



Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradan & Breac Geal

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INLAND FISHERIES BILL

The Chairman of the Irish Salmon Anglers - FISSTA (Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers) Mr. John Carroll, welcomed the passing of the report stage of the Inland Fisheries Bill 2009 through the Dail recently. On behalf of our FISSTA members nationwide, I congratulated the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Mr Eamon Ryan TD and the opposition spokespeople on the completion of this very onerous task. It brings to a conclusion our campaign to reform inland fisheries by merging all regional fishery boards into one body now being named Inland Fisheries Ireland. It has taken over six years since our federation met three times in January 2004 under the Chairmanship of Mr Edward Power to present our first submission to the Dept high level review under the charge of FGS consultants. Our proposals met with 'strong opposition' and taken many diversions since that time but we are now pleased that the bill will soon be ready to open up a new chapter in the management of inland fisheries.

Mr Power's decades of voluntary service was commended in the Dail Chamber by the opposition spokespeople Liz McManus TD Labour and Simon Coveney TD Fine Gael for his long and valued service to angling. He was the Secretary of the Salmon and Seatrout Council of Ireland in 1979 when the late Brian Lenihan TD was Minister for Fisheries passed the 1980 act.

Minister Eamon Ryan TD was generous in his praise for FISSTA when he stated: "I too wish to acknowledge the presence in the Visitors Gallery of people who have spent significant amounts of time on a voluntary, non-paid basis in the protection and development of our fisheries, for community benefit and gain."



FISSTA delegates with Minister Eamonn Ryan at the passing of the Inland Fisheries Bill.

FISSTA lobby Minister to cease attack on spawning fish

Well, the Government administrations, both north and south, should be protecting their state silver bars or wild salmon if there is going to be a recovery of stocks. Many Ministers in the past were left searching in the dark of their vast portfolios to the point that indecision was the most comfortable place to be, while the permanent Government kept their Minister out of trouble and free to work towards the next promotion. In the past, FISSTA were not shy about giving the new Ministers a fair wind when we said in the early days of his appointment: "We feel that thankfully, this is not the impression one gets from Minister Eamon Ryan's department where he seems to have hit the ground running on matters communications and energy so far and can only await the changes to our fisheries under his Natural Resources brief." Well, we are a lot clearer now and it is a mixture of good and crazy with the latter being the latest attack on our spawning fish with the bye laws he signed to extend the netting into the end of August.

We summarise the 5 issues for the Government under new Inland Fisheries Ireland to resolve now as follows:

Rescind the bye law of 29th April 2010 that condemned a great deal of our salmon stocks to be netted during August.

Review the impact of Aquaculture on our water quality and salmon and seatrout with a view to recommending solutions based on closed containment of fish cages.

Review the CFB role in their failure to manage the fisheries according to their brief. This will coincide with new FGS recommendations/strategic review now being considered by the Minister.

Review the CFB withdrawal of the "security of tenure" relationship with angling clubs and examine the case study of the Gweebarra River where the seizure of our waters by NR Fishery Board is being legally resisted by Donegal Game Anglers Federation with the support of Donegal County Council.

Review and recommend the true value of our resource to protect salmon and encourage habitat enhancement

The Minister has signed this order on April 29th see attached without knowing how many fish the netsmen will catch to the end of July when the season normally closed. This is a new attack on our brood stocks. Even in the very worst days of the driftnetting when the netsmen lobby ruled supreme over us anglers, we managed to curb August netting to a few days extension. Now that has gone to the end of August as in the Nore in 2009. That was because our defence of the spawning fish from August onwards was accepted by scientists who dug in. This is not happening anymore and the backend fish will go the way of the June and July salmon already wiped out. Imagine the thinking being permitted by the Dept in May to extend netting into August now. Why should any draft netter man his boat for such lean pickings in June or July when the bigger August fish at inflated prices are fair game for a much less effort. In the previous 2 seasons over half the quota was caught in last week July - so it is possible that they can kill a lot more in a week of August than in this coming July.

Our appeals to the Ministers Ryan and Lenihan have fallen on deaf ears this year and we need NASCO to send the message back that all is not well and that the high marks received last year are no longer merited. We all have a responsibility to stop the madness as they kill the final seed? Our reaction must be a united NGO voice to send the message to rescind the present bye law to end draft netting in areas we have already paid netsmen our conservation money of €30m to stop - except they have put in new licensees.

