



# Federation of Irish Salmon & Sea Trout Anglers

*Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradan & Breac Geal*

**F.I.S.S.T.A.**

**www.fissta.com**

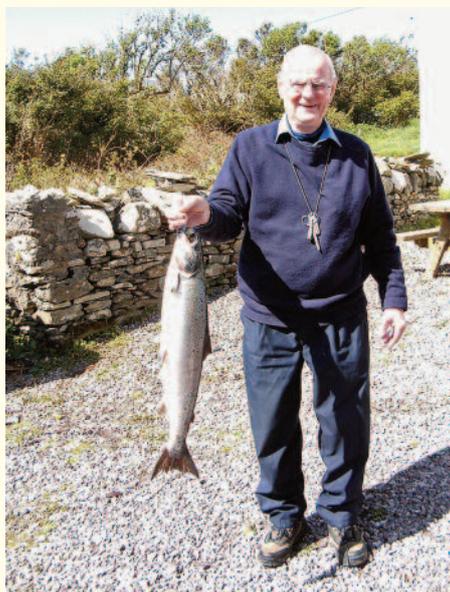
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## First salmon on a new knee

**I**t was great to see one of Slieve League Angling Club members Robert Mollard from Dublin catch the first salmon of the season after a few minutes fishing on the Glen River on the last day of spring. It weighed 8lbs and was indeed a great start to Robert's season who had just recovered from a new knee replacement. Some of the local anglers while toasting the arrival of the first salmon, consoled themselves by suggesting that maybe the new plastic knee was the difference and that we all could be going for one soon if it continues to produce such results.

### **New Minister for State for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources**

The recent changes in Government saw some Junior Ministers dropped which included Minister of State Sean Power TD who had barely had time to read into the brief since his appointment last November. He is replaced by fellow Fianna Fáiler Conor Lenihan TD who takes on Natural Resources which includes salmon and angling. The line Minister remains unchanged in that Green Party TD Mr Eamon Ryan will continue to lead the department into a series of announced changes which will include the merger of the seven regional fishery boards into a new body to be named Inland Fisheries Ireland. It is envisaged, this new group will in partnership with the Loughs Agency



**Robert Mollard's first salmon of the season on the Glen River weighed 8lbs.**

Fisheries Conservancy Board of Northern Ireland develop an all island policy of conservation and fisheries management. So we see interesting and exciting times ahead as FISSTA believe that angling and salmon and sea trout in particular can be released from the straight jackets the regional fishery boards.

### **Merger of Fishery Boards - on target**

The good news is that the new plan to restructure angling and inland fisheries is on track for Vesting Day on this coming August 1st. We commend the Minister Eamon Ryan TD for

remaining on track despite some very heavy lobbying to drop all changes amid the economic downturn. Thankfully, he has deflected the very strong attack on the boards merger from none other than former Marine Minister Frank Fahey when he opened a new €3m. fishery board office in Galway city in late April. Obviously, the planning and funding of such new offices at a time when the Western and North Western boards are being amalgamated, raises the question of what will happen to that investment which Mr. Fahey signed off during his tenure at the Department. Many have observed that it is a measure of the Minister's generosity that he gave Mr. Fahey the privilege to open them even though he knew he would be attacked by Mr Fahey on the present merger policy which FISSTA first proposed in the FGS submission of 2004. FISSTA once again, did not get an invitation to the big bash, which was paid for from some of our €135 rod license fee. It would have been easy to avoid mention of the sealice issue in the presence of Mr. Fahey. After all, it was he who appointed several fish farmers to the his boards during his tenure. In that context, we must acknowledge the hard hitting comments of Lal Faherty, Chairman of the Western Board who did not miss the opportunity to highlight the plight of the sea trout and salmon smolts being infected by sealice emanating from the fish farms that have ruined our stocks.

While tracking the progress of the new changes we learned of another new body (RIG) to streamline the fishery board bureaucracy which FISSTA have campaigned for over many years. The new group is called RIG and we learned that another meeting of the Restructuring Implementation Group (RIG) group took place on Wednesday, April 22nd. Following the retirement of Mr. Martin Brennan, (who FISSTA have already wished a very happy retirement to) Mr. Eamon Molloy, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources chaired the meeting.

