

Salmon and Inland Fisheries

Annual Reports covering the period 2010/11 & 2011/12.



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Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under 22 (1) of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 by
the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (the Department) is required by Section 22 of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 to publish an Annual Report outlining its activities in the year, statistics relating to fisheries and details of income and expenditure.

In 2012 the Department's Statistics and Research Branch assumed responsibility for the publication of fisheries statistics in line with Government policy. The Department now publishes an annual Digest of Statistics for Salmon and Inland Fisheries which contains detailed information on a range of fisheries related issues including salmon and eel stocks, fisheries protection, enforcement activities and licence and permit sales. The Digest is available on the Department's website at www.dcalni.gov.uk

As these statistics formed the greater part of the Annual Report, the Department will, in future, publish an abridged report annually to coincide with the publication of the Digest of Statistics. This report covers the period 2010 to 2012.

Salmon and Inland Fisheries Annual Report covering the period 2010/11 to 2011/12

Background to Inland Fisheries

The Department continues to progress its strategy to conserve, protect and improve stocks of salmon, eels and freshwater fish through the Salmon and Eel Management Plans; conservation and protection measures; and interactions with other Government Departments and bodies in the promotion and development of angling and the contribution that it can make in promoting health and well being.

Detailed statistics on a range of fisheries related issues are contained in the Digest of Statistics for Salmon and Inland Fisheries in the Department's Jurisdiction. The digest is available on the Department's website at www.dcalni.gov.uk

Fisheries protection

Fisheries protection work was a major component of the Department's broader strategy to conserve and manage salmon, eels and freshwater fish. Fisheries Protection Officers (FPOs) carried out regular patrols on land and water throughout the Department's operational area. Staff monitored and checked angling and commercial fishing activity to ensure compliance with the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 and associated byelaws.

Regular inspections were carried out at commercial dealers, fish retail outlets, hotels and restaurants to ensure that all freshwater fish offered for sale had been legally caught. In addition, intelligence-led operations were carried out to detect illegal activity. All illegal fishing gear and/or catches were seized and alleged offenders were subject to the due process of the law. A total of 125 boat patrols took place in 2010/11 and 239 in 2011/12. During 2010/11 a total of 105 individuals were convicted of fisheries offences and 84 in 2011/12.

Salmon conservation

The Department's strategic approach to salmon conservation, which reflects its obligations to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), involved habitat improvement projects on rivers and the provision of advice and guidance to other bodies with responsibility for regulating activities that are potentially detrimental to fisheries. Eight projects were completed in 2010/11. The Department's Focus Area Report, which details actions delivered and planned on the protection and restoration of salmon habitat in the North, contributed to the formulation of internationally agreed guidelines following the 2010 NASCO annual meeting.

For a number of years there have been increasing concerns about low salmon stocks and the Department asked anglers and commercial fishermen not to target salmon during the 2012 season as an interim measure to protect salmon stocks. The Department undertook a public consultation on possible future measures to conserve salmon stocks. Due to the perilous position of the species, in December 2012 the DCAL Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, called for a range of voluntary salmon conservation measures to be implemented in the Department's jurisdiction for the 2013 season by commercial fishermen and recreational anglers. These included a voluntary cessation of commercial salmon netting and voluntary catch and release for recreational anglers.

Habitat improvement works were commenced on the Tempo River in the area upstream of the village. This work included the creation of spawning beds, juvenile and adult fish habitat and groynes were built to create adult holding pools which provide cover for fish. Works were carried out by Rivers Agency staff with the Department providing the funding and the design of the fisheries improvement scheme. Tree planting was also carried along sections of the River Bush and weed & silt removal was carried out on stretches of the Upper Bush catchment to improve spawning areas for salmon. Fish Counters on the Clady River in Co. L'derry and the Garvary River in Co. Fermanagh were commissioned and are operational.



Habitat enhancement work on the River Bush.

Eel Management Plans

In compliance with Eel Management Plans required by European Council Regulation 1100/2007, the important eel fishery on Lough Neagh was closely monitored and supported by funding from the Department and the European Fisheries Fund. The small brown eel fishery in the Erne catchment was closed as a condition of the North West Eel Management Plan. It has been replaced by a conservation fishery to capture silver eels, transport them around the hydro electric dams at Ballyshannon and release them to escape to the sea to spawn. The Department established and supervised the conservation fishery in 2010-11 in conjunction with Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Electricity Supply Board. The conservation fishery continued in 2011/12.

AFBI

DCAL continued to commission the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to provide the evidence base for fisheries conservation policy and strategy through scientific monitoring, research and analysis.

Public Angling Estate

The Department has powers under the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 to acquire and improve facilities for angling and this has been achieved through the provision of a Public Angling Estate. The total number of fisheries available to the Department's permit holders over the period of this report was 63.

