



# Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

*Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradan & Breac Geal*

**F.I.S.S.T.A.**      [www.fissta.com](http://www.fissta.com)

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## **FISSTA CHAIRMAN WELCOMES NEW FISHERIES BILL**

**F**irstly, we, the National Executive Council of FISSTA wish all members a very successful 2010 season. The Chairman of Ireland's Salmon Anglers - FISSTA (Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers) Mr. John Carroll, has issued an exclusive statement to this magazine welcoming the new Fisheries Bill which will hopefully be passed into law by the time this edition is on the shelves.

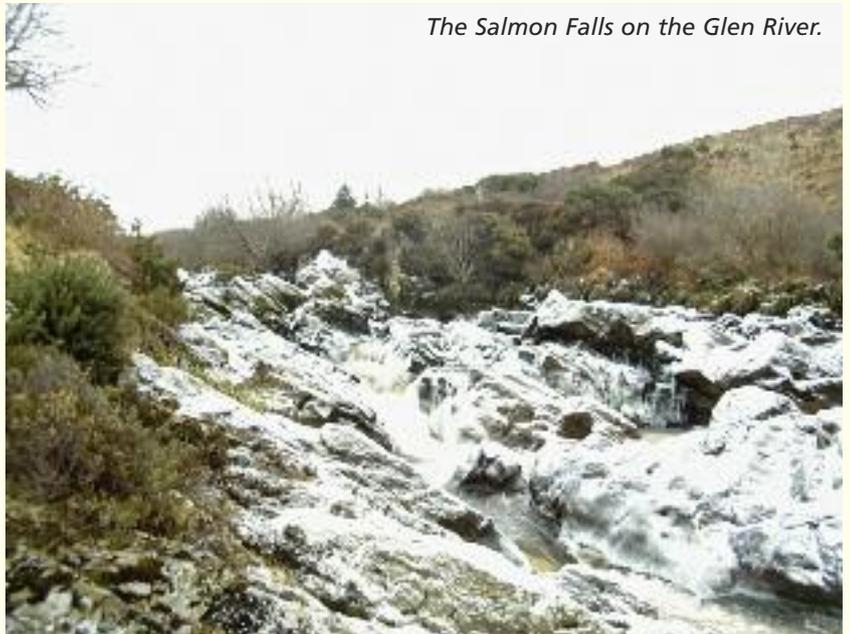
"The bill has been a very long time in coming since our first submission to FGS Consultants in January 2004 when FISSTA held special meetings nationally and in the regions to get the full views of the membership. Our work was rewarded with a well researched document being produced under the Chairmanship of Edward Power who was also at the angling helm in 1979 when the last bill was enacted. His experience and knowledge guided the Federation through what was to be a very important phase of planning and it is hoped the new Bill will serve angling and stocks well in the future," said Mr Carroll.

FISSTA have attended or monitored all the key readings during the passage of the Bill in the Dail and noted the many comments made by Deputies who have supported the general sentiments of the legislation. FISSTA wish to thank all concerned especially the opposition spokespeople for their time and genuine consideration in discussing the sometimes very technical detail and for seeking our feedback. All are in agreement that the old structures had failed and that one new board called Inland Fisheries Ireland had to be formed to take ultimate responsibility for the development of angling and fisheries into the future.

Sadly, the passage of the bill got a very rough ride from sections of the angling community who did not share the organisational objectives of what was a relatively simple piece of legislation. Instead, it was seen in some quarters as the loss of local representation in a world of stagnation where the old regional fisheries boards were considered surplus to requirements. There was indeed enormous opposition to the new proposals and the Ministers Ryan and Lenihan are to be commended for remaining on track to give us a new broom. Hopefully, this new broom will

not be used to sweep out all that is good in inland fisheries with what has to go. Time will tell and it is will be up to the collective wisdom of the new 9 member board to ensure a good job is done. We await the appointment of the new Inland Fisheries Ireland Board and hope that angling (the sleeping giant of the inland fisheries) will be supported as the main vehicle for returning the national and international business that enriched our tourism sector in the early 1980s.

