

Galway Fishery Newsletter 2018



2018 MARKS 40 YEARS OF THE GALWAY FISHERY IN STATE OWNERSHIP

Another milestone was passed this year, with the Galway Fishery marking 40 years since the Government purchased the Fishery on behalf of the State.

The Fishery had three distinct aspects; Commercial Salmon (Traps), Rod Fishery & Commercial Eel Fishing. After a number of years in State ownership the Management of the Fishery was transferred; firstly to the Central Fisheries Board, then The Western Regional Fisheries Board, and subsequently to Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Over the years a number of conservation measures were introduced on the Fishery. In 1998 the commercial salmon traps were closed, and in 2008 commercial eel fishing was suspended, in line with conservation measures for eels introduced countrywide. The world renowned rod fishery is still in operation, with bag limits introduced over the years for salmon conservation. The Galway Fishery continues to be used as an important facility for salmon & eel research work.

Season Overview

The good run of fish into the river during June & July was once again the highlight of the season on the Fishery. After a mixed bag of weather in early spring, with fluctuating water levels and the generally poor enough numbers of spring salmon recorded, the sight of reasonable numbers of grilse starting to arrive from Mid-May onwards was a welcome sight for anglers.

From mid-June onwards and well into July, Ireland experienced a heatwave, with temperatures in Galway reaching 32C! Water temperatures reached 23C, and catch-and-release had to be suspended as fish would not survive in the high temperatures.

Anglers enjoyed reasonably good sport in August once water levels rose slightly, although fluctuating levels in September made fishing difficult.



Fergal Cormican (left) who caught the first salmon of 2018, which was donated to the White Gables, who made a generous donation to Galway Hospice.

From an angling perspective the early spring and the back end of the season was disappointing, with fluctuating water levels and low spring fish numbers in the system. Uptake of rods during the peak season (June 1st – July 14th) was maximised, with the good run of grilse into the system providing anglers with good sport during this period, despite the tropical - type weather conditions experienced nationwide.

Cover photo courtesy Mark Francis



Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland

Spring Fishing

A Cold Start

Opening Day on the Fishery saw cold blustery conditions, the water running reasonably clear, with all 16 sluice gates open on the Weir. A good contingent of anglers turned out, some travelling from various parts of the country despite the unfavourable angling conditions. For the fifth year in succession no fishing took place on Opening Day, with most anglers happy to renew contacts with old angling acquaintances and friends in the angling lodge. The weather pattern continued unsettled and water levels remained high up to the end of the month.

The beginning of March was marked by the arrival of Storm Emma (aka the Beast from the East) which brought heavy snowfall and sub-zero temperatures. Angling conditions during this period were to say the least "difficult", with high water levels, eventually dropping back to 4 gates during the last two weeks. Reasonable angling effort took place, mainly from local anglers, despite low temperatures and biting E/NE winds which made angling conditions very difficult. No fish was recorded during the month of March on the Fishery.

April

Angling conditions during early April were reasonably good with 4 sluice gates open. Levels increased from the 6th onwards and fluctuated for much of the month. The first Salmon of the season was recorded on Friday 13th, a fresh sea-liced fish of 4.72 kg (10.62lbs), caught by local angler Fergal Cormican spinning from the high bank. The fish as customary was donated to a local charity, the beneficiary this year was the Galway Hospice Foundation. Despite fluctuating water levels at times during the month catches overall were generally low, with a total of 6 fish recorded, averaging 4.30kg (9.68lbs). Despite the low numbers of fish, some decent spring salmon in double figures were recorded, with John Ryan from Tipperary landing a cracking springer from the east bank on the fly of 4.88kg (11lbs) on the 20th with 6 Sluice gates open. All fish landed during the month were wild, caught using various methods. The heaviest fish was recorded on April 21st by Tipperary angler Frank Acheson, spinning from the high bank, tipping the scales at 5.55kg (12.5lbs).