We were surprised and delighted to learn of the progress that the Cabinet has approved the Heads of Bill for the new agency and the drafting and enactment of the necessary legislation will be prioritized to ensure the vesting day of August 1st is met. Details of the draft Heads of Bill and the restructuring proposals were made available first week in May on the Department's website and through the Fisheries Boards and FISSTA will make their comments available from dgl1@indigo.ie at our earliest opportunity.

It is understood that the RIG received a number of proposals on the structure, role and function of Regional Advisory Groups from a range of stakeholders including FISSTA. While a number of proposals on the representation and accountability were new and in conflict with the FISSTA FGS submission of 2004, they will be considered by the RIG at future meetings.

Mr. Molloy outlined preliminary details of the governments new voluntary early retirement scheme for fishery staff and management, and the possible implications of the scheme for the Fisheries Service were briefly discussed.

The Department stated that the competition for the Chief Executive Officer designate for the new Inland Fisheries Authority will start in the coming weeks. The draft proposals issued by the department confirms: "...considerable opposition from existing Regional Boards, particularly in the west of Ireland ... and that their stated preference is for the status quo, the Minister remains convinced of the approach being adopted." And we hope Minister Eamon Ryan TD will remain on track and that his new Minister of State Conor Lenihan TD adds a new impetus to implementing what will be a new era in the inland fisheries sector.



*Fishery Officers checking permits - it would be safer to do so on the river banks.*

### **Legacy of 1977 anglers' submission to STATE may bear fruit in 2010**

As a voluntary Federation, our FISSTA members frequently question our effectiveness in a world of frustration and slow progress of our state bodies that tend to grind us down year after year and decade after decade.

We are fortunate that our composition of both junior and senior members on our Executive Committee give a great mix of experience that have benefited angling over the years. The best example was the ending of the drift netting and it was no coincidence that it happened in the last month of the Chairmanship of Edward Power in November 2006. Indeed, it was a fitting tribute to his work that goes back over the past sixty years when he worked under FISSTA's mother organisation the Salmon and Trout Conservation Council of Ireland (STCCI) which needs to be documented as a separate assignment in a future issue. Ed Power has met most Marine Ministers since the late sixties and he admits: "Apart from Fionann O'Loinsigh who at the foundation of the state served fisheries well, Brian Lenihan Senior was by far the most enthusiastic and progressive Minister for our inland fisheries. He got most of the job done despite interference from vested interests who eventually diverted his Inland Fisheries policy offline. Many decisions without consultation were made in the late 1980s which culminated in the Great Rod War of 1987-89. Mr. Lenihan had performed honourably in that Ministry ably assisted by a very efficient Civil Service lead by Dept. Secretary Jimmy Power (no relation) at that time." The famous quote from Lenihan to the STCCI delegation of 1980 in which Ed Power recorded as Secretary at that meeting was: "I am not going to preside over the demise of the Wild Atlantic Salmon" and in fairness he did not, but others did. It is now time to find out if the new Lenihan generation will enhance the fair and commendable record of their father.

Sadly, Edward Power has suffered a setback in that his own home was completely damaged in a recent fire, which thankfully, he and his wife Mary escaped safely from in the early hours of the morning. At our recent National Executive meeting Ed acknowledged the widespread support and messages of goodwill he received from the angling and shooting fraternity. But while the Powers are healthy and well physically, the scars of such an ordeal will take their toll for some time to come. The loss of all his angling encyclopedic records and memorabilia is something that we all will have to endure. His generosity in making documents available to any of us that had historical questions was appreciated even though he considered it a labour of love to retain the records for all to share. We join with all in wishing Ed, Mary and family good luck in their huge job to return to normality after such a devastating blow.

So, our third season without drift netting (excepting the Foyle) has begun again with many positive signs of recovery being recorded all over the island. Some rivers have been opened but the rivers that we all expected to open this year remain closed albeit in some cases with Catch and Release to keep an angling presence as a poaching deterrent. On the rivers that are open the early feedbacks from our clubs indicate we are on the right track at last. Our Ministers both North and south continue to meet and a close cooperation appears to be already in existence which can only benefit the wild Atlantic

salmon stocks and hopefully end the last few drift nets on the Foyle and FCBNI area and we will update you on their submissions to NASCO in Norway in June in the next issue.

