Bradlow at CPS annual dinner.



Councillor Eulalie Stott and the Director of the Cape Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation, Dr Johan Neethling, listening to Tom Sutcliffe's speech.



Bert Jansen (right), winner of a gallon of whisky raffled at the CPS annual dinner dispenses a wee dram for a grateful Stuart Torrance.



Heather Smithers (right) who won the raffle gets her prize from Stuart Torrance, Lucy Lehr and Tom Sutcliffe.

interest in trout legislation.

Of the three papers specifically on trout and officially presented for discussion, only one, by Dr. Paul Skelton of the JLB Smith Institute, had reservations about the role of trout in South Africa. Yet even Skelton admitted that one "could not point a finger and say the trout was the culprit in the demise of endemic species" but that bass played a greater role in this respect.

Pro-trout papers were presented by Martin Davies of the Department of Ichthyology and Fisheries Science at Rhodes, University, and by Peter Jackson of the JLB Smith Institute. Davies stated that there had been a six-fold increase in the numbers of flyfishermen in the Cape in the past five years, and while recognising that there had to be control on "exotics" asked who was going to enforce them.

Jackson also stressed that "exotics were part of the scene and were here to stay and had to be properly managed".

He said there should be no ban on imported trout ova as, like the importation of thoroughbred racehorses, this would improve the quality of the South African product.

However, what for trout anglers amounted to the most important statement of the symposium came from Dr. Kas Hamman of the Cape Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation.

Summing up the proceedings in the final session, and presenting a paper jointly with C.J. Kleynhans of the Transvaal Provincial Administration and O. Bourquin of the Natal Parks Board, Dr. Hamman said that the eradication of aquatic invasives – and *inter alia* trout – even by selective means, was "just a pipe dream at this stage".

He emphasised the point with these words: "There is a place for these (aquatic invasives); they are there; and there is no way you are going to get them out."

Ways and means of control and consideration of future legislation were subsequently discussed at a two-day closed workshop, details of which will not be known for some time. But the four main aims of the workshop which, according to Tony Ferrer of the Foundation for Research Development, would be "applying science to the real world", were: (1) Education; (2) Research; (3) Policy development leading to legislation; and (4) Implementation.

. . . AND THE RESULT!

By Fred Croney

Guidelines for the management of aquatic invasives including the re-enactment 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. Kleynhans, 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.!!