May

Conditions at the start of May were reasonably good with 4 sluice gates open on the Weir. The weather was cool with heavy rainfall at times, and blustery winds. Water levels dropped to 2 gates from the 11th onwards, with dry settled weather from the 20th of the month. Despite favourable angling conditions spring salmon fishing

was generally poor, but some decent fish were recorded. Grilse started to appear around mid-May on the Fishery, and provided decent sport at times, with a mixture of spring salmon and grilse recorded in the catches up to the end of May. A total of 49 fish were recorded for the month, 18 spring salmon averaging 4.60kg (10.36lbs) and 31 grilse (fish under 3.55kg 8.1lbs) averaging 2.10kg (4.73lbs). The heaviest fish recorded for the month was a fresh-run spring salmon caught on the fly, that tipped the scales at 6.66kg (15lbs), caught by Billy Moylan from Co. Laois.



A nice grilse is returned to the river.
#CPRsavesfish

Grilse Run

June

Water levels in early June were good with 1 sluice gate open, making ideal conditions for angling, especially for fly-fishing. Numbers of fish were generally low during the first week, but grilse started to run into the system in decent numbers from the second week onwards. The good grilse run continued throughout the remainder of the month, providing excellent sport with many anglers reaching their bag limit of 3 fish in a session.

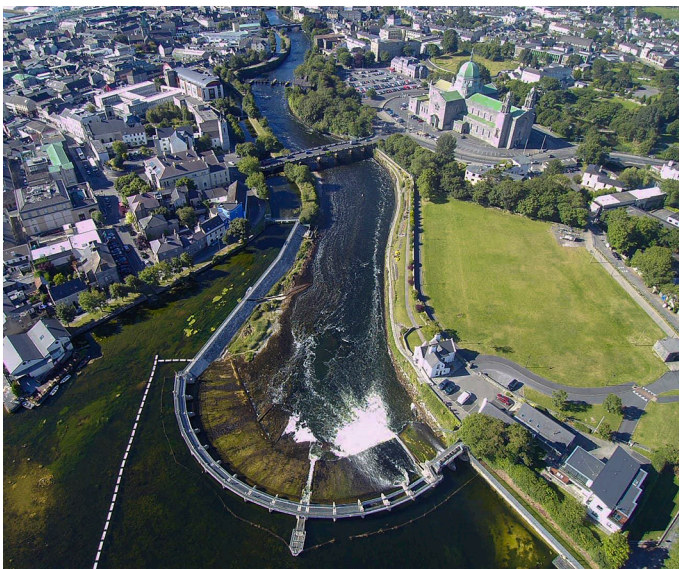
During the second half of the month Ireland experienced a heatwave, with daily air temperatures reaching the mid-high 20's! As the month drew to a close the temperature gauge reached 32°C in the West, pushing water temperatures to 23°C in the river! Catch & release was suspended once the temp reached 20°C, and this remained in place for the rest of the month.

A total of 376 fish were recorded for the month, 10 salmon averaging 3.97kg (8.95lbs) and 366 grilse averaging 2.12kg (4.78lbs). The heaviest fish recorded was a fresh run salmon of 5.77kg (13.0lbs) caught on fly by Aidan Sheridan from Co. Mayo on 13th June.

July

Conditions from the start of July were far from ideal, with the heatwave continuing, and no sign of any change on the horizon! Air temperatures ranged from mid to high 20's with water temperature hovering around 22.5°C early in the month, dropping to around 19°C as the month progressed. Anglers continued to enjoy decent sport despite the trying conditions. Good numbers of fresh-run fish continued to enter the river on the tides, with plenty of fish present in the system.

Despite the adverse weather and water conditions, and high temperatures during July, catches were reasonably good with a total of 149 fish recorded. The catch consisted of 6 salmon averaging 3.92kg (8.82lbs) and 143 grilse averaging 2.09kg (4.71lbs). Best fish recorded for the month was a salmon caught on fly (single handed rod) by Westmeath angler Liam Gilsenan, tipping the scales at 4.44kg (10.0lbs) after an epic battle between man and fish!



Aerial view of the Fishery, summer 2018. Photo courtesy Mark Francis.