We must acknowledge the hard work which the Inland Fisheries Minister Eamon Ryan TD has achieved to date in getting the heads of bill through Cabinet in time for approval before the summer recess. Despite huge opposition from the interests that opposed our proposed changes which we first outlined in 2004, we are grateful to Minister Ryan for his partnership approach to our Federation and for showing the leadership to get this new legislation passed at such a crucial time when the economy issue is central stage. The new legislation, when passed, must bring in a new era of accountability and management efficiency that was sadly lacking under the old boards which were introduced by Marine Minister Brian Lenihan Senior TD in 1980. It is ironic that the task to further reform this system will now fall to both his sons, the Minister for Finance Brian Junior and Conor who has now been given Natural Resources along with his other duties as Minister for State. Our Federation in the course of our business, will meet the new Minister of State Conor Lenihan and we hope we can reform the system that has prevented the angling business being developed here.

Our experience of lobbying and influencing the Government goes back many years and I am indebted to Edward Power who gave me a copy of his original document of 1978 that the Salmon & Trout Conservation Council proposed at the time. It was a visionary document drawn up by Ed and his colleagues which would have served angling well had it been implemented. But sadly, their vision was opposed by those that dug pitfalls which eventually ground the 1980 restructuring process to a standstill in that each of the seven boards became independent entities that eventually led to the present scenario of wasted budgets and an impossible system to manage. It is worth recording that there was a staff representative of the Civil Service who made the case for one policy and one board at that time, as he warned of the danger of seven conflicting policies being possible. That staff representative was Dr Martin O'Grady who later became employed in the Central Fisheries Board and had to eventually work through the very system he warned of back in 1980. What a lot of fish and money could have been saved over the past thirty years had Power and O'Grady been heeded. If this progress continues it is likely we will see vesting day on the first day of August 2009 as already announced last October.

With so many restrictions on angling and river closures we can only continue to work hard to ensure the speedy return to normality and abundance of fish. However, we are at a loss to understand or clarify the criteria on what opens or closes a river since Dr Paddy Gargan announced last February at a conference in Kilkenny that angling logbook returns were no longer being considered in future as they were deemed unreliable. That has left us all clamoring for answers but to date the Standing Scientific Committee refuses to give any or even answer an email. Indeed, the scientific group that electrofish our rivers do not allow our club habitat committee members to accompany them or obtain any information on their findings which leaves us difficult to defend the suspicions of many anglers that they could be making it up as they go along.

The National Executive Council of FISSTA are commissioning at great expense a consultant to analyse the data to obtain a second opinion as we can no longer this situation to go unchallenged for a third consecutive year while draft nets are given the 75% share of a resource that should be closed to netting. Anglers can only be astounded at what happened to the Owenea River this season when their quota dropped to accommodate the closed Owntocker River so that draft netting could continue in the estuary of Lougros Bay.

With such mismanagement of our fisheries there is no room for complacency even though many anglers feel they can ease off and reduce our campaign for the conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon. This would be a serious mistake as commercial netting in the form of an increased draft net quota for the estuaries are still a huge threat to the survival of our salmon. The awarding of new licenses for draft netting to meet increased draft netting quotas is the predominant issue now, despite some who defend it as fair game as they are only single stock that are above the Conservation Level. FISSTA know better. Two seasons ago, FISSTA were accused of highlighting false fears, after we objected to the proposal by the Central Fisheries Board representative for a two week extension to draft net the Moy Estuary at the July National Salmon Commission showed how vigilant we must be if all the good work is to be maintained. Such proposals confirm that the state bodies charged with the protection of our salmon show scant regard for the resource that will keep them in business. We include Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Marine Institute in this as well because of their promotion of the fin fish farming at the expense of our wild salmon.

## Issues that Minister Ryan must address with new legislation

- Threat to Salmon from Increased Draft Net Take. This is by far the most urgent issue to be addressed by Minister Eamon Ryan. The present regulations allow a CEO to have almost complete authority and discretion to divide the Harvestable Surplus as he and his Fishery District Committee deems appropriate e.g. Shannon RFB on River Feale increased the draft net take from 1,000 to 3,610 (77% of TAC 4,688 fish) for 2007. (2009: 4,581 QUOTA. 75% 3,436). The granting of 50 new licenses after spending over €2m. in buying out 52 in 2007 is an abuse of public funds. This is unacceptable to anglers who have fought so hard to protect our brood stock from the drift net and sought a 75/25% share so that anglers could ensure maximum spawning took precedence over killing of salmon. FISSTA will not allow the point of slaughter to be transferred from the drift to the draft net as it is envisaged that our plan to achieve abundance will not now happen unless the Minister intervenes. The NASF buyout programme must be acknowledged and partly financed by state to ensure the supply of salmon continue to return to our rivers.
- Access to State Waters or Security of Tenure: The dropping of all legal charges against protesting anglers and clubs such as on the Gweebarra River dispute which the angling world is watching internationally. The cat and mouse game being played by the Northern Regional Fishery Board in spending a sizeable marketing budget promoting a fishery that is in dispute continues to backfire on them as visiting anglers have already raised through our clubs. Renewal of 7 year leases as agreed and promised in writing 'forthwith' by previous Ministers Fahey, de Valera & O'Donoghue since April 23rd 2002. Without security of tenure it is pointless motivating angling clubs to undertake remedial work in partnership with certain RFBs who demonstrate complete disregard for the voluntary angling sector.
- Fish Farm Pollution: With the allocation of a new tranch of grants to aquaculture firms, the sea lice pollution and serious degrading of our water quality will continue. The damage to our marine environment is clearly caused by irresponsible operators. The damage to our water quality, angling, and tourism will be irreparable if this Government fails to act now by moving farm sites out of bays or to closed containment combined with tagging the caged and harvested farmed fish. A whole ocean approach to the management of our marine resources is advocated by FISSTA and now that Marine Harvest have admitted that no cages should be located within salmon habitats, the way is now clear for our new Minister to get the fin-fish industry out of the bays and into closed containment sites where wild fish and water quality can be protected.
- Protection: The policy on Protection has failed and must be reviewed. A Special Task Force from An Garda Unit & with the limited RFB back up being used to assist. It is time to show how serious poaching is viewed as a crime. There must be strict control of poaching both at sea and in rivers and



*A sign of the times in Cavan - locals have enough of wind turbines.*

estuaries. Last autumn gave proof yet again that the fishery board staff have neither the capability nor enough funding to police and enforce the law. Funding of electronic technology such as portable webcams should be made available as a cost effective measure to minimise illegal activities. The Minister must address the penalties for poaching as they have proven to be ridiculous in the face extreme illegal fishing taking place this season.

- Habitat Enhancement Programme: When the fish returns begin to increase, FISSTA need statutory help to implement their Salmonid Sanctuary Programme which basically ensures the work to create more spawning is fast tracked. Only the members on local rivers can implement this with effect and immediately. Extension of funding into NASF habitat projects must be awarded to ensure return of our salmon continues.

- Angling Tourism Plans: Visitor Quota Allocation. The success of the habitat enhancement tourism marketing strategy in the ISG report will be dependent on the partnership with the local angling clubs who are the key ingredient of the angling tourism product. FISSTA can implement this partnership immediately and will be supported by European Anglers Alliance if a credible proposal is put in place.

- Representation on Inland Fisheries Ireland: It is the belief of FISSTA that the new Inland Fisheries Board must have a strong appreciation for salmon angling and must be run efficiently unlike the National Salmon Commission. The absence of any standing orders procedure renders these meetings ineffective and a deterrent to progress.

- Rod Licence Revenue: In 2003 the then Marine Minister Dermot Ahern practically doubled the cost of our rod license. Following refusals to purchase by FISSTA, it was agreed in principle by Junior Minister John Browne to ring-fence the revenue towards salmon habitat enhancement plan to be agreed under the Salmonid Sanctuary Programme. These promises were not

honoured and FISSTA are still seeking this additional funding to be included with the doubling of the cost again this season with a 'Salmon Conservation Levy' in 2008, which brings it to €135. Previous Ministers failed to spend the €30m. habitat grant to RFBs in 2006 and FISSTA now seek accountability for the expenditure plan for funding since 2003. It is time to implement this plan and grant FISSTA this habitat sanctuary revenue for clubs in conjunction with the ISG terms.