Failed to protect spawners

The argument that the quota is the control measure and that it does not matter when it is killed /exploited (even into Aug Sept and maybe Oct) must be confronted as our scientists have failed to protect these invaluable spawners from nets. That is no reason for us to stay silent. This emanated from the decision to boost the commercial take of the draft-net sector after the ending and distribution of €25-30m so called hardship fund. The reason that our scientists have not opposed August extensions up to now, is that they claim not to have any research/studies/evidence to confirm our very basic observation that what we call the backend run are the spawning fish of Aug and Sept that are vital to the recovery process. Why was August 1st the cut off date to end driftnetting - even from the 1960s when the season started in January? This was the only mechanism to protect the spawning fish - in all rivers, especially in early rivers. This is where the voice of anglers (not just us) with their logic and understanding of salmonid nature must be heard or we lose all.

Taking them in a commercial quota, in June or July was acceptable to the netsmen while they were still some to take with minimal effort, but now that it requires increased effort for very little they claim the fish are coming later into August. That is why they now target the fish in August onwards. If August extensions to 20th or 30th this season is not opposed it will leave us as bereft of the salmon as in June and July where they have been fished out already in places like west Donegal to Kerry and even the Donegal Bay where the Moy fish enter. The Central Fisheries Board expected us to be satisfied that they had agreed 'to act on our request' by conducting a study - as if they needed one.

I am now told that while the research they promised us into the backend fish had started, 'it had now got delayed in the public embargo'. I was informed of this the day before Minister Lenihan signed the bylaws extending the draftnetting into 20th Aug. They could have held back to July end until they saw what was caught. But I suppose no study will be done either. So, we have no alternative but to give it every push at every opportunity and especially at international conferences wherever the wild salmon are being discussed.

The following letter has been sent to the Minister Conor Lenihan TD.

Dear Minister

We write to explain how very shocked and concerned we are at the most recent attack on our spawning wild Atlantic salmon by extending the netting season into August 20th which is the time the majority of the Autumn run of ova filled salmon head to the upper reaches of our rivers to spawn. Even the worst years of the driftnetting era, which thankfully ended in 2007, when the season ended on July 31st, the months of August onwards were kept sacred to protect the spawn.

As custodians and Ministers for the protection and development of our wild Atlantic salmon you signed the bye law 872 below on 29th April 2010 last which will cause the demise of a high proportion of our spawning fish. We understand your objective was to boost the commercial income of the draft-net sector after the awarding and distributing of €25-30m hardship fund in 2007-2009. We also understand that your scientific advice does not oppose the extension from July 31st into August and possibly September. The reason that our scientists have not opposed August extensions up to now, is that they claim not to have any research/studies/evidence to confirm our very basic observation that what we call the backend run are the spawning fish of Aug and Sept that are vital to the recovery process. We appeal for common sense to prevail and anglers on the riverbanks observe and read nature more accurately than most. Why was August 1st always the cut off date to end driftnetting - even from the 1960s when the season started in January? This was the only mechanism to protect the spawning fish - in all rivers, especially in early rivers. This is where the voice of all who hold the salmon dear (not just us anglers) with their logic and understanding of salmonid nature must be heard or we lose all.

I am now told that while the research they promised us into the backend fish had started, 'it had now got delayed in the public embargo'. I

was informed of this the day before you, Minister Lenihan, signed the bylaws extending the draftnetting into 20th Aug. Normally, the option was there, like other Ministers have done in the past, to hold over your decision to extend after July 31st when you could see how much of the quota, if not all, was caught. But sadly, the protection of the spawning fish does not appear to be part of the agenda.

So, we appeal to you now, re-examine what you have been advised to do, and rescind the bye law on extensions and to protect the wild salmon under your responsibility.

We look forward to a favourable reply by return.

Yours truly,
Noel Carr.



Sean McDaid with the first salmon of the season caught on opening day on the Gweebarra River. This is the fourth year of the Donegal Game Anglers protest against the river being taken over by the Northern Regional Fishery board.



Jim Bowden - making a real difference for mental health groups.

Jim Bowden has been angling all over Ireland and further for many years where he can boast of a few good salmon caught. Jim voluntarily takes mental health groups to the solitude of the river where angling for salmon proved to be a very successful leisure activity. Catching the odd salmon as pictured above crowns the visit, but without the help of the local Central Bar in Carrick, the angling licences would have been too costly for the group to purchase. Jim said: "Evelyn and owner Hugh Quigg have been most generous in their kind support for our groups and we wish to thank them and the Sliabh Liag Angling Club for their kind assistance to us on our visits to the fishery."

Aquaculture - the debate

As the recession bites even harder into the ghost towns and estates and the unemployed figures rise there is a much higher awareness on the need for entrepreneurs to think up new ways to earn a living. Obviously, the main source for enterprises in the west of Ireland is tourism where the base raw material is our scenic clean environment and our spectacular coastline. This is the magnet that will draw the visitor and where business and jobs will prosper if a product is developed that will lead to repeat business. All over Ireland there are small angling clubs on rivers beavering away improving the water quality and fish habitat in order to provide angling for themselves first but also for visiting anglers who will pay for a day ticket and perhaps stay a few nights in the local hotel or guest house.