August

Angling conditions at the start of August were challenging with a half sluice gate open on the Weir. A period of unsettled weather during the first week brought water levels to 1 gate from the 7th onwards, increasing to 2 gates during the last week of the month. Good numbers of fish were present in the system, and anglers enjoyed reasonably good sport, especially on the fly. Catch for the month was 61 fish averaging 2.01kg (4.54lbs).

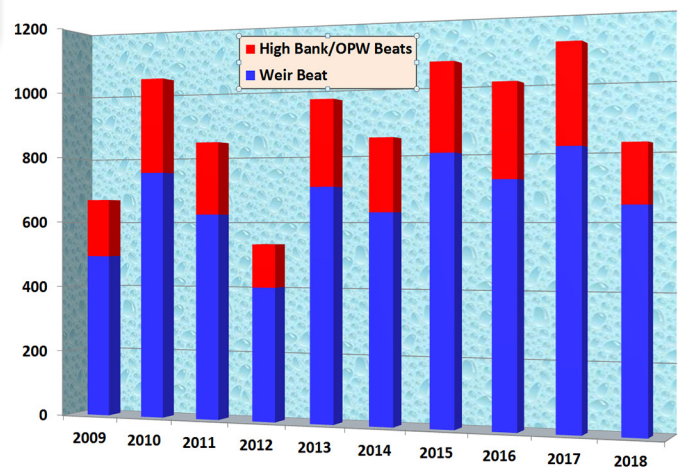
September

At the start of September angling conditions were reasonably good with 2 sluice gates open on the Weir. Rain from the second week onwards, coupled with on-going maintenance by the Office of Public Works on the sluice barrages, resulted in fluctuating water levels from 2 to 8 gates. As a result little or no angling effort took place during the second half of the month on the Fishery. Catch for the month was 10 fish, all grilse averaging 2.24kg (5.05lbs).

Season Summary

The spring fishing season was again this year somewhat frustrating from an angling perspective, as was the back end of the season. Weather and water conditions during these periods disrupted angling on the Fishery, but spring fish numbers again this season were generally low.

Every season has its silver lining, however, with the months of June and July providing excellent angling for grilse on the Fishery despite the near tropical conditions at times. Good numbers of fresh fish entered the river on the tides daily, and some good sport was to be had, especially on the fly. In that respect, the Fishery was again fortunate, as the good run of grilse and the catches recorded in Galway was not replicated throughout the county, with some rivers experiencing near drought conditions for the summer period. The catch recorded for the season on the Weir was 650 fish, a mixture of grilse and salmon. On the local beats downstream and above the Weir, the estimated catch was 175 fish, bringing the total to 825 for the season.



Ten Year Catch Record, including catches from the Galway Weir and the beats downstream and upstream.

Downstream & OPW Beats

Local anglers that fished above the weir and downstream this year experienced frustrating times during the spring and summer periods. The weather pattern disrupted spring fishing, followed by fluctuating water levels in May. Settled weather from early June to late July provided reasonable sport at times, but high temperatures and low water levels made angling conditions difficult to say the least. Angling effort was minimal on the beat above the Weir until later in the season, when some fish were recorded. Fluctuating water levels in late August/September again disrupted fishing. The catch from both beats for the season was estimated at around 175 fish.

Sea Trout

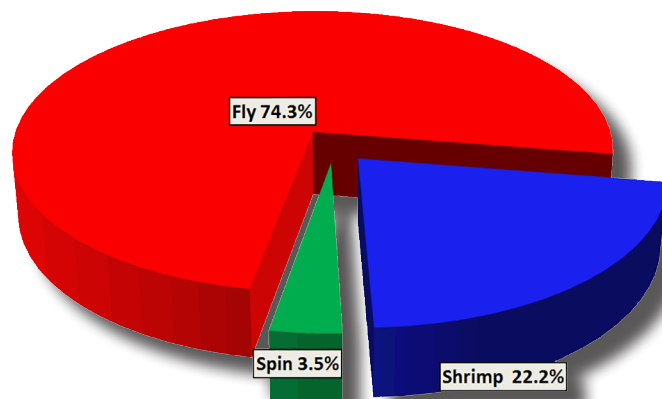
Sea trout numbers were again generally low during the season. Up to the end of May water levels fluctuated up and down, with numbers of fish low in the system. From early June onwards levels stabilized at one gate, but levels dropped to a half gate from the second week in July. Water levels fluctuated again later in the season but numbers observed in the river were low. Anglers encountered some finnock (juvenile fish) while fishing for salmon, but overall sea trout catches were few. Some decent size sea trout were observed on the camera in the Weir Pool, during low water conditions on the Fishery.