The Department continued its programme of works to develop and upgrade facilities at waters in the Public Angling Estate, and in particular to enhance the facilities for disabled anglers. This was supplemented by the continuation of the general maintenance programme, which includes tree and grass cutting, weed removal, signage replacement and general repairs to access paths and angling stands.



Disabled fishing stand at the Quoile Basin, Downpatrick.

Fisheries Officers from the Department attended a selected number of angling fairs across Europe, Ireland and the UK. These events represent the opportunity to promote angling to overseas markets and in 2011 DCAL staff attended a total of 7 promotional angling fairs including events in Holland and Dublin.

Fish production

Movanagher Fish Farm adjacent to the Lower River Bann, near Kilrea, produced around 140,000 brown and rainbow trout in 2010/11 and 2011/12 to supply the Department's Public Angling Estate. Redevelopment of the fish hatchery commenced in 2011 and was completed in 2012, providing a modern juvenile fish rearing unit and staff and visitors with enhanced facilities.



Ponds at Movanager fish farm

Technical advice

Departmental technical staff routinely provided advice and guidance on matters relating to the conservation, protection, development and improvement of salmon and inland fisheries to angling clubs, fishery owners, and a range of other water users and interested parties. Advice was provided to the range of authorities which control and regulate activities that might impact on salmon, eels and freshwater fish, for instance the Planning Service and NIEA on water abstractions and fish passage issues. Technical staff also provided input to the development of environmental policies and regulations generally across government that have the potential to impact on fisheries.

Stakeholder engagement

The Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum was established to advise, assist and inform the Department and to provide input into the decision-making process with regard to salmon and inland fisheries. It met on five occasions in 2010/11 and received briefing and support from DCAL officials. In addition, a sub-committee established by the Forum held one meeting in Fermanagh. In 2011/12 the Forum met 4 times.

Community outreach

The Department recognises that angling can provide a range of economic, environmental and social benefits including education, crime reduction, social cohesion and health and well being. The Department has supported a number of initiatives to date and is planning to expand this outreach work targeting a greater number of organisations with a particular focus on groups and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. The following projects have been supported to date:

Angling First

Angling First Ltd is a registered charity based in Dromore, Co Down that aims to introduce the sport of angling to young people as a positive activity and an alternative to engaging in anti-social activity. The organisation also works with vulnerable adults with the aim of addressing mental health issues. During 2012, DCAL provided Angling First with 50 seized rods and tackle following the theft of the charity's fishing equipment. This was also the first step in the development of a partnership between Angling First and the Department in encouraging greater participation in angling.



Young people at the Angling First pond Families at the Waterworks

The Families at the Waterworks Fishing Club was founded in 2001 and is a cross community club, committed to participating in the ongoing regeneration of the Waterworks site and surrounding neighbourhoods in North Belfast. DCAL has supported the club by providing free stockings of rainbow trout for events organised by the club to encourage young people in the area to participate in angling.



Anglers at the Waterworks Belfast

River Bush Salmon Research Station open day

In 2012 the Department held the annual open day at the River Bush Salmon Research Station as part of the Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival. An estimated 1200 people, over twice the number recorded in 2011, visited the Research Station to learn about the important scientific work that goes on there. The work of the Salmon Research Station is regarded across the world as an exemplar in salmon conservation and is unique in that it can be tracked back to the 1970's.



River Bush Salmon Research Station open day

Legislation

During 2010/11 the following Regulations came into operation:

Eel Fishing Regulations (NI) 2010

Revocation of the 1979 Eel Fishing Regulations which were remade to implement the requirements of Eel Management Plans.

Eel Fishing (Licence Duties) Regulations (NI) 2010

Removal of redundant licence types.

Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2010

Amendment of list of rainbow trout waters and transfer of licences appeals to a Magistrates Court.

During 2011/12 the following Regulations came into operation:

The Eel Fishing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 amended the definition of undersized eels to increase the minimum size of brown eels which can be caught to 40cm. This was a conservation measure to protect the sustainability of eel stocks.

The Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 amended the list of designated rainbow trout waters to include two new rainbow trout fisheries at mill ponds on the Green Road, Ballyclare and at Cromore Road, Portstewart, and removed Loughinisland Lake from the list of designations.

Finance

The table below details DCAL Inland Fisheries Group income and expenditure for the 2010/11 and 2011.12 financial years:

	2010/2011	2011/2012
Resource expenditure	£2,136,689	£2,215,915
Capital expenditure	£272,033	£479,024
Income	£575,733	£554,520

Sources of income include licence/permit sales for recreational anglers and commercial fishermen.



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