### **'Jobs without pollution this time' say Irish Anglers!**

FISSTA have questioned the failure of IFA AQUACULTURE to acknowledge and plan for the impact of pollution from the salmon farm cages that are in place all around our Irish coast. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Mr. Brendan Smyth TD is urged to continue to oppose such applications by CEO of Irish Salmon Growers Ltd for hundreds of new applications that will bring unbridled development of the industry and unsustainable jobs once again.

Mr. Noel Carr, PRO of FISSTA warned: "Finfish farming was licensed as an urgent answer to jobs during our last recession in late 1980s. We must not make

this mistake twice. It took only three years to discover the environmental damage caused in the early 1990s in which the angling tourism industry was practically wiped out and beaches became deserted due to the downgrading of our water quality. It cost many sustainable tourism jobs at that time and there are many places in the west of Ireland where it has never recovered. FISSTA anglers know that the sea trout and salmon stocks have yet to

*Angling protestors showing their licences but not permits to Fishery Officers on Gweebarra river.*



recover from the migrating smolts as they were infested in estuaries that had fish cages. Indeed, our clean pristine environmental image was seriously tarnished then and as long as we still have a finfish farming business that has no fish farm waste management scheme then the damage of this business will be opposed by FISSTA. There is, along with FISSTA many other bodies, both national and community that oppose the present standard practices of fish farming. Such people who lobby for clean water have the highest respect and appreciation for our marine environment and we congratulate the present Governmental policy on clean water to comply with EU directives and call on Ministers Smith, Ryan and Gormley to continue to protect our coast against pollution of all kinds and most certainly not to license fish farm cages as an acceptable level of pollution as was done in the past. Such standards by Norwegian salmon farm companies in Ireland are in many cases not permitted in Norway and must be opposed at every opportunity. The opposition to citing



John Boyle and Frank McDevitt protesting on the Gweebarra river.

of fish farms in salmon estuaries was acknowledged by Marine Harvest Chairman Mr Frederiksen last year, yet nothing has changed to date.

The Irish Farmers Association, the main lobby who obtain a high level of grant aid, has also a major responsibility to ensure that the production of all food including farmed salmon is done to their very high standards in the water as well as on the land. Their farm waste management schemes in conjunction with the Dept. of AFF must be extended to new licenses if there is going to be any progress in this

ongoing debate on practices in which the 'polluter must pay' principle does not seem to apply. It is not too much to ask for 'JOBS WITHOUT POLLUTION' from an industry that must clean up its cages. As we face into yet another round of fish farm development that will take its toll on our marine environment it is necessary for new waste management protection schemes be put in place this time around.

**Donegal Game Angling Federation**

<p>19' Burke Anglers Fancy Comfort Lake Boat. Value €3600          €300 Voucher for Top Tackle          €250 Voucher for fuel for any Topaz outlet          €200 Cash          Framed Limited Edition Print of A Wild Atlantic Salmon. Value €200          Weekend for 2 in Andys Gweedore. Value €200          4 Ball round of Golf at Rossapenna Golf Course. Value €200          Overnight for 2 in the Fitzpatricks Killiney Castle in Dublin. Value €200          Meal for 4 in Skippers Restaurant in west Donegal. Value €200          Meal for 2 in The Glen Bar Co Donegal. Value €100          €100 Cash sponsored by Des Kenny Orchard Electrics Dublin          €100 Voucher Southside Angling Centre Dublin          Tiffany &amp; Co Sterling Silver Bean Necklace. Value €300          €60 Fuel Voucher for Spar Service Station Dungloe          A Days Fishing for 2 on Lough Na Tooney. Value €50          A Days Fishing For 2 on any of the Rosses Lakes. Value €50</p>	<p><b>Tickets €10 each or 6 for €50</b></p> <p>Draw will take place on <b>Fri 30th October 2009</b></p> <p><small>Licence granted at Nis Gleannita District Court. Licence issued pursuant to S.28 of The Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956</small></p> <p><b>Donegal Game Angling Federation DRAW</b> No. ....</p> <p>Name: ..... BLOCK CAPITALS</p> <p>Address: .....</p> <p>Home Phone No: .....</p> <p>Mobile No: .....</p>
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**FISSTA & Donegal Game Angling Tickets for sale this season - be sure to buy one.**