Top 10 Heaviest Salmon of 2018

Name	Date	Country	Method	Wt. (lbs)
Billy Moylan	22 May	Ireland	Fly	6.66kg (15lbs)
Thomas Twomey	20 May	Ireland	Fly	6.14kg (13.5lbs)
Aidan Sheridan	13 June	Ireland	Fly	5.9kg (13lbs)
Frank Acheson	21 Apr	Ireland	Spin	5.68kg (12.5lbs)
Paul Stewart	6 May	N. Ireland	Fly	5.68kg (12.5lbs)
James Carney	10 May	Ireland	Spin	5.45kg (12lbs)
John Ryan	20 Apr	Ireland	Fly	5kg (11lbs)
Paul Wymes	5 May	Ireland	Shrimp	5kg (11lbs)
Fergal Cormican	13 Apr	Ireland	Spin	4.77kg (10.5lbs)
Seamus Harrold	11 June	Ireland	Fly	4.77kg (10.5lbs)

* Average Weight 6.05kg (13.3lbs)

Salmon Caught By Method 2018



Stocking & Salmon Smolt Tagging

Over two days March 14th & 15th 20,600 smolts were released into the lower River Corrib at Menlo Pier from the hatchery in Cong. A further 43,500 were released into the Cong River downstream of the hatchery. The fish were micro-tagged and fin-clipped before release.

The smolt trap on the east bank was operational from 9th April after water levels dropped to 4 sluice gates, to monitor migration of smolts downstream to the sea. As levels decreased some smolts started to migrate out of the system. The migration in April was poor in comparison to previous years, with unseasonably low water temperatures and mixed weather conditions.

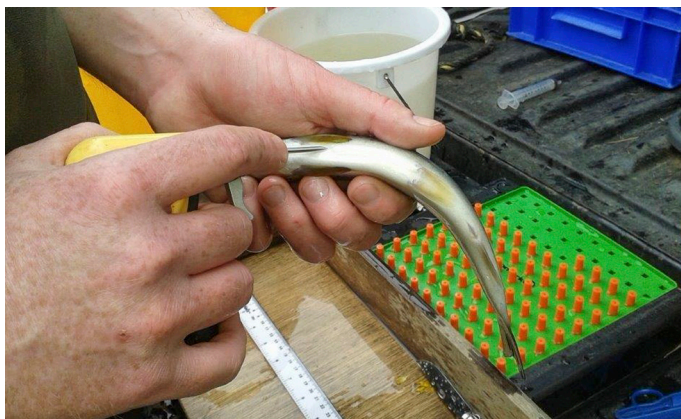
The smolt trap was in operation until the end of May, and a total of 3,701 wild smolts were fin-clipped and micro-tagged. Some hatchery-reared smolts, 223 in total released from Cong Hatchery in mid-March were recorded in the trap, and released back into the system.

PIT Tagging (Passive Integrated Transponder)

As part of the new PIT tagging research work that first commenced in spring 2017 on the Galway Fishery, during April & May this year 2,000 smolts were PIT-tagged and released from the smolt trap. Data from these tags should come on stream in 2019, showing sea survival percentage rates from returning adult fish.

In 2017 1,600 wild smolts were PIT-tagged. Later that year a PIT-tag reader was installed in the fish pass to record data from returning adult fish in 2018.

