

**NOTE FOR INFORMATION**  
**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT REGIME FOR WILD SALMON**  
**2007**

The Government is committed to aligning the management of the wild salmon fishery with scientific advice from 2007 onwards in the interests of conservation of stocks.

International best practice for the management of North Atlantic Salmon requires the adoption of the precautionary approach and the cessation of indiscriminate mixed stock fisheries. These are the recommendations of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation and the International Council for the Exploitation of the Sea.

In future the harvest of salmon, by any means, will be restricted to those stocks of rivers that are meeting their conservation limits. This means there will be no indiscriminate capture of fish. Commercial fishing and recreational angling can continue only on the scientifically identified exploitable surplus.

The Government's primary motivation is the conservation of the wild salmon species. It is vital to afford every protection to the remaining salmon stocks and to clearly prioritise conservation over catch.

The current imperative must be to maintain stocks above conservation limits or at the very least halt the observed decline.

The Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Mr John Browne, T.D., has made a number of regulations, bye-laws and orders for the conservation and management of salmon in 2007. This legislation reflects the scientific advice and compliance with international and EU obligations. The relevant instruments are:

The **Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations (No. 2) 2006 (S.I. No 672 of 2006)** which sets out the quotas on a river-by-river basis, the mechanism for allocating overall quotas between commercial fishermen and anglers and individual commercial fishermen's quotas. The regulations specify the quotas for each of the rivers that are open for fishing in 2007. In addition, in order to protect the spring salmon (multi sea winter fish) only one tag may be issued per angler up to 12 May 2007. Some flexibility has been built into the text of the regulations allowing for changes in this limit in appropriate circumstances through river specific byelaws. Details of the rivers that are open are set out in Appendix 1.

The **Conservation of Salmon and Sea Trout Bye-law No. 814, 2006** specifies the annual and seasonal angling bag limits in specified rivers. The Bye-Law provides for an annual bag limit of 10 fish for 2007, a season bag limit of 1 fish in the period 1 January to 12 May, a daily bag limit of 3 fish from 13 May to 31 August and a daily bag limit of 1 fish from 1 September to the end of the season. The Bye-law also

provides for the use of single hooks and prohibits the use of worms as bait once the specified number of fish have been caught in the specified periods.

The **Conservation of Salmon and Sea Trout Bye-laws No. 815, 2006** identifies those rivers and the circumstances where catch and release is permissible. These rivers are listed in Appendix 2.

The **Conservation of Salmon and Sea Trout Bye-law No. C.S. 287, 2006** prohibits angling for salmon and sea trout in specified rivers that are not meeting their conservation limits. These rivers are listed in Appendix 3.

The **Conservation of Salmon and Sea Trout Bye-law No. C.S. 288, 2006** prohibits angling salmon and all sea trout in the river Liffey and river Slaney that are not meeting their conservation limits.

The **Control of Fishing for Salmon (Amendment) Order 2006 (S.I. No 653 of 2006)**. This Order extends the date by which applications for commercial fishing licences must be received by the Regional Fisheries Boards from 31 January to 18 March 2007.

The **Salmon Rod Ordinary Licences (Alteration of Licence Duties) Order 2006 (S.I. No 670 of 2006)**, prescribe the licence fees payable in respect of salmon rod ordinary licences, including a salmon conservation levy equivalent to 50% of the licence fee. The Minister has issued a direction to the fisheries boards under the Fisheries Act 1980 directing that the Central Fisheries Board co-ordinate the preparation and implementation of a programme for rehabilitation of salmon stocks, giving priority to rivers below their conservation limits; in special areas of conservation; and which have the greatest prospect of recovery, which is to be funded by the proceeds of the salmon conservation levy.

**Special Tidal Waters (Special Local Licences Alteration of Duties) Order 2006 (S.I. No 671 of 2006)** prescribes the licence fees to be payable from 1 January 2007 in respect of special local salmon fishing licences, including a salmon conservation levy equivalent to 50% of the licence fee. The proceeds of this levy will be invested in wild salmon management initiatives designed to rehabilitate wild salmon stocks and habitats.

**Fisheries (Miscellaneous Commercial Licences) (Alteration of Duties) Order 2006 (S.I. No 628 of 2006)** prescribe the licence fees payable in respect of commercial salmon fishing licences, including a salmon conservation levy equivalent to 50% of the licence fee. The Minister has issued a direction to the fisheries boards under the Fisheries Act 1980 directing that the Central Fisheries Board co-ordinate the preparation and implementation of a programme for rehabilitation of salmon stocks, giving priority to rivers below their conservation limits; in special areas of conservation; and which have the greatest prospect of recovery, which is to be funded by the proceeds of the salmon conservation levy. The orders also prescribe the fees payable in respect eel and oyster fishing licences and molluscan shellfish dealers' licences. Increases in the latter fees are in line with inflation.

Copies of the orders are available on the Department's website [www.dcmnr.gov.ie](http://www.dcmnr.gov.ie), for inspection at the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards' offices and for sale from the Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

### **Outcome of consultation exercise on Tagging Regulations**

There was opposition from the angling community to the one fish bag limit for the period up to 12 May 2007. The scientific advice is clear, however, that additional protection is required for this stock of wild salmon, which is only exploited by angling. The regulations have been amended to allow for flexibility in relation to the 1 fish rule up to 12 May. The catch and release byelaw will address the potential impact that the one fish bag limit might have on tourism angling etc. The byelaw allows an angler to continue fishing, even having caught his or her bag limit and sets out the conditions and the way in which catch and release must be practised so as to minimise the impact on fish stocks.

While the regulations relating to the composition of the fishery district committee were amended to reflect the fact that the quota now applies to all harvesters, there was criticism of the extent of power vested in the chief executive. As the only State official who can be held accountable for the decisions taken, it is not proposed to change this provision. The CEO will be required, however, to report reasons to the Minister and the relevant Fisheries Board for quota decisions.

Submissions received on behalf of the commercial salmon fishing sector objecting to the regulations in general terms on the basis that they are confusing and not based on science. The submission claims that Draft-net fishermen are confused as to the status of driftnets in estuaries in 2007. This matter will be addressed early in the New Year by the further amendment of the Control of Fishing for Salmon Order.

The Control of Fishing for Salmon Order regulates the number and type of licences in each district. This order will be amended so that no drift net licences issue in 2007 but will provide, where possible, for former drift net licence holders to apply for draft net licences. It is proposed to amend this order following further consideration. While this instrument is not subject to any statutory consultation process, the details will be published at the time of issuing details of the method of application to the hardship fund to facilitate decision-making on the part of commercial fishermen. Commercial fishing will be permitted to continue now and into the future in estuaries where the rivers are meeting conservation limits and a surplus of stocks has been identified by the scientific advice.

### **Hardship fund**

The Minister, recognising that the decision to align with the scientific advice from 2007 onwards may cause hardship, and with reference to the report of the Independent Salmon Group set up to examine and make recommendations to address any financial hardship, has established a €25 million hardship fund to be managed on an administrative basis by BIM and the Regional Fisheries Boards.

The fund should be available to:

- a. all those subject to a compulsory closure of their current commercial fishery, namely the holders of drift-net licences and some draft net licence holders;
- b. on a voluntary basis, to all those engaged in draft-net, loop-net, bag-net, snap-net, and head-weir fishing;

The level of payments would be determined as follows:

- a. payments should be based on the average verifiable (tag return) catch for each licence holder for the past 5 years (2001 - 2005);
- b. payments should be based on the average net income per salmon in the commercial drift and draft-net fishery for the past 5 years (2001 - 2005). This is estimated to be €23 per salmon;
- c. each individual licence holder should receive 6 times their average catch multiplied by the average net income per salmon;
- d. in all cases a payment equal to 6 times the current licence fee in respect of each licence surrendered will be made. For example, in the case of drift-net fishermen, this equals a payment of €2,022. In the case of draft-net fishermen participating in the voluntary scheme the payment will be €1,140;

In every case, those who avail of the direct payment scheme:

- a. will no longer be eligible to apply for a commercial salmon licence;
- b. must verifiably decommission their net(s) or fixed fishing engines to the satisfaction of the competent authority and;
- c. must comply with any other reasonable conditions required to manage the fishery;

Details of the scheme will be advertised before the end of January 2007 and applications invited.

### **Harvesting of the 'New Surplus'**

The Minister has instructed the Fisheries Board to devise a fair and transparent mechanism, to be managed through the tagging scheme, for the balanced allocation of the opportunity to harvest surplus fish and any charges that might be involved.

### **Enforcement and Stock Rehabilitation**

The Regional Fisheries Boards are the statutory agencies responsible for the conservation, protection, management and development of the inland fisheries resource. The Boards will be instrumental in implementing the changes required in the management of the wild salmon fishery from 2007.

It will be important that any investment in a hardship scheme is complemented by investment in enforcement of the new management regime and in addressing obstacles to stock recovery such as habitat protection and rehabilitation.

The Department will be providing the Regional Fisheries Boards with an additional €4 million over the three years 2007-2009 to supplement their enforcement and protection effort while the new management regime becomes established.

The Minister intends that the Regional Fisheries Boards will be provided with an additional €1.25 million for in-river habitat improvement and fish stock rehabilitation.

A 'Salmon Conservation Levy, will be applied to all salmon rod licences and commercial salmon fishing licences from 2007. The salmon conservation levy applied is equivalent to and additional to the 2006 licence fee in each category.

The revenue generated from the salmon conservation levy is to be reinvested in salmon stock rehabilitation and habitat improvement and will be ring-fenced and designated for the purpose of prioritised investment in salmon conservation initiatives.

To this end the Minister has instructed the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards. The instruction requires the Central Fisheries Board to prepare and implement a programme for rehabilitation of salmon stocks, which is to be funded from the proceeds of the salmon conservation levy. This programme will give priority to rivers below their conservation limit; in Special Areas of Conservation; and which have the greatest prospect of recovery.

Each of the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards will identify the part of its licence fee income that is generated by the levy in its annual accounts. The Boards will also identify in their annual reports any rehabilitation programmes in their region which are funded from the salmon conservation component of the salmon licence fees.

### **Further research and pilot projects**

The Minister has instructed the Marine Institute and the Fisheries Boards to continue to undertake pilot projects examining aspects of the wild salmon fishery including:

- Genetics stock identification programme Central regional Fisheries Board/Marine Institute the preliminary results confirm the mixed stock nature of the commercial fisheries and support the management actions taken to date. The work requires additional analyses over the coming months to confirm and refine the initial results and to provide quantitative genetic markers for the individual salmon stocks.
- The Northern Regional Fisheries Board and the Marine Institute (in consultation with the relevant Northern Ireland authorities (Department of Culture Arts and Leisure)) will undertake a scientifically based pilot project in July with the cooperation of the draft net fishermen. This will address the issues raised by the recommendation of the standing scientific committee to review of the objectives behind hatchery programmes to decide whether they should continue to be used to re-establish self-sustaining salmon populations in rivers. Issues relating to the suitability of hatchery reared stocks for rebuilding wild stocks need to be addressed and the implications of allowing wild fish in the lower reaches of these rivers to interbreed with returning hatchery reared fish also needs to be considered.
- Radio-telemetry Studies on Salmon Catch & Release