It has always been very difficult to reach consensus between angling federations because of the differing priorities and objectives. For example, FISSTA main priority is the netting of our salmon and seatrout stocks and the vast amount of our resources is used in ending Government policy that licensed the commercial draft (then drift) netting of stocks and is the main objective to this day. The regional fishery boards had failed to manage the migratory fish stocks even though they charged a licence fee of €135 per angler at present. Other disciplines such as trout and coarse were sympathetic to our plight but their priority is to receive the full service from the regional fisheries boards for their discipline. That is why a new framework for angling under Inland Fisheries Ireland was needed to reflect the various needs of all disciplines.



*The Salmon Falls on the Glen River.*

## **NEW INLAND FISHERIES IRELAND BOARD REGIME BY SPRING**

We have concentrated on keeping the message very simple and unchanged from what we first sought in our FGS submission of December 2003. Minister Eamon Ryan TD and Minister Conor Lenihan have been made very aware of our priorities to improve our angling for the future and we look forward to the Inland Fisheries Bill completing the final hurdle in the Spring. Only then, can our respective angling federations move forward in a spirit of unity and common purpose.

After surviving 'much opposition' (Minister Ryan's note in head of bill) we can now look forward to the new regime called Inland Fisheries Ireland under the new bill which will take strategic control of the soon defunct Regional Fishery Boards. We welcome such a change which we campaigned for since our 2004 FGS submission and we acknowledge our Executive members who attended and worked extra hard to sign off on our submission in January 2004. We publish the names to acknowledge this achievement even though it has taken six years to complete. We commend Minister Eamon Ryan for having eventually accepted our original FGS proposals against strong opposition from those who prefer to see salmon anglers paying all their inland fisheries costs. This is a crucial time for us to get it right and we are determined to keep these reforms on course.

Our respected lobby has influenced all political sides to pass this bill for the benefit of our angling and stocks. Our work over the early weeks of January and February 2010 was to maintain a vigilant watch on the passage of the bill to ensure a positive outcome will deliver better angling for all disciplines. We will maintain this close watch in the coming months to keep it on track or the impact on our clubs down line will be severe.

## **OPEN CLOSED RIVERS ASAP**

Sadly, the new draft regulations contain more closed rivers than open ones, along with restrictions on angling including tags. Further information can be had from me on your river plan if you email [HYPERLINK "mailto:dgl1@indigo.ie"](mailto:dgl1@indigo.ie) dgl1@indigo.ie While some rivers are already opened, and many of our rivers will open later in the spring, our salmon season officially opened on January 1st, so register your club now if you have not already done so. We are also pressing for the allocations of the outstanding conservation stamp grants as every club depends on some money to enhance waters to survive.

## **SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON YOUR RIVER**

It is very important that our clubs views are presented in a more professional FISSTA submission and we will present all details we will have on your river as soon as we receive it. We believe that the representations we made to date were vital to some of our rivers (eg Feale) opening or staying open last season and this coming season as anglers are the best deterrent to poaching.

## **STOCKS - NASF BUYOUTS TO BE FUNDED IN 2010 - NO AUGUST DRAFTNETTING**

We opposed strongly the introduction of an extension of netting into August to protect the backend fish. Sadly, the one week extension in the Nore was extended to August 28th in what had to be the most damaging attack on our spawning fish to date. Local anglers were prohibited from killing a Nore fish in August, but had to watch while commercial netsmen had a quota of 216 to kill. We are campaigning by all legal means open to us to stop our late fish being commercially netted making our work meaningless and wasting our time and stamp money.

## **BETTER INSURANCE COVER**

Once again there is no increase in premiums and we have improved our insurance cover that further protects you. So, registering your club is the most important task to undertake in the year and it is better to do it as early as possible for cover is initiated for the benefit of all.



*Seoirse's Pool as most have never seen before.*

## **Vision**

The following members were the National Executive Committee 2004 who signed off the FGS submission that has influenced the new Inland Fisheries Bill. We acknowledge their efforts being brought to fruition and hope the vision outlined in their submissions is implemented to deliver a stronger, more sustainable angling product for the future.