During the 2018 season 118 tagged fish were recorded in the fish pass, 2 mobile units placed in the river, and a hand recorder checking fish caught by anglers. The data indicated that sea survival was around 7.4% from the wild smolts tagged in 2017. This was an improvement on sea survival in recent years, which was calculated to be around 5%.



A PIT tag being inserted into a wild smolt at the trap in Galway.

Tag Recovery

In conjunction with the smolt tagging programme on the Fishery and Cong Hatchery, adult salmon returning to the river were monitored throughout the season. All fish caught on the rod were checked for the presence of the adipose fin near the tail. If the fin is missing the fish is checked to see if a micro-tag is present. Sampling also took place throughout the season with other salmon caught, wild or hatchery, to check on lengths/weights, scale samples etc. This information gives an indication of length of time spent at sea, feeding patterns and DNA profiles of the salmon.

Up to the end of September a total of 70 fin-clipped fish, 14 of which contained micro-tags were recorded in the catch on the Fishery. This represents 10.75% of the overall catch recorded for the season on the Weir.

Fish Counter

The counter in the fish pass was operational during the season, and provided information on the numbers of fish migrating up-stream using the pass. In early spring water levels fluctuated during April & May, so information on fish migration was difficult during that period. From June onwards water levels stabilized at one gate. Levels went to a half sluice gate for a period of weeks, until the weather became unsettled and levels fluctuated in the river. This pattern continued during August and September, which meant that the counter was not fully operational during these periods. However the counter was operating at critical periods, especially during the main run of grilse into the system. The counter data gave a good indication of the actual numbers of fish migrating upstream. The data downloaded during the season showed a total of 7,110 fish passed through the counter up to the end of November.

Salmon Regulations 2019

The 2019 season will again see some changes on the angling front with revised quotas for both multi-sea winter (spring salmon) and grilse. The quota for the season for the entire Corrib catchment with a combined quota for multi-sea winter fish (spring salmon) and grilse is 5,664 fish

Bag limits for the 2019 season will be the same as in recent years, with a bag limit of 1 spring salmon per day from February 1st to May 11th, 3 fish per day from May 12th to August 31st, and 1 fish per day during September, with a total bag limit of 10 fish for the season.

Catch & release may be in operation during the season, depending on the circumstances at the time. This may be revised at the discretion of local management. It should be noted that regulations and bye-laws may be subject to change.

Safety Regulations

Safety regulations first introduced in 2013 will apply to anglers wading from the east bank on the Fishery. If the big rock on the east bank is covered (normally 2 gates) anglers will not be permitted to wade down the centre of the river under such conditions. This measure was introduced to ensure anglers safety while wading in the river.

Anglers are advised at all times to use a personal flotation device when in the immediate vicinity of the Fishery. Flotation devices will be made available to anglers for use on request while on the Fishery during the 2019 season.

Down Memory Lane

Our trip down memory lane this year brings us back to more recent years, circa 1978 on the Galway Fishery. This was a defining year when the fishery changed from private into public hands, ending centuries of private ownership on this historic fishery.

The last private owners John & Douglas Barber from Billingsgate London decided to sell the Fishery and its associated properties in the late 1970s. When the intention to sell the Fishery was announced, some members of the public and local angling enthusiasts were keen that the Fishery should be purchased by the State. The impending sale of the Fishery also drew interest from a group of private individuals around Galway, who saw the opportunity to purchase a going concern, with the added bonus of prime salmon fishing on their doorstep. Negotiations commenced with

representatives from the relevant Government Department and angling interests, and after protracted discussions, mainly regarding the purchase price, agreement was finally reached between the State and the owners. The Minister for Fisheries & Forestry at the time, the late Mr. Brian Lenihan Snr purchased the Fishery in 1978 for £200,000 with a number of properties included in the sale. Unfortunately some buildings associated with the Fishery had been disposed of in private sales beforehand, namely; the Owners Residence adjacent to the Salmon Traps on Gaol Road, Weir Lodge overlooking the Weir Pool (Jimmy's Pool) and the Managers Cottage opposite Galway Cathedral. The Weir Lodge was subsequently purchased by the Central Fisheries Board when it was put on the market a short time later.

