

Issue number 1

January 2025

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Newsletter

Salmon Watch Ireland

A look forward to 2025 and review of the issues affecting Atlantic salmon

Welcome to 2025 from Salmon Watch Ireland and we hope Atlantic salmon and sea trout stocks are in sufficient numbers in 2025 to provide sustainable exploitation without compromising future generations of this wonderful asset.



Released to spawn a new generation

2024 was again a year which primarily was overshadowed by a focus on our ongoing Judicial Review of the decision to award an aquaculture licence to MOWI in Bantry Bay.

The Judicial review took place in April/May 2023 and was a very complex case involving three separate parties taking the review namely IFI, SWIRL and Sweetman and others including FISSTA.

The judgement arrived in July 2024 and a very positive outcome was achieved for Salmon Watch Ireland with the licence being quashed by Judge David Holland. A very positive outcome followed on the issue of costs in December 2024.

We certainly can agree that the hearing of the case was exceedingly fair and indeed comprehensive with all parties given a fair hearing. I would like to thank all our directors and indeed our members and supporters who helped

Facts and Figures

Designated Salmon Rivers

147 Designated Salmon Rivers in Ireland

40 Rivers open for harvest.

38 Rivers Catch and Release

69 Rivers closed to angling.

No surplus in 107 rivers.

73% of rivers do not have enough wild salmon to produce the next generation of wild Atlantic salmon.

Water Quality in Ireland

There has been no significant change in any of the water quality indicators for Ireland's rivers, lakes, estuaries and groundwaters in 2023 and no sign of improvement overall.

While improvements are happening in some rivers and lakes, these are being offset by declines elsewhere.

The biggest issue impacting water quality is nutrient pollution from agriculture and wastewater.

Average nitrate levels in rivers, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters are largely

to prepare and support us both financially and with the advice which enabled us to pursue this case.

Our legal team of Marc Bairead and Ryan Browne of O'Shaughnessy Bairead Solicitors deserve enormous credit and gratitude for their outstanding contribution to the preparation of this case.



The barristers who acted for us namely Eanna Molloy SC, and Alan Doyle deserve our sincere appreciation as they both went to extreme lengths to pursue our pleadings in the case.

This case was extremely complex and indeed lengthy but our legal team, through a very technical process, were steadfast in their approach and certainly left no detail of the case unexamined.

Our appreciation must also go to Inland Fisheries Ireland and Sweetman and others including FISSTA who played a significant part in achieving this result.



Barriers and Water Quality

The early 2024 spring salmon run in Ireland appears to have been extremely poor, but grilse numbers were certainly increased in several catchments. This

unchanged and remain too high in the east, southeast and south.

Average phosphorus levels in rivers and lakes are also largely unchanged and remain too high in over one quarter (27 per cent) of rivers and one third (35 per cent) of lakes.

Salmon Farming in Ireland

35 Sites in West, Northwest and Southwest

Currently Operational – Approx 14 sites operational annually.

All currently unlicensed

5 farms currently under renewal and review notice

No licence issued since 2007

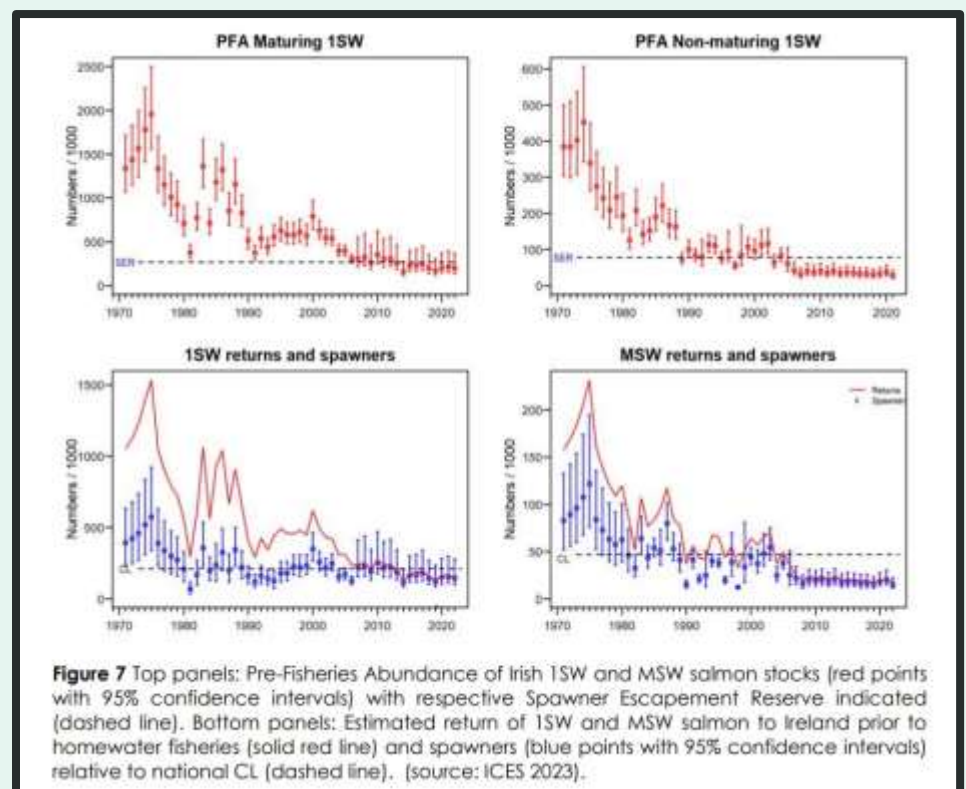
One new licence was issued in Bantry Bay but quashed by order of High Court.