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## **REPORT OF FISSTA AGM, COUNTY ARMS BIRR, COUNTY OFFALY 29 Nov 2009**

A very productive AGM was held in Birr's County Arms Hotel where anglers from our main clubs attended to hear the speakers. The Chairman welcomed all by thanking all for attending and the President Josephine Egan read the welcome and very special message

*Winter Olympics? - No this was Loch Aubha at Slieve League 2009.*



from Minister of State Conor Lenihan in which he stated: "I thank you all for your kind wishes and goodwill to me in my brief for the management of our salmon and sea trout resources and I share your priorities for the return to abundance of the wild stocks. Your contribution in both finance and voluntary effort is an example for all angling bodies. There are many challenges for the Inland Fisheries sector and I congratulate your National Executive, the regional representatives of FISSTA, who have worked hard to date on water quality and the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and commend your achievements. I acknowledge your constructive proposals and robust defence of both stocks and your member's rights and while I am aware of outstanding issues raised I am pleased to report good progress in the publication of the Bill as we approach the implementation of a new framework for fisheries management. We acknowledge your constructive proposals during the FGS consultation process and I know we share common interests for the future of the Inland Fisheries Sector. I am delighted to note your public welcome for the new structures and I am confident that the new Inland Fisheries Ireland Board will initiate a new era for us all to prosper. I look forward to your continued cooperation to fulfilling these goals."

Following a most informative address from Chairman John Carroll and report from Secretary Noel Carr a number of speakers contributed to the debate on the following issues:

- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Commercial Salmon Netting
- Youth Plan for 2010
- Kerry, Donegal Gweebarra and Mayo Update.
- Security of Tenure to be progressed
- Angling Council Ireland - policy update
- Insurance - new dates for Jan 2010

The Chairman summarised the developments since the last meeting highlighting his information that the new regulations raise huge questions on criteria which will be pursued.

### **Press & Publicity**

The Secretary Noel Carr gave a report on the annual press coverage and it was agreed not to exhibit at the Irish Skipper Mara Media Ireland Angling 2010 Expo at Cloghran. Other events were discussed and explored but the attendance numbers decided to remain with the established fairs once again. It was therefore agreed to use our limited budgets as wisely as possible by attending the Shane's Castle Game Fair and to exhibit once again at the late Summer

Birr Castle Game and Country Fair which is by far the country and angling highlight event of the year and was a huge success judging from the very positive feedback received to date. The inclusion of the FISSTA newsletters in each edition of the Irish Country Sports and Country Life has established a strong readership and proven to be a great success and our gratitude was recorded to Albert and Irene Titterington for their very kind support and sponsorship. It was agreed to sanction the 2010 workload as follows:

- Inland Fisheries Bill - Lobby all Dail & Seanad Members
- Improve Finance and Membership
- Youth Development Programme as per Owneycree Schools model
- Sealice Campaign
- EAA -Get EAA Salmon policy developed
- NASCO - Get Govt Salmon Plan to include payment to North Atlantic (NASF)

There was a long and fruitful discussion on the future of FISSTA as at the previous meeting a draft plan was circulated which

triggered a lot of ideas which had to be firmed up on at this stage. It was agreed that if we are to keep defending the interests of the members then funding from the base up must be better organised.

It was agreed that it would be a very hard plan sell in a period when rod licenses have doubled, but is vital that anglers contribute if we want angling to survive. A list of what FISSTA stands for was discussed and the draft was adopted for to present to the clubs at a later stage. One delegate warned of plight of certain clubs that were fledgling or where their rivers were closed at present and it was agreed that we had to be sensitive to them who had such limited resources. But like any family, the strong should carry the weak members at such times, as without an active federation there may be no angling. It was agreed to seek an increased contribution from the clubs that were in a position to pay a little extra at this time.

The Executive Committee was commended for their work in 2009 and especially on the ESB Fisheries plan which was presented to the AGM and approved unanimously. The Kingfisher Club of Castleconnell were acknowledged with Chairman Paddy Guerin being congratulated for seizing the initiative and instilling the Kingfisher Club members such as Pat Leyden and Pat Jones (all in attendance) with the enthusiasm for the survival of their Shannon river especially as the floods were posing a very serious challenge as we spoke in late November. Waters such as the Lee, Erne and Clady were also under scrutiny to ensure our fishery potential is protected from hydropower decisions. The motions passed and the elections of officers were as follows:

### **ALL MOTIONS CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY - PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (PU)**

1. That the Standing Scientific Committee account for the rationale in recommending decisions to close or open rivers and as such the Minister make available the rationale on which he complied with his decision. - FISSTA Executive. PU
2. That this new Executive develop even further a programme for the youth in our affiliated clubs so that our angling and stocks are protected for future generations - Owneycree Anglers. PU
3. That this Federation continue to coordinate the plan so that clubs on ESB waters lead the conservation of the wild salmon as per the Shannon Castleconnell initiative - Donegal Game Anglers. PU
4. That this Federation continue to explore new sources of income to support the service demands of our clubs and members - Cumann Iascaireachta Shliabh a' Liag PU

5. That this Federation confront the causes of the dramatic decline in purchases of our rod licenses by all means necessary to ensure our survival. Cumann Iascaireachta Shliabh a' Liag PU

6. That FISSTA be commended for their support of Donegal Game Anglers in defending our angling rights on the Gweebarra - Cumann Iascairi Baile na Finne PU

7. That this federation commend the Kingfisher Club of Castleconnell for their progressive plan and endorse the document compiled by FISSTA - FISSTA Executive. PU

8. That this federation supports the closed containment of our sea cages to curtail the widespread pollution. EC PU

9. That this federation supports the closure of all commercial netting including draftnetting until our fisheries return to abundance. EC PU

### **F.I.S.S.T.A. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2010**

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### **FRANK ELLIOT - AN ANGLING INSTITUTION**

If you had to choose a profession in life one could do worse than become a baker in Lifford town like Frank Elliot. The job meant he was free early in the day to visit and fish his wide range of salmon waters. Frank Elliot is an angling institution along the banks of the Mourne, Finn and Foyle where he has fished all his life.

There are few who have fished these waters that do not know this master of the flycasting craft. His experience and stories are legend and demand a separate article to explain not just his very rich angling achievements to date but also explain why our sport and stocks have declined in number since his first encounter with Kingsmill Moore on the Finn in the 1950s. His ability to take account of weather conditions and water levels to catch a salmon has been well recorded over the years as is his opinions on the adverse effects of the predatory and commercial exploitation methods that are permitted. However, his forthright views are presented diplomatically and he has lost none of the very high respect that he has earned over the decades. I know that from many salmon anglers who know him, that he is blessed with the knowledge and experience of a river that has encountered all of the many challenges that have ruined more famous rivers than the Mourne.



*The cast of a master - Frank Elliot in action.*

## Fish 'til your heart's content

There are many team sports such as football which we learn in our youth that dismiss us just when we think we are getting the hang of it. While the golfball is pursued by many after their playing field conquests with the larger round or oval ball have come to an end, the game rejects us all while we are still in our prime. Not so with the nature sports where the only playing fields is the wide open countryside where one can get lost in the wonderland of nature. Prime among such sports is the ancient craft of flyfishing. It is a very popular pursuit for all generations especially for the grandfather to teach and the evidence is there on any river bank during the salmon and trout season for all to see.

I was glad that Richard Fitzpatrick of the Irish Times pursued my suggestion and to interview Dr TK Whitaker to explain why salmon fishing has served him well since he caught his first one in Donegal over fifty years ago. Whittaker, is a former Governor of the Central Bank in Dublin and as author of the 1960s Programme for National Recovery and in 2000 he was voted, Ireland's greatest living person.

Dr Whittaker is now in his 93rd year and still an ardent Fly fisher and stated to Richard 'fishing has always been a great interest. I never excelled at anything else. Even from my earliest days as a child in Drogheda in the 1920s, my mother would bring me cycling up the Boyne to the Boyne-Navan canal and I would be trying my hand, to see if I could get a perch out of the canal. Or, with my very, very crude equipment, I'd try to hook a salmon from the weir on the Boyne. But I was never there long enough or never lucky enough to catch anything. I think I got a perch.'

## Every tiny, little sign engages your interest

A lot of people say that fishing is boring, or that they would not have the patience for it until they have some experience of it. Then they find they don't know what has been happening for the last two or three hours; it has gone away unnoticed because of their focus. Every tiny, little sign that appears engages your interest. It's not dull or that there's nothing happening. To the perceptive eye - and the fisherman's eye should always be perceptive - there is always something happening, some evidence of movement, something showing, and that keys you up all the time. You don't say, 'Ah, to hell with it - I'm here for the last three-quarters of an hour and nothing has happened'. There's a constant alerting of your faculties, a real surge of excitement.

