

Public Consultation on the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging

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Dublin 8th November 2011

Public Consultation on the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme and conservation measures

The Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources, Mr Pat Rabbitte TD, today announced a 30 day public consultation process on the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme (No 2) Regulations 2011.

Regulations are made for the management of the wild salmon and sea trout fishery from the 1st of January, based on the scientific and management advice provided to the Minister by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).

In launching the public consultation process, the Minister remarked:

“The preliminary advice I received indicates that some of the salmon fisheries did not perform as well in 2011 as they did in 2010, in part due to water levels and weather conditions. While 2011 saw several additional rivers opened for angling, there will be fewer changes to the status of rivers in the new 2012 season. While there have been improvements in some rivers, “catch and release” restrictions and closures will be applied in a number of cases to protect fragile stocks.”

As usual, individual rivers performed differently, which emphasises the importance of managing salmon stocks on a river by river basis. In all the Salmon Standing Scientific Committee of IFI assessed 141 rivers and the managers preliminary advice is that:-

≈ 43 rivers are open (a surplus of fish has been identified over and above the conservation limits in these rivers) which is 7 less than in 2011;

≈ 34 rivers have been classified as open for angling on a “Catch and Release” only basis, i.e. 6 more than in 2011; and

≈ 64 rivers are closed (no surplus of fish available for harvest), compared to 63 in 2011.

Otherwise the Tagging Scheme regime for 2012 is, in essence, unchanged from the Regulations which currently apply. This is also the case with regard to the conservation byelaws.

New conservation initiatives.

The Minister does propose, however, on the advice of IFI, to introduce additional conservation measures for the further protection of sea trout (by the introduction of a bag limit) and salmon in closed rivers by restricting the type of angling for other fish species.

Seasonality

As part of an ongoing review and on an experimental basis, the salmon angling season in the River Blackwater in Co Waterford and Co Cork will be extended on a catch and release basis until 12 October 2012. The Minister explained that **“the purpose of this initiative is to facilitate an examination by IFI of the effects on salmon of an extended angling season, which may be justified given that salmon may have been running later in the year. The effect of this initiative will enable fisheries operators to attract tourist anglers further into the shoulder of the tourism season. I understand there is a healthy surplus of fish returning to the River Blackwater over and above the**

conservation limit. The performance of the fishery during these two weeks will be closely monitored by IFI with a view to determining the prospects for extending the season in other such rivers."

END

Note for editors

Summary of main changes to the management of the wild salmon fishery

3 Rivers which were closed in 2011 will open for "catch & release" in 2012
Corock (Waterford Fishery District), Bungosteen (Ballyshannon Fishery District) and Dee (Dundalk Fishery District).

7 Rivers which were open in 2011 will be limited to "catch & release" in 2012
Garavogue (Sligo Fishery District), Eany (Ballyshannon Fishery District), Crolly/Gweedore (Letterkenny Fishery District), Castletown (Dundalk Fishery District), Argideen, Owennacurra (Cork Fishery District) and Glenamoy (Bangor Fishery District).

4 Rivers which were open for catch and release in 2011 will close in 2012
Grange (Sligo Fishery District), Clady, Glenna (Letterkenny Fishery District) and Glyde (Dundalk Fishery District).

The requirement to use brown tags on the River Suir has been relaxed as the river continues to improve from a being closed in previous years to being open on a restricted basis last year ("catch & release" for most of the season and anglers restricted to one fish from 15th August to the end of the season) to being fully open in 2012

Additional Conservation Measures

Conservation of Sea Trout (National) Bye-law

This Bye-law provides for a bag limit of 3 Sea trout (less than 40cm) per angler per day. Up to now, protection has only been afforded to sea trout greater than 40 cm in length.

Prohibition on Angling Bye-law

This Bye-law prohibits the use of any fish hooks, other than single barbless hooks, and the use of worms as bait in angling for all species of fish in the rivers, which due to the status of salmon stocks, are closed for salmon harvest or opened for "catch and release" angling only of salmon.

Seasonality

In July 2011, the Minister requested IFI to conduct a full review of the run timing of salmon populations using the available information to scientifically test the hypothesis that salmon runs are coming later, and also attempt to identify the dynamics of any change identified. The output of this review will further inform the management measures for the 2013 salmon fishing season.

Background

Anecdotal reports have suggested that the mean timing of salmon runs have been getting later in the year leading to a situation where 'fresh' fish have been running into rivers which have harvestable surpluses and have been meeting their conservation limits, but neither anglers nor commercial fishermen have been able to benefit as the runs are outside their

respective seasons, September 30th in the case of the majority of recreational angling rivers and July 31st in the case of most commercial fisheries. This will facilitate an examination of the actual effects on salmon stocks of an extended angling season.

The pilot extension of the season in the Blackwater (Munster) river will facilitate an examination of the actual effects on salmon stocks of an extended angling season.

Conservation of Salmon and Sea Trout (Blackwater River) Bye-law

This Bye-law extends the angling season on the Blackwater (Munster) river including the Glenshelane and Finisk from 30 September 2012 to 12 October 2012 on a "catch & release" basis and provides for the use of single barbless hooks.

Statutory notice

The Minister is giving statutory notice of his intention to make the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme (No. 2) Regulations, 2011 to provide for the management of the wild salmon and sea trout fishery by Inland Fisheries Ireland following the 30 day public consultation.

Any person may submit objections to the draft regulations at any time during the period of 30 days until 8th December, 2011 either in writing to the Department at 29-31 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2 or by e-mail to inland.fisheries@dcenr.gov.ie

Details of the conservation proposals and the draft regulations are available on the Department's website www.dcenr.ie/natural/inland fisheries/ .

The Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources, Mr Pat Rabbitte, today announced a 30 day public consultation process on the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations.

Regulations are made for the management of the wild salmon and sea trout fishery from the 1st of January, based on the scientific and management advice provided to the Minister by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).

In launching the public consultation process the Minister remarked:

"The advice I received indicates that some of the salmon fisheries did not perform as well in 2011 as they did in 2010, in part due to water levels and weather conditions. While 2011 saw several additional rivers opened for angling, there will be fewer changes to the status of rivers in the new 2012 season. While there have been improvements in a number of rivers, "catch and release" restrictions will be applied in some cases to protect fragile stocks."

As usual individual rivers performed differently, which emphasises the importance of managing salmon stocks on a river by river basis. In all the Salmon Standing Scientific Committee of IFI assessed 141 rivers and the managers preliminary advice is that:-

48 rivers are open (a surplus of fish has been identified over and above the conservation limits in these rivers) which is 3 less than in 2011;

34 rivers have been classified as open for angling on a "Catch and Release" only basis, i.e. 4 more than in 2011; and

59 rivers are closed (no surplus of fish available for harvest), which is one less than 2011 now that the Corock (Waterford Fishery District), Bungosteen (Ballyshannon Fishery District) and Dee rivers have shown sufficient improvement to allow angling on a catch and release basis.

Otherwise the Tagging Scheme regime for 2012 is, in essence, unchanged from the Regulations which currently apply. This is also the case with regard to the conservation by-laws.

New conservation initiatives.

The Minister does propose, however, on the advice of IFI, to introduce additional conservation measures for the further protection of sea trout (by the introduction of a bag limit) and salmon in closed rivers by restricting the type of angling for other fish species, details of which are available on the Departmental website.

Seasonality

As part of an ongoing review and on an experimental basis, the salmon angling season in the River Blackwater in Co Waterford and Co Cork will be extended on a catch and release basis until 12 October 2012. The Minister explained that **"the purpose of this initiative is to facilitate an examination by IFI of the effects on salmon of an extended angling season, which may be justified given that salmon may have been running later in the year. The effect of this initiative will enable fisheries operators to attract tourist anglers further into the shoulder of the tourism season. I understand there is a healthy surplus of fish returning to the River Blackwater over and above the conservation limit. The performance of the fishery during these two weeks will be closely monitored by IFI with a view to determining the prospects for extending the season in other such rivers."**

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Summary of main changes to the management of the wild salmon fishery

3 Rivers which were closed in 2011 will open for "catch & release" in 2012
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4 Rivers which were open in 2011 will be limited to "catch & release" in 2012
Garavogue (Sligo Fishery District), Eany (Ballyshannon Fishery District), Crolly/Gweedore (Letterkenny Fishery District), Castletown (Dundalk Fishery District).

1 River which was open for "catch & release" in 2011 will open for harvest in 2012
Bunowen (Connemara Fishery District)

2 Rivers which were open for catch and release in 2011 will close in 2012
Grange (Sligo Fishery District) and Clady (Letterkenny Fishery District)

The requirement to use brown tags on the River Suir has been relaxed as the river continues to improve from a being closed in previous years to being open on a restricted basis last year ("catch & release" for most of the season and anglers restricted to one fish from 15th August to the end of the season) to being fully open in 2012

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