seems to have been reflected in some Scottish fisheries with improved summer runs.

Thankfully, in Ireland, the summer was not warm but again rainfall amounts were not conducive to large catches of salmon. It is increasingly worrying that some major rivers in the south and southeast effectively did not receive rainfall from the spring until late in the season.

It is also interesting that spring stocks in 2024 suggest extremely poor returns which feeds into the narrative (Not always) that linkage exists between grilse and MSW stocks regarding survival at sea in first year as 2023 saw probably a new low for returning stocks of grilse.

The return of salmon to Ireland is in a very precarious position with stocks now at 10% of historic highs. This is also reflected in most countries supporting Atlantic salmon stocks with UK and Norway showing a dramatic overall decline.



There is also evidence that the decline in perceived strongholds like Iceland and the Russian Federation is now accelerating and showing a similar worrying trend.

The scale and basin wide declines are consistent with oceanic influences which may be related to warming SST which can and does have cascading influence on currents and productivity at sea.

Salmon Counters in Ireland

33 salmon counters

Last report available – 2023

Significant decline in numbers of Grilse and MSW Salmon

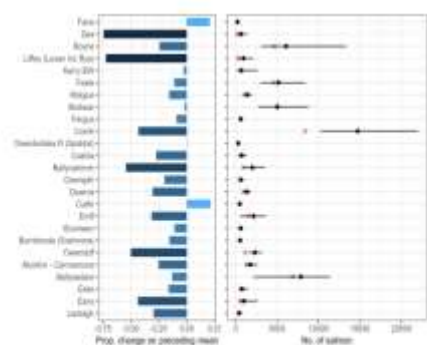


Figure 4 The proportional change in the salmon count in 2023 compared to the preceding multi-annual mean count per fish counter (left panel); Mean salmon count and associated range (min, max) of the preceding time series (indicated by black circle and bar, respectively) in comparison to the most recent year's count (indicated by red X) (right panel).

Tagging Regulations

2025



WILD SALMON AND SEA TROUT TAGGING SCHEME (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2024

It is also worth noting that Baltic salmon saw a dramatic decline in 2023 which would certainly be remote from Atlantic influence, so a climate explanation is suggested.

There is also a suggestion that unregulated high seas fisheries directed at Atlantic salmon may be occurring but evidence of this is currently not reliable, but areas of concern are North of Faroes and South of Greenland. These areas are consistent with fisheries for salmon which were carried out by the Faroes and Greenland during 1970s and 1980s. However, the evidence of these fish coming to market is not available. The probable over exploitation of pelagic species in the areas where salmon feed is certainly a concern and must lead to a significant bycatch of Atlantic salmon and indeed potential ecosystem compromise.

We do know that there are complex reasons which dictate strength of salmon populations but with a background of practical elimination of legal harvest it is not beyond the possibility that other illegal directed fisheries have grown in international waters.

This must be investigated by NASCO and must include a directed and well-resourced program going forward.

The newest threat to Atlantic salmon is certainly the vast and continuing expansion and strengthening of the pink pacific salmon presence in the North Atlantic although 2023 did not see numbers in UK and Ireland that were expected.



Pink Salmon Male - Photo Inland Fisheries Ireland

While these fish would appear to present some difficulties in freshwater, we would suggest that vast populations of these fish are now at sea in Northeast Atlantic and certainly will further compete with all species in traditional feeding areas for Atlantic salmon.

There is anecdotal evidence that pink salmon have reduced other pacific salmon populations through competition in North Pacific.

