



Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradan & Breac Geal

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ANGLERS JOIN FORCES IN DUBLIN TO END FOYLE NETS

In line with FISSTA's campaign to end driftnetting or mixed stock fisheries (MSF), the Loughs Agency on the Foyle and Fisheries Conservancy Board of Northern Ireland (FCBNI) are the 2 commercial netting areas for us to target in co-operation with our colleagues of Ulster Angling Federation (UAF) and Foyle Association of Salmon and Seatrout Anglers (FASSTA) who are our partners in this campaign. The FCBNI nets are driftnets



Mark Gough left Vice Chairman of Foyle Anglers (FASSTA) and Jim Haughey NASF NI and Ulster Anglers Federation in Leinster House before meeting the Minister.

which came under sustained attack from all at NASCO and will be under even greater pressure if they do not end them now. But this is a Stromont/ London matter to decide on unlike the Foyle nets where the Dublin Government are complicit in allowing the Loughs Agency against their conservation policy to retain a mixed stock fishery. A lot of work through Orri Vigfusson and NASF has been done with no great result to date and it was agreed that a bigger push to end the nets for 2010 was necessary now. The meeting was set up by Chairman Jim Haughey of the UAF & NASFNI to lobby Minister Eamon Ryan (but only Conor Lenihan Minister of State was available) who sits on the North South Ministerial Council that oversees the work of Loughs Agency and in our case the Foyle Fisheries Commission. The Foyle Fishery has responsibility for the management of all fishery related matters including netting and angling and their area. It is the fishery with excellent potential with most of the rivers stretches

across the Donegal border into the Finn and their tributaries such as the Derg and Lough Derg in South Donegal, to the Reelin and Deele that drains the East Donegal and the Culdaff in Inishowen North of Donegal. See Maps on page 2&3 of Focused Area Report.

Basically, the Loughs Agency's management of the fishery is to let their 28 nets operate without quotas for 6 weeks without any restrictions. They would reject this as they would claim that the counters monitor escapement accurately and that adequate stock gets to spawn under a single stock management model. The fact that only 1,500 fish were caught this season suggests the netmen are not making it a worthwhile occupation but the tradition in many may wish to hold out for the big money or not budge on principle. So, our strategy has to be conservation of the stocks as this is what already did it for CFB areas in 2006. Like before in 2000 with NASF NI, and Stopnow in 2004-06 we can facilitate the state with information research, and support that includes protests and pressure but it is not for us to enter into fundraising deals like before. That idea went out with the White Report of 2006 when Minister Noel Dempsey rejected the NASF proposal. We must continue to put the onus on our politicians North and South to end it now - how that happens is for them to sort out.

Summarised Agenda

Overall, the meeting with the Minister was productive, but time will



FISSTA attended the European Anglers Alliance AGM which took place in Slovenia in late August where good friends of the wild Atlantic salmon Jan Kapell (Left) Oyvind Fjeldseth (centre) Norwegian Hunters and Anglers and Runar Rugtvedt also from Norwegian Hunters and Anglers.

tell just how productive we have been.

1. Conserve fish by ending netting in line with precautionary approach and international management practices. Removal of remaining 28 commercial nets: 10 drift & 18 draft.

Result: Minister Lenihan TD agreed to table a proposal to end MSF in Foyle at the North South Ministerial Council meeting to be held on 23rd October 2009.

2. Address the decline in the stock: Threats to the Foyle Special Area of Conservation; climatic changes acknowledged, water quality/ Water Framework Directive.

Result: To finalise a proposal and to send it into his office immediately.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT – BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT!

Nore River open for nets to August 28th but closed for rods except catch and release - how can this happen?

The August holiday period have always caused a few problems for salmon with a skeletal staff in departments and fishery boards left to deal with netsmen and politicians demanding extensions from the closing last day of July. Frequently, the Minister would grant under protest from FISSTA a few days but it rarely stretched to a week in the past few years due to the dwindling stocks. This was the only measure that protected the Autumn or backend fish even in the worst days of driftnetting back in the nineties when certain Ministers allowed absolute mayhem for salmon on the open seas. But we thought that had changed as the nets were bought out and the €30 million plus was handed over for them to decommission their nets. Sadly, they are still at it in the estuarial areas but this time they are no longer satisfied with June and July but for the first time as on the Nore River, got license extensions into the last day of August under the hand of Minister Conor Lenihan who seemed to cave in to local political pressure. If anyone from the salmon community was in any doubt about how things are managed here then they only have to look at how management threw our conservation to the wolves this August.

We do not know what Minister Eamon

Ryan TD said when he got back from his holidays to his desk to learn that he is the first Minister to allow such an open and late attack on what was always considered a sanctuary at that time of year. This was recognised in January last by the limiting of angling and removing the Catch and Release order for September. However, nothing prepared us for the bombshell that was dropped in August by allowing snappnets back on the Nore with new nets and equipment when it was reported that this era was over for good having spent our rod license and con levy on paying them off.

There was a huge wave of objection from our members to the secretariat and I resume to the Department and our October National Executive Council meeting decided that something urgent has to be done to get the message across that such damage to a fishery will not be tolerated even if the local anglers are afraid of being victimised by losing their few fish in September. Out of courtesy to the Minister who was away in holidays, FISSTA now await his reply before action is sanctioned at our AGM on November 29th in Birr County Arms Hotel.

While we may not welcome the sentiments, we are grateful for the enclosed letter from the Southern Regional Fishery Board CEO Brian Sheerin who confirms the details as requested. NRFB please note. We learn that the Standing Scientific Committee approved a quota in August while the CFB tell us that there is no such classification scientifically for Autumn or backend run, and therefore does not warrant the protection of the SSC. This is code for allowing August and September commercial netting next year if we do not resist such an attack on stocks now.

Our response must be unified and decisive and one that will resolve the problem and not add to it. We are concerned that some of our member want more urgent action now that would not be sustained and eventually lead to failure. There is a danger that such incidents as the Aug 28th netting will lead to various actions by disparate groups. No matter how well intentioned such actions could indicate to the Minister a lack of opposition or very fragmented and ill considered opposition to the proposals. FISSTA must emphasise the importance of unified and national action and our AGM on November 29th is the place to be to influence that debate.

The merger of the boards are set for the mid December period and we hope this new dawn will result in an improved fishery management regime in 2010.

NEWLY PUBLISHED ROD CATCH RESULTS CONFIRM FISSTA'S WORST FEARS

The Central Fishery Board press report stated that we anglers, bought 20,061 licenses in 2008, an increase of 0.38% on 2007 license sales and from that we returned 13,917 logbooks to the Regional Fisheries Boards in 2008, with a national return rate of 69%, up 4% on 2007 logbook returns.

This does not reflect the negative picture FISSTA have been painting over the past few years until we examine the district (7,890) and national (3,079) sales which have collapsed downward proving that we are losing local anglers rapidly along with anglers especially novice ones failing to buy a one day license to sample the sport. The findings are a testament to the inaction of the authorities to review the ridiculous prices for angling in Ireland.

The summary statistics for the total numbers of rod licences sold are:

2001 32,814, 2002 35,024, 2003 31,809, 2004 30,807, 2005 28,738, 2006 27,341, 2007 19,986, 2008 20,061,

THE GWEBARRA PROTEST - MEDIATION IS THE ADVICE OF THE HIGH COURT JUDGE

The situation on the Gweebarra took a sinister turn in July when the Northern Regional Fishery Board made an executive decision to use our hard earned license money to go legal against



Sean Rodgers of Killybegs caught the only fish of that day on the Junction Pool at the Silabh Liag fishery.



A fresh run 18lb salmon landed by James Maloney on the Frances fly at Condry's on the Sliabh Liag fishery was the talking point of the mid August weekend.

anglers and apply for an injunction in the High Court in Dublin. The injunction cited three officers of the Federation and was intended to criminalise the protest actions on the river, designed to prevent us from informing others of the true situation and to block our anglers from fishing.

The Judge did grant the first part, restricting us from informing visiting anglers of the protest. However, he refused to grant the injunction against the Donegal Game Angling Federation from fishing the waters, stating that he would not wish to criminalise these men "of good character" and that this matter was to be decided in a court. He did indicate throughout the proceedings that this matter should have been resolved through negotiations and dialogue from the very outset. He appointed a Mediator and indicated very strongly that both parties would be well advised to use his services or otherwise "face ruinous costs".

Both parties have indicated their intent to enter into the mediation process which will be chaired by Mr.

Anthony Barr, Senior Counsel. It is expected that talks will begin in mid November.

The Donegal Game Angling Federations' position was a strong one in that we had been asking for talks all this year, as advised by the clubs at a general meeting in January 2009. Further letters and phone calls to the Chairman of the NRFB throughout the year failed to get a positive

response. In fact, the key impediment to the resolution of this entire matter is the boycott imposed on the Federation in Sept 2006 by the Board and its refusal ever since to enter into talks. The tragic irony is that the Judges intervention may lead to a solution through debate and compromise, but only after a shameful waste of money and a damaging division within the community around the river at Doochary and Leitermacaward.

FISH FARM CAMPAIGN IN DUBLIN DURING 'GLOBAL WEEK IN NOVEMBER'

FISSTA have maintained a strong campaigning presence against fin fish farming in open sea cages as the sea lice infest the migrating smolts and kill them. Many politicians have yet to be lobbied on this issue and it was our pleasure to welcome Don Stainiford to Dublin in November to screen a film and raise the awareness of the damage to their wild habitat.

What we want

Salmon can be farmed safely and with minimal ecological damage, if the industry adopts standards that protect the environment, consumers and local communities. We will think twice before we buy or eat farmed salmon until the salmon aquaculture industry, not merely adopts marginally better practices, but adopts farming methods that in the short and long-term; eliminate the environmental consequences associated with disease transfer, proliferation of salmonid parasites, and salmon escapes; eliminate the environmental and public health consequences associated with the use of antibiotics, biocides, and harmful chemicals in salmon farming; eliminate the environmental consequences associated with salmon farm waste being discharged directly into the environment; ensure that farmed salmon feed does not deplete wild fish stocks or result in a net loss of marine protein; ensure that salmon farming practices in aggregate do not harm the environment or wildlife; prohibit the use of genetically engineered fish and the use of genetically modified organisms in feed; respect the views of coastal communities and other stakeholders in locating farms; adopt and implement ethical business practices, including safe, healthy work environments and fair compensation.

SEA ANGLERS' CATCHES WILL NOT BE COUNTED AGAINST QUOTAS UNDER NEW EU RULE

The debate on whether the EU would introduce new regulations that would have meant that anglers would have to return sea caught fish has been aired over the past few months. However, these fears were becoming more and more likely when I attended our AGM of European Anglers Alliance in Slovenia in late August as the Article 47 could be read that catches by recreational sea anglers were going to be subject to the European quota system. However, our man in Brussels, Jan Kapell Secretary of EAA now confirms to FISSTA that these fears have now receded after the European Council adopted a "substantially watered down" version of the controversial Article 47 proposal.

A revised Control Regulation for Europe's fisheries was adopted by the European Council in October and it includes a chapter on recreational fisheries for the very first time. It is based on the original Article 47 which was proposed a year ago by the European Commission as part of a radical overhaul of the existing rules governing European fisheries. That original text seemed to suggest that recreational catches should be counted as part of a nation's overall annual quota.

But, Jan Kappel, says: "The final version of Article 47 adopted by the European Council is far more limited in scope. "The text from November 2008 - if interpreted to the limit - could have made recreational sea anglers and other recreational fishermen subject to catch declarations, log books, licences and fishing authorisations. It could also have lead to all recreational boats being registered. Even all species of fish in freshwater fisheries could have been subject to Article 47 provisions if that first draft had been adopted unchanged. This has all been watered down substantially. Article 47 is now limited in scope so that it only concerns recreational catches of species or stocks under a recovery plan. In fact, anglers can continue unaffected to fish even on a recovery stock under certain circumstances if the angling pressure is deemed to be small. Fishing from the shore, including beaches and piers is explicitly excluded from the Regulation."



Bill McConnell from Belfast landed this fine 15lb salmon at the Salmon Leap on the Glen River. This was Billy's fourteenth fish he had caught on the river this season, all of which he returned except this one as he was going home after a few days holiday. He truly deserved the good fortune.

If ever there was a doubt as to the value of our EAA subscription, Jan Kappel has answered this question with a result that must please our most skeptical members. We, in Ireland do not see Jan very much but his work has benefited every salmon and seatrout and now sea and freshwater angler's quality of fishing. A big thanks to the hard working officer board and the secretary who have taken an active role lobbying MEPs, the Commission and Council members on behalf of recreational anglers ever since Article 47 was first proposed. He added: "We tried until the last minute to have Article 47 deleted as we were not too happy with the final compromise text we had seen. More time would have been welcomed, but the ministers wanted to secure a final agreement on this regulation as it is due to take effect from January 1st. This Regulation is part of a bigger package, the ongoing reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. For this reason the decision makers wanted this piece of legislation off the table so they could move on with other equally important issues. However, compared to the text we were presented with last November there is reason enough to have a sip of a glass,

though not reason enough to empty the entire bottle." I suspect some of our salty sea anglers will use this good news for a fine celebration.

FEEDBACK ON SALMON FISHING

The feedback from this column is the main reason why I write it as it always give our Federation members the updates as the news breaks. However, it would only be natural if one would feel left out when we read the following from the Irish Times angling column: 'Along with a collection of European angling journalists, I attended a four-day promotion event in Glasson Golf and Country Club to test the area's pike fishing and hospitality facilities. The evening included a full reception in the Athlone Civic Centre, attended by the town's Mayor, Cllr Mark Cooney, and town councillors, followed by a splendid dinner in the nearby Prince of Wales Hotel.'

Not always easy to be objective after availing of this kind of fare but it is important to learn how a venue fishes. Nobody will be availing of the hospitality facilities mentioned above but you can rely on this column when it advises on a fishing venue.

SALMON - THE CLIMATE CHANGE FORECASTERS

Dr Ken Whelan, Director of the Marine Institute's Aquaculture and Catchment Management Services Team, based at Newport, Co. Mayo gave a lecture on salmon to an open house in Dublin in October. According to Dr Whelan, recent research has shown quite clearly that aquatic systems are changing and changing fast. Water is getting warmer, storms are getting stronger and the availability of food resources in and from the ocean is under threat. Oceans and atmosphere are intimately and inextricably linked. Changes in the oceans are "forcing" unprecedented shifts in climate patterns.

When Icelander Orri Vigfusson and Chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon were asked for a comment on the Whelan lecture, he quickly pointed out that: "This is exactly the same conclusion we came to back in October, 1989. Hence we hurriedly set up the Northern Angers Salmon Fund and conservation schemes to adapt, combat change and conserve the salmon populations. In Iceland, we managed to double our salmon stocks and now enjoy the best salmon fishing in the world." Hopefully they will now change their strategy and save some of their rivers.

Wild salmon, in their migrations across the oceans, are one of the natural world's most sensitive indicators of the biological and chemical effects of climate change, according to Dr Ken Whelan, Director of the Marine Institute's Aquaculture, whose talk 'Salmon - The Climate Change Forecasters' was delivered this evening to a capacity audience at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin yesterday. The talk was part of the Academy's 'Threats to the Environment' lecture series.

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"Similar patterns are apparent in freshwater," said Dr Whelan. "We have recently witnessed a series of unprecedented rainfall deluges which have caused massive landslides and the dislocation of tonnes of mud, silt and peat. Such climate perturbations are also causing major biological modifications.

The research carried out by Dr Whelan and his colleagues has shown that the Atlantic salmon is an ideal bio-monitor to track and trace climate change from remote mountain streams to distant zones in the Arctic seas. The salmon, which is equally at home in both fresh and saltwater, traverses large areas of the planet in a relatively short space of time but is endowed with an uncanny ability to find its way home. Throughout its odyssey the salmon collects and stores a wide range of physical, chemical and biological information (www.salmonatsea.com). "Although the science is complex the take home message is clear," said Dr. Whelan. 'Adaptation to climate change is in our hands. Combating climate change requires a clear and unambiguous focus on: monitoring change, responding to change, conserving populations of animals and plants and relieving man made stresses on the environment.'