The decision by the State to purchase this formerly private Fishery was the catalyst to further purchases in the early 1980's of the Moy & Erriff Fisheries, bringing them into State ownership for the first time. Accessibility to quality salmon fishing by the general public was greatly enhanced, taking away the perception of exclusivity when such fisheries were in private ownership.

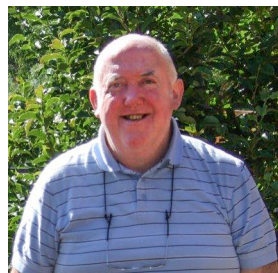


The three Fishery Managers since the State purchased the Fishery - Paddy Gargan, Ned Cusack and Seamus Hartigan, pictured on the occasion of Ned's 100th birthday party!

Fishery News

As the year draws to a close and a new season beckons, perhaps it is timely that we look back and remember those that have passed on during the year.

On November 27th 2018 Gerry Hartigan passed away unexpectedly after a short illness, the news of which shocked his family and friends. Born by the banks of the Shannon in Thomondgate, Limerick City, his love of the outdoors, fishing & shooting was rooted from a young age, especially fishing, a hobby he pursued all his life up



to a number of months before his passing. His love of fishing encompassed all species, fresh water and sea, but salmon fishing held a special place in his heart, travelling throughout the country, and to many parts of the world - British Columbia, Canada, Iceland and beyond to fish for this iconic species. Despite his many trips abroad, he held the Galway Fishery in very high regard since first coming to fish there in the early 1980's, making many friends over the years, and enjoying the banter and comrade with fellow anglers on the Fishery.

He worked in the Precision Engineering Business setting up his own Company Orion Tooling Ltd in Smithtown, Shannon, Co. Clare in the mid 1980's and was still involved in the family run company up to recent years, when he decided to ease into retirement and devote more time to family, friends and his favourite hobby, fishing! His easy-going manner, coupled with his sense of humour and gregarious nature endeared him to many from all walks of life. This was evident from the large attendance at his removal and funeral mass in his adopted Shannon.

On December 13th came the sad news of the passing of Sean Murphy from Naas, Co. Kildare after a long illness. He was a passionate lover of the outdoors, both hunting and fishing, which he engaged in regularly in his spare time. The River Liffey was where he "cut his teeth" in fishing, and moving on to the Midland Lakes of Loughs Owel, Ennell and Sheelin where he spent many happy years. In 1966 he was introduced to salmon fishing on the famous River Slaney, and his fondness for salmon fishing thereafter never waned. He was a regular on the Galway Weir for many years, and indeed fished throughout the country until ill health some years ago curtailed him from engaging in his favourite hobby.



He worked in the building trade with his brother Paul, who also accompanied him to fish on the Weir over the years. They constructed houses on a small scale, undertaking all the various trades themselves, i.e. block-laying, carpentry, plastering etc. He always enjoyed his days on the river bank or lake, willing to share his knowledge with others on what fly was working on the day, and comparing experiences with fellow anglers!

As the year draws to a close and a new season beckons, we remember Gerry and Sean fondly, and have them and those that have passed on before in our thoughts. We will ring in the new season, and raise our glasses "to absent friends" and colleagues.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anam dílis.



Rod Angling Fees 2019

Main Beat			New Beat		
Period	Full Day	Half Day	Period	Full Day	Half Day
	Euro €	Euro €		Euro €	Euro €
Feb 1 - Feb 28	35	25	Feb 1 - Mar 31	20	-
Mar 1 - Mar 31	50	40	Apr 1 - May 31	25	20
Apr 1 - May 31	65	45	Jun1 - Jul 13	35	25
Jun1 - Jul 13	125	(Fishing am/pm)	Jul 14 - Aug 31	30	20
Jul 14 - Aug 31	65	45	Sep 1 - Sep 30	20	-
Sep 1 - Sep 30	45	35			

Fishing Times: From February 1st fishing will be free for regular patrons until the first salmon is caught, thereafter normal angling fees will apply. IFI will donate the first salmon to a local charity of its choice. Normal fishing day is from 9.00am to 7.00 pm. Half days are available from 9.00am to 2.00pm or from 2.00pm to 7.00 pm.