Research Topics

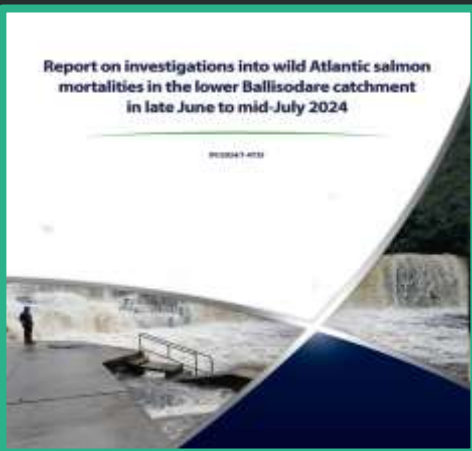
Research Inland Fisheries Ireland

Research Newsletter

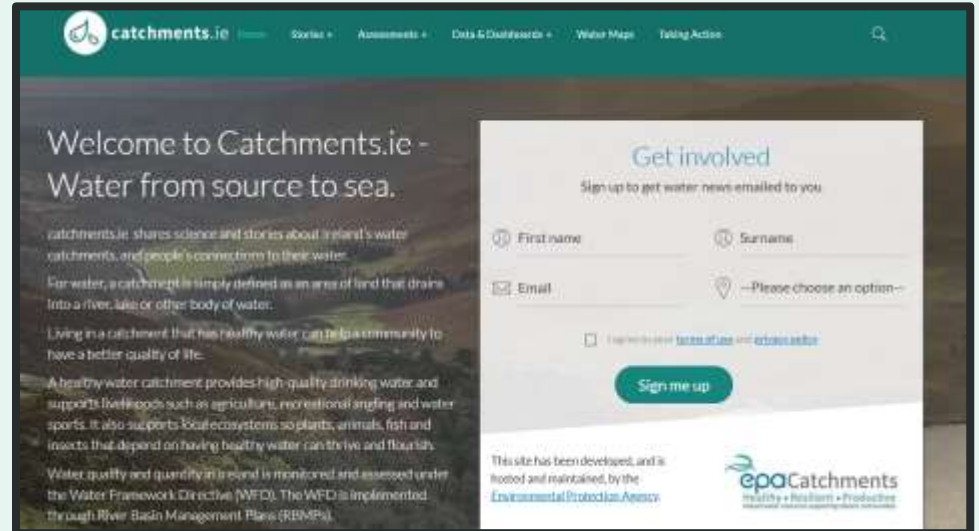
No 19



Ballisadare Mortality Report



Coming closer to Ireland it is quite evident that we have enormous problems regarding water quality and other issues related to loss of biodiversity. It is alarming that the regular updates on water quality by the EPA usher in a consistent and robust denial by stakeholders of the role that agriculture plays. Please be informed and sign up to catchments.ie.



The agriculture lobby is strong politically but the nitrates derogation situation regarding organic nitrogen limits will have to be discontinued and SWIRL will be actively promoting its removal where water quality issues cannot be resolved.

The specter of lack of investment by the state in wastewater infrastructure is now coming to a head with a renewed investment in housing with consequent overload of already inadequate treatment plants.

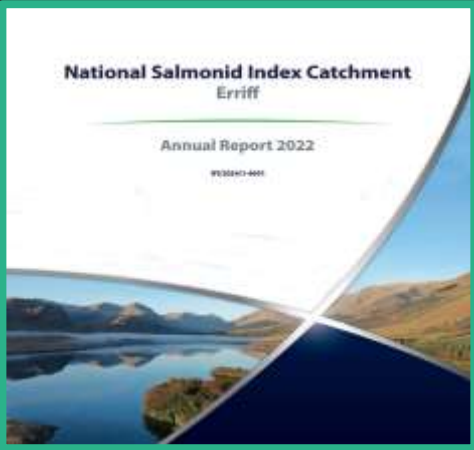
Again, SWIRL will be seeking to empower local communities to make observations on planning to seek proper and reliable infrastructure.

We have also continued to engage regarding open cage salmon aquaculture with many submissions regarding renewals of expired licences. We also are still awaiting a determination of our EU complaint against Ireland in relation to legislation surrounding salmon aquaculture.

The issue of mortalities on Irish salmon farms has been consistently mentioned and is outside international norms which is certainly reflective of an industry which should never be operating in Irish waters.

Mortalities and disease are certainly indicative of a dangerous near coastal environment which has the probable outcome of many negative outcomes for wild salmonids.

National Salmonid Index Catchment Report



Water Framework Directive Fish Sampling Report



Renewal and reviews of existing extant salmon farm licences has commenced, and we anticipate a vast increase in applications going forward.



Lough Currane, Waterville under threat

SWIRL again has been at the forefront in calling for exploitation of wild salmon being reduced substantially. The commercial harvest of salmon is certainly not consistent with low stock levels and needs to be dis-continued while more protection of salmon from over harvest by other stakeholders is a necessity.