## Obituary: Arthur Drugan - Angler from Tralee

**T**he news of the death of that renowned angler from Tralee Arthur Drugan has saddened the many Kerry and national anglers who had the privilege of knowing him. As National Secretary of FISSTA the most rewarding part of the job is that I get to meet many of the leading anglers whose goodwill and advice we value greatly. Arthur was the Kerry icon who led by example and won the respect of all by the power of his argument. He attended FISSTA's AGMs for many years as a delegate and serving Secretary of Tralee and District Anglers and you could always be certain that he would quote an appropriate story from his vast experience to back up a point.

Arthur's knowledge on nature and the wild salmon was vast as he grew up in an angling family. His father James Drugan had the reputation for ending the criminal careers of many salmon poachers in North Kerry during the fifties and sixties. James was a former Garda and later appointed Regional Fisheries Inspector in North Kerry from 1950 to 1970. On St Patrick's Day 2005, in the midst of one of the many National Salmon Commission intense strategy debates, Arthur told me he was convinced that if drift netting ever ended (which happened 18 months later) the recovery would be similar to his father's experience on the Feale during the 1950 - 1955 period when the much depleted stocks from poaching completely recovered after an intensive policing effort.

I fondly recall his support for me as Chairman when the FISSTA National Executive Council was divided on policy in 2002. He was instrumental as the senior sage along with his colleagues at that time, in gaining support for our decision to continue the strong press campaign (one page ads in daily newspapers) in conjunction with NASF against Minister Frank Fahey TD to end drift netting. It was a defining moment in our FISSTA campaign and as a result the heave against the FISSTA National Executive Council failed at that Athlone AGM. In more recent times, other differences of opinion arose on other issues including the direction of the Kerry Angling Federation. But like many loyal club members, he defended the decisions of his officer colleagues and angling friends of many years. Even though we differed on certain issues, it did not stop him from picking up the phone and having a chat. He always wanted to learn of the latest

news with particular interest on the NASF buyouts which ensured our supply of salmon for the next term.

Many enjoyed his storytelling as he had the ability to impart the punch line to heighten the entertainment value. His colleagues in Tralee & District would have enjoyed his entertaining yarns more than most down the years and like his scribe colleague Ted O' Riordan did more than his bit to lay the foundations for the quality angling that we all enjoy today.

For example, we may all take the very low value insurance package for granted today, but in the late fifties angling was for the privileged few in that the extended costs prohibited many including clubs from being formed. One day Arthur was fishing with his friend Mick Healy, spinning with a minnow on a treble hook when it got stuck in midstream. Arthur gave it a few strong pulls and it eventually released and came out of the water at speed and damaged his friend's eye that was a few yards up on the bank of the river. Mick was hospitalised and eventually made a full recovery but had lost some time and earnings from work. Arthur had a small ten shilling personal accident policy at that time and he convinced Mick to make a claim against him and his insurance policy. As then and now, you will never know how good a policy is until the first claim and in this case the insurance company refused to pay stating that sporting events were not covered. Arthur refused to accept their decision and it eventually went to the High Court in 1958 in the Healy v Drugan case which he won, and Mick was awarded his £1,200 and costs of £2,000 which made national headlines at the time.

More importantly, it ensured that sporting and especially angling accidents were included in such personal accident policies in the future. This encapsulates the spirit of the man as at the time another person would have just walked away. But Arthur took them on at high risk for his principles and his sport in that he would have to pay the huge sum in 1958 of £2,000 costs had he lost the case.

Such deeds were only a small part of his legacy, and he will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Our sincere sympathies go to his family and angling friends on their sad loss. Ar dheis De, go raibh a h-anam dhilis.

Noel Carr