Between June 1st to July 13th (inclusive) there will be two angling sessions per day, i.e. from 6.00am to 1.00pm and from 1.30pm to 8.30pm.

Deposits/Full Fees: Booking requests that are received are allocated rods subject to availability. If you receive an offer of angling, deposits/full fees must be paid within 14 days of the receipt of the offer. Otherwise it will be assumed that the offer is not being taken up and the rod(s) will be reallocated to another angler on the waiting list. For bookings during the peak season between June 1st-July 13th inclusive, full fees must be paid to secure the booking(s). For all other times outside of this period, a 50% deposit is required. **Please note: Deposits/Full Fees are non-refundable.**

Evening Fishing (Fly Only): Evening fishing starts on April 1st until September 30th. April 1st to July 13th - €30 per rod. July 14th to September 30th - €25 per rod. Between June 1st-July 13th inclusive fishing is from 8.30pm to 11.00pm. All other times 7.00pm to 10.00pm. A bag limit of 1 fish per angler will apply to evening fishing.

Advance Bookings

Applications for rod bookings should be made before the start of the season (Feb 1st) by mail, fax or email to:

The Manager, Galway Fishery, Weir Lodge, Earl's Island, Galway

Tel. +353-91-562388

Fax: +353-91-362930

Email: seamus.hartigan@fisheriesireland.ie

FISHERY REGULATIONS

Licences: Before an angler can fish a current State salmon angling licence must be produced. Licences can be purchased at the Fishery Office.

Fly Only Rule:

During low water conditions (at a level to be determined by the Fishery Manager) a fly only rule will apply on the Fishery.

Polaroids:

Polaroid glasses are only permitted to be used by anglers fly-fishing on the Fishery.

Bag Limits:

There is a national bag limit of 10 fish per angler on rivers that are open for salmon angling. From the start of the season on February 1st to May 11th inclusive, a daily bag limit of 1 salmon per angler will apply, up to a maximum of 3 salmon during that period. From May 12th to August 31st a bag limit of 3 fish per day applies. During September a bag limit of 1 fish per day applies. A bag limit of 2 fish on prawn/shrimp fishing or spinning will apply from May 12th to August 31st. After the above bag limits or the quota has been reached, anglers may be permitted to fish catch & release using single barbless hooks, subject to certain restrictions depending on circumstances i.e. water temperature, height, etc. Angling methods, bag limits, catch & release policy may be revised during the season at the discretion of local management. All fish caught must be recorded, and tagged if retained, with details given to Fishery Staff. **It should be noted that regulations and bye-laws may be subject to change.**

Foul Hooked Fish:

All foul hooked fish must be returned to the river under Bye-Law No. 847/2008. In the case of badly damaged or exhausted fish that cannot be revived, they must be handed up to Fishery Staff. Failure to comply will result in anglers being banned from the Fishery.

Protocol on the River:

(a) Anglers should fish the river down step by step and when at the bridge, cease fishing, go upstream and start again.

(b) Fly anglers wading from the east bank have right of way while fishing down the river

(c) Anglers must alternate in Jimmy's (Weir) Pool after one hour's fishing

N.B. During inclement weather it is advisable to contact the Fishery for information on conditions before travelling.

The Galway Fishery and Inland Fisheries Ireland reserve the right to refuse access to the Fishery.

Inland Fisheries Ireland does not accept any liability for any injury or damage as a result of the use of this Fishery. Anglers are advised to exercise utmost care for their safety and the safety of others using the Fishery and to have regard to changing weather and water conditions. Anglers are also advised to have regard to potential dangers due to the naturally occurring features of the physical environment of the Fishery. Anglers are advised to use a personal flotation device at all times when in the immediate vicinity of the Fishery. Use of this Fishery is permitted on the strict understanding that Inland Fisheries Ireland's duty to entrants is limited to that owed to a "recreational user" under the Occupiers Liability Act, 1995.