



**Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe  
ar son na hAeráide & Comhshaoil**  
Department of Communications,  
Climate Action & Environment

24<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Mr. Thomas Mernagh  
Subject: River Slaney

Further to your submission dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016 regarding the consultative process for WSSTR 2016 and Conservation Measures for 2017 for the River Slaney, it is proposed to address the issues raised by the various submissions in relation to the River Slaney in this document.

The proposed closure of the river Slaney is based on the information provided on the predicted salmon run for 2017 by the independent Standing Scientific Committee on salmon (SSCS). The SSCS undertook an assessment of the salmon stock status on the river Slaney based on recent fish counter data, recent rod catch data (because of problems with the counter in 2016) and recent catchment wide electro-fishing data. All three assessments indicated that the Slaney is not meeting conservation limits for one sea winter or multi sea winter salmon stocks. The counter and rod catch analysis were below the 65% attainment of CL advised where catch and release angling is advised and the electro-fishing data was below the salmon fry threshold where the SSCS advice that rivers are likely to be meeting CL and where catch and release angling is advised.

The SSCS provides advice on salmon stock status (Conservation Limit Attainment) on the river Slaney based on the fish counter data. As the counter is a partial counter, the annual verified salmon count is doubled to account for salmon moving over the weir and not passing through the fish counter. The SSCS use a five year period of counter data to provide scientific advice for management in the following year. The Slaney fish counter was not operative in 2016. Also the count of one sea winter salmon verified by the Slaney counter was very low in 2013 and thus 2013 data was not used in the assessment. The average count of corrected upstream migrating adult salmon from the counter for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 was used as a data point for the 2016 count. Counter data for 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 made up the remaining five year time series used for the 2017 salmon advice on the Slaney.

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	CL	2016	2015	2014	2012	2011
<b>Slaney raised 1 SW count</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Slaney raised MSW count</b>	<b>2749</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>1166</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>708</b>

Table 1. Slaney fish counter data used for 2017 advice

Based on the five year counter time series, the Slaney is forecast to meet 16% of one sea winter Conservation Limit and 24% of multi sea winter CL in 2017.

The SSCS also provided an assessment of salmon stock status on the Slaney for 2017 advice based on rod catch data as no fish counter was operative in 2016. The following data were used based on angler logbook returns. The 2016 data is based on an IFI Fishery Inspector estimate.

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
<b>1 Sea Winter Harvest</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1 Sea Winter C &amp; R</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Multi Sea Winter Harvest</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Multi Sea Winter C &amp; R</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Total Rod Catch</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>162</b>

Table 2. Slaney rod catch data used for 2017 advice.

Based on the five year time series of rod catch data, the Slaney was assessed to meet 44% of one sea winter CL and 51% of multi sea winter CL for 2017.

Catchment wide electro-fishing (CWEF) is primarily used for rivers where there is no other index of salmon stock status. It is undertaken in the Slaney to provide a robust relative measurement of salmon fry status to contribute to development of scientific advice. Currently a catchment-wide index of  $\geq 17$  salmon fry per 5 minute standardised electrofishing is used by the SSCS nationally as the cut-off between rivers below this threshold where the stock is clearly below Conservation Limits and those rivers above the threshold where it is more likely that the stock is meeting Conservation Limits. If the salmon fry index is above the threshold, catch and release fishing in the following year is advised. Table 3 below sets out the CWEF results for the river Slaney for the

last five surveys. The SSCS use the average of the most recent most recent five surveys as an index.

Year	2008	2009	2010	2014	2016	Average
<b>CWEF value</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>13.2</b>

Table 3. Results of CWEF salmon fry (no/ 5\_min) average on the Slaney.

The CWEF abundance value for the Slaney was 9.1 in 2016 which is the second lowest value since this survey programme was introduced. The average salmon fry density recorded during catchment wide electro-fishing on the Slaney over the last five surveys gives a CWEF average of 13.2 salmon fry which is below the 17 salmon fry average advised by the SSCS as the threshold where rivers are likely to be meeting conservation limit.

Inland Fisheries Ireland will endeavor to provide any information which can be used to best facilitate the SSCS in predicting the salmon run for 2018. The primary metrics used on a closed river is fish counter data and the juvenile assessment programme (CWEF). The Slaney counter is undergoing repairs to optimize its future use. The SSCS model is based on multi-year data which best reflects the natural cycle of salmon and accounts for inter year variations which may be caused by weather or other events.

A number of submissions suggest the proposed closure will lead to an upsurge in poaching. The Slaney was last closed in 2007 for salmon fishing and IFI officers saw no evidence to suggest an increase in the number of illegally caught salmon during that angling season. The river Slaney has a significant proportion of private fishery which is fly fishing only and a short but significant public fishery in Enniscorthy where various methods of non-fly fishing are allowed.

IFI is aware that there are significant issues for the free passage of fish at Clohamon. IFI undertook a fish salvage operation in 2016 where significant numbers of salmon and sea trout were recovered from the tailrace at Clohamon. Our statutory role in relation to the operation of mill races, such as that at Clohamon, and their potential impact on a fishery is as prescribed in the relevant sections of the 1959 Fisheries Act. These powers primarily relate to the installation of certain size screens at the headrace and tailrace. IFI actively enforces these sections of the fisheries act. IFI is not a planning authority. It is a prescribed body under the planning regulations and makes submissions to the planning authority in relation to planning applications which are likely to impact on fisheries issues. These are publically available through the planning authorities. IFI is actively working on the improvement of barriers to fish migration and is a project partner on the AMBER (Adaptive Management of Barriers in European Rivers) project. The AMBER project seeks to raise awareness of the problems posed by stream fragmentation, the pressures on

freshwater ecosystems and the need for innovative solutions. IFI is particularly anxious to improve fish passage at Clohamon but many of the issues at this location are beyond the powers and remit of IFI. IFI has and will continue to work with all stakeholders in an attempt to address issues at this location.

I trust the above clarifies the matters you raised.

Yours sincerely,



Gerry Clerkin,

Inland Fisheries Division

Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment

Telephone: 01 6783071

*Fáiltítear roimh comhfhreagras i nGaeilge*