The visiting salmon and seatrout angler is the highest spender of all and it is in Ireland where we can really target a huge increase if we share the vision - but sadly there are conflicting visions that do not sit well together. Donegal is a perfect example as it has struggled with both for many years.

The Donegal County Council had been asked to support a Fanad-based fish farm company trying to obtain new licences for the production of farmed salmon. Councillor Noel McBride tabled the motion seeking support for Marine Harvest in the application for new licences which would in turn, he said, secure current employment and create much needed new employment in the Fanad area and beyond. "Marine Harvest are generating a wage bill of €7.6 million per year and 95 per cent of that is going to local employees in the Fanad area. "They are now faced with a big problem in that they are not able to obtain licences to set up on new sites. This company are trying to plan their business for the future and the barrier of not being able to secure new licences is very difficult for them. They have tried everything to get these extra sites which they urgently need in order for their business to progress." Cllr McBride added: "Ask any farmer and they will tell you that they never plant the same crops in the same field year after year, because it just won't work. The same goes for the type of salmon farming being carried out by Marine Harvest." He explained the company employs 193 people in the North West as well as others in Kerry and Mayo. He asked fellow councillors to support his motion which would see a letter sent from Donegal County Council to the Minister for the Marine urging him to deal with the Fanad company's application as a matter of urgency. "I appreciate it is not Donegal County Council's role to issue licences for aquaculture, but this is something I strongly feel we need to support. This company has a turnover of €43 million per year and it is unbelievable that it has taken them more than ten years to obtain these new licences."

The motion was seconded by Cllr Ian McGarvey who said it was very important that new areas are opened up for Marine Harvest. "The Council and the Department need to plot a way forward because that business is important for the local area and the future of Marine Harvest." Cllr Mick Quinn said there was an obligation on councillors to: "support the local economy and retain employment." He added: "I believe the difficulty is coming from EU legislation but any help that this Council could give would be much appreciated by Marine Harvest."

Sounds like the fish farmers had not one objection and it appears they didn't from the report. If any of the councillors in attendance had been aware of the environmental damage that can emanate from fish cages. But Donegal seems to be accepting jobs at the price of losing them in a much greater tourism programme and must think out for themselves whether it is tourism or fish farming they want for the future. Councillors have a right to defend every job and they have an obligation to support local jobs and economy. But it is time for some joined up thinking AND A STAND TAKEN FOR TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS on this aquaculture debate.

Adrian lands the catch of his life

This well known angler in Donegal is Adrian Maguire who is also the Treasurer of Donegal and District Anglers based at Frosses. Adrian is also a member of the Sliabh Liag Anglers where he caught this salmon on the

Glen River at the Salmon Leap. However, angling has taken a back seat this spring as he has been concentrating his full attention to hooking Sarah, as the catch of his life and landing her in her new home on the banks of the Eany Water which is very different from her own home in Coventry .

Thankfully for all the community, Sarah accepted his marriage proposal and the happy couple tied the knot and are now living in married bliss where we all wish them a happy life together and we hope where many very happy chapters have yet to unfold.



Adrian Maguire with his Glen River fish.

Obituary Doug Lock

The late Doug Lock.



It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Doug Lock in Fermanagh on April 13th. His health deteriorated earlier this year and like the great angler he was he was optimistic when I talked with him in Belfast hospital a week before his death.

Doug was a strong powerful influence in the fight for the conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon and was never shy in expressing his views. His support was crucial during our long campaign to end driftnets and his appreciation of North Atlantic Salmon Fund that kept the salmon coming back, will be our abiding memory of him. He loved salmon angling and fell in love with the great majestic Blackwater. It was at Ghillie Cottage on the river near Fermanagh he chose as his place of retirement from SW England and where he enjoyed life by helping many as a fly fishing guide after what was a hectic career in the rock music business. His speycasting was legendary and inspired all who had the pleasure of seeing the master at work. His River Blackwater reports in the Trout and Salmon magazine were the first page read by many every month as they were a testament to his talent of observation summarised in a few words. Some would not always agree with his views but he was always there to defend them in his own very entertaining way. They reflected the national picture for many visiting and fishing in Ireland as his column was a microcosm of what an Irish river, not just his beloved Blackwater, encountered during the season. He made such a difference and will be sadly missed wherever salmon and angling and angling are held dear.

Mother Nature prevented me from attending his funeral as the first ash attack stranded all European Angling delegates in Austria that morning of Friday 16th April, but he was remembered on the banks of the Danube. To his family and friends we extend our sincere sympathy on the passing of a true friend of the salmon. May he rest in Peace.

Noel Carr