



New head for fisheries advisory service

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Topics: Biodiversity | Ecosystems

As of 1 May 2022, Andrin Krähenbühl will head the FIBER fisheries advisory service at the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag) in Kastanienbaum. The biologist and angler brings with him experience from research and association work. And he is convinced that it serves everyone if the institutions work well together: fisheries, research and biodiversity.

Andrin Krähenbühl has been fishing since childhood. He studied biology at the University of Bern – strongly connected to water and to Eawag. Because he really wanted to work with water one day. For his Master's thesis, he studied the speciation and ecological adaptations of char in Greenland. At the Eawag Department of Aquatic Ecology, he helped investigating the food web of Swiss waters, and at the Swiss Competence Centre for Fisheries in Bern, he got to know the work of the association more intensively.

Active base

At home in the Schwarzenburg Sportfishing Association, the Bernese Young Fishermen's Officer; he has just completed training as an instructor for the certificate of expertise (SaNa) required by the Animal Protection Act and led his first young fishermen's course. And as vice-president of the Bern Fishing Lease Association, he has to deal with stocking and the near-natural design of leased waters, with migration obstacles and hydropeaking problems.

"The 30,000 or so members of the Swiss Fishing Association (SFV) do an incredible amount of work in their associations," Krähenbühl knows from experience. "This ranges from the revitalisation of streams and watercourse cleaning days to the breeding of stocked fish and the imparting of knowledge through fishing courses and public relations work." For him, one thing is clear: "For progress in the promotion of living waters, the basis of active fishermen and women is needed.

"Progress in promoting living waters needs the base of active fishermen and women." Andrin Krähenbühl, FIBER

Research for practice

A lot of research is being done. But often exciting findings that are relevant to practice are not communicated in a comprehensible way or are not used in practice for other reasons, says Krähenbühl: "Working for FIBER, which links research and practice, therefore appeals to me immensely."

The enthusiastic fisherman and nature observer spends most of his free time on Lake Neuchâtel. But he also likes to explore other lakes - and try out recipes at home that don't necessarily require trout-like "noble fish". So every now and then he fishes for an eel or a catfish - good edible fish that benefit from climate change.

Before an excursion, Krähenbühl often reads the lake reports of the "[Projet Lac](#)". "There I find out how the lakes are doing, what the shores look like, which fish species I can encounter and how the species and age classes are distributed in the lake," he says. Because the lake reports provide valuable data for sustainable fishing or also for support measures, he will certainly work with them at FIBER. "And with the 'Progetto fiumi', the counterpart for the larger rivers will soon follow."

Fishing knowledge for research

Krähenbühl finds FIBER particularly exciting because this position is not conceived as a one-way street. "It's not just about bringing research results into practice, but also about involving the grassroots in research," Krähenbühl explains.

As a model for such citizen science projects, he cites the lake trout project, for example, which, with the help of fishermen, researched how lake trout in Lake Lucerne always return to their ancestral tributaries - an important finding for sustainable stocking. Or the [Amphipod project](#), where even new species have been discovered in recent years with the help of well masters.

Helpful networks

Due to time constraints, Andrin Krähenbühl will initially concentrate on cooperation with the cantonal fisheries associations. A course on spawning pit mapping is already being planned with the Solothurn cantonal association. The method enables fishing clubs to observe the natural spawning of trout in watercourses, especially in small streams, and to monitor the success of revitalisation measures. The interest of the associations in spawning pit mapping and the further development of the corresponding app comes at the right time. The importance of small tributaries is increasing with climate change, because they are usually higher up or better shaded and offer the fish cool places to retreat.

Furthermore, FIBER would like to work closely with the Swiss Fishing Association SFV and the Fisheries Competence Centre. "This way we can hopefully share work and use synergies," says Krähenbühl. But suggestions from the associations are also welcome, he adds. FIBER tries to reach non-organised fishermen via Facebook, Instagram and Youtube.

<http://www.fischereiberatung.ch>

Since 2004, the Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, the Swiss Fisheries Association SFV and the Water Research Institute Eawag have jointly operated the fisheries advisory service FIBER to promote dialogue between research and practice. In addition to the activities

organised by the Head of Unit, exchanges also take place in the Steering and Monitoring Group, in which the involved institutions, representatives of the cantons (JFK), the Swiss Fisheries Association SFV, and the Swiss Association of Fisheries Supervisors SVFA are represented. From the outset, the core topics of FIBER were habitats and biodiversity of Swiss waters, management and fisheries management, and the influence of climate change on waters. At the beginning of April 2022, a first course on fish food animals was held - a topic in which more and more fishermen are interested. And in the future, invasive species are also likely to increasingly occupy FIBER.

Three questions for the new FIBER director



Some fishermen say the water is now too clean and fish are starving. What do you say to that?

Andrin Krähnebühl: In many lakes we have had very unnatural conditions since the middle of the 20th century and partly until today due to nutrient inputs from urban wastewater and agriculture. Individual fish species, such as perch, roach and, in some lakes, whitefish species living near the surface, benefited from these conditions; others, such as char and many whitefish species, suffered. Several species have become extinct. Sewage treatment plants and other water protection measures have successfully counteracted eutrophication in most lakes. As a result, yields have declined, but biodiversity has clearly benefited. This should take precedence over human use goals - also because biodiversity is an important resource when it comes to adaptations to climate change and other challenges.

Where can research benefit from fishermen's observations?

Fishermen often recognise existing grievances in the waters before the alarm reaches the administrations. And they often know where good and functioning stretches of watercourses are and where fish spawn, for example. When planning research and monitoring projects, this local knowledge can be very important in defining the right sections for surveys.

There is a prejudice that fishermen only want as much profit as possible, if necessary also

with released, non-native fish. Is this true?

There are very different views among fishermen. Uncertainties about the future of fishing have increased with warming temperatures, more winter floods and the threat of summer drought. I am convinced that we must do everything we can to ensure the survival of local species and allow for a slow, evolutionary adaptation to the changing conditions.

Cover picture: Andrin Krähenbühl with a pike (Eawag)

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<https://www.eawag.ch/en/info/portal/news/news-archive/archive-detail/new-head-for-fisheries-advisory-service>