I caught my first salmon on one of the last days of a fishing holiday on Donegal's Glen River now run by the Sliabh Liag Anglers. Within a quarter

of an hour of fishing on the same run, a little higher up where I had lost a salmon the morning before, I hooked a salmon, or rather a salmon had hooked himself. I was using a number eight salmon fly and I was determined to play it cool. After a couple of jumps and zigzag runs the fish decided to dig himself in, so firmly that I could not budge him and began to fear I was caught in a rock. I had to pull dangerously hard to get him moving. Only at the end of 20 minutes of play did I draw him to shore, where Raymond Gleeson, a local 16-year-old boy who was acting as a reluctant ghillie, netted him skilfully and ran him up the bank to safety. The moment I stood to have my photograph taken holding the fish was a sweet one.

So too was the moment when the cooked fish by Teresa Maloney was set before me to serve all the family in Ostan Sliabh a'Liag. By common consent, I awarded myself the curadh mhír, or hero's portion.

We are so enamoured by the salmon because I suppose the lure of the salmon is that it's a magnificent fish. It's big and gleaming and active and cute. But I don't by any means despise trout.

My favourite waters are many but I started with a love of the Boyne, but mainly the Slaney on the East coast, and in the West it would be the Moy and the Owenmore, which runs through Bangor Erris, and the Glenamoy, which is a little bit north of that. The Owenmore has a fairly good run of fish, which is its most important asset, and it's picturesque and it's near to where I have a holiday home, an old deserted schoolhouse, which looks out on Carrowmore Lake, halfway between the Owenmore and the Glenamoy.

I paid my €200 holiday home fee recently so I can fish there contentedly.

I suppose the most irritating thing about fishing is the flash floods, which can muck up the whole river on you. There's no point in fishing if the water is brown. That has happened several times.

In fact, it happened this year and last year in Mayo. I went down for the last few days of the season, the last few days of September, and the last day of all, September 30th, was a total washout in both years. I didn't get anything this year. But I've cut it down because last year I was too energetic on the bank and I got angina and I had to have a month in hospital, so I'm supposed to be very careful. So, I don't go on my own anymore. I would have my son or my grandson with me. More recently, this year, they would come out and stand with me in the middle of the river, holding me by the arm while I fish, which is very useful. It's reassuring, because the last way I want to disappear from this world is going down river in a flood."

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# F.I.S.S.T.A.

FOR THE NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON "Commitment to Conservation"

We all acknowledge the work done in Ireland to date to conserve our wild Atlantic salmon and all bodies including states will agree that our work to conserve must double if we are to succeed in the future. However, asking the states would have been pointless if the deal had not been made with the fishermen in the North Atlantic.

Every season the NORTH ATLANTIC SALMON FUND pays the Fisheries and Oceans Minister in Ireland to compensate them for applying the conservation principle by returning their netting gear that are needed in the North Atlantic.

The money is raised by the fundraising efforts of the Chairman of NASF Mr Clif McGillicuddy from clubs who support this cause since the early 1980's when our government started to intervene. Without these private agreements in place in the North Atlantic, needless to say, our stocks would have been wiped out many decades ago.

Today, we see the salmon returning, and while some explore the reason for our small mortality at sea, many forget the big picture on how NASF continues to broker new deals with commercial fishermen to protect our salmon rights now.

F.I.S.S.T.A. take this vital work in Ireland very seriously and have played their part as founding member and risk contributors to NASF to ensure the support is raised.

We acknowledge the support of all in Ireland who have contributed directly to NASF in the past. We ask that you do so again in 2010 to demonstrate our gratitude to NASF for keeping the salmon coming up your river.

Contact F.I.S.S.T.A. Phone: 087-2552001 or Email: duff@smullop.ie or NASF HQ, Skillyhill 25, Ryehill Park, Island. Email: nass@westcoast.ie

Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers  
Commitment to the Sustainable Future of the Salmon & Trout