Directed conservation is required with larger fish requiring more protection. We still view the allocation of ten tags as being over generous in times where salmon stocks are at such low levels.

We have consistently not called for mandatory catch and release in rivers with a surplus, but we certainly cannot be happy in a situation whereby certain stakeholders may be compromising the calculations through inaccurate returns.

Accordingly, we have made suggestions on how the process can be improved to increase accuracy. It would not be incorrect to suggest that very few salmon catchments are managed in an effective way. We need a situation where properly resourced management structures on rivers lead to a better outcome for the resource.

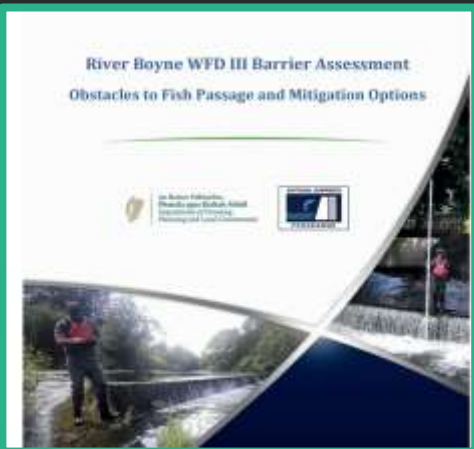
To this end SWIRL has taken a strategic evaluation of our focus going forward and has decided to endeavor to empower local communities to act in the interests of salmon conservation through practical actions facilitated by resources provided by us.

We will again facilitate an annual conference in autumn 2025. These annual conferences serve as a very important information resource to which all stakeholders can engage in and will certainly be continued and expanded.

Research Newsletter Number 18.



River Boyne Barriers Report



NASCO Conference Westport June 2024



The annual North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) conference was held in Westport, County Mayo from June 3rd to 7th. Salmon Watch Ireland attended the conference as a delegate and was part of the Non-Governmental Grouping.

The NASCO conference is essentially made up of government parties with a limited but important input to discussions by the NGO's. Ireland is well represented by our NGOs (including SWIRL) and our viewpoint on management of the resource is primarily focused on conservation.

There was a consensus among all parties that Atlantic salmon have reached a point whereby their very existence may be compromised and that they certainly face extirpation in many rivers. In the face of those threats NASCO adopted a new strategy and an action program with the goal to 'prioritise and drive actions necessary to slow the decline of wild Atlantic salmon populations and demonstrate that restoration is possible' [Strategy NASCO - 10 Year Plan](#)

While accepting that salmon abundance may not be achievable in short term or indeed medium term, it is incumbent that we should concentrate on maximising the production of wild healthy juveniles and maximise the spawning potential of all catchments.

Among the other major issues addressed by the conference were: The threat posed by pink salmon to wild Atlantic salmon. [NASCO - Pink Salmon](#) New guidelines on stocking which again emphasized the need confine restocking to the very limited situations where extirpation is threatened [Stocking Guidelines](#)

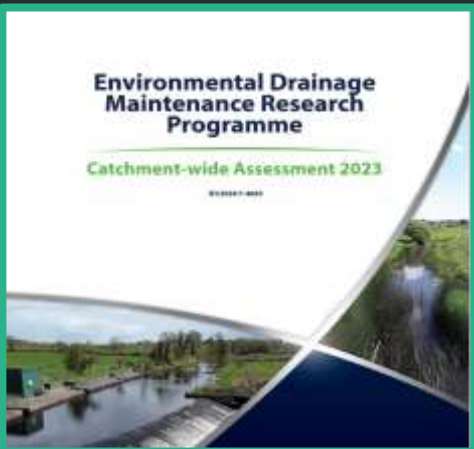
All the conference material is available at following link:
[Report on NASCO Conference, Westport, County Mayo, Ireland](#)

River Liffey Barriers Report



Drained Catchments

Maintenance Research Report



Hydro Power and Migratory Salmonids

Ireland has a long history of hydro-electricity generation comprising small, medium, and large facilities. Typically, these installations require a dam or weir to impound the watercourse and to create a “head” or fall of water which drives a turbine and generates electricity. There are large well known ESB installations on the Shannon, Liffey, Erne, and Lee rivers which have had an enormous adverse impact on their salmon runs.



River Lee Waterworks - Fence to prevent adult salmon migration to hydro station

Other, smaller and largely privately owned installations on smaller rivers or tributaries have also impacted adversely. With the increasing demand for green renewable energy there has been a worldwide revival of interest in new hydro-electric facilities over the last 20 years or so. In Ireland we have seen an increase in new small-scale installations, and in the renovation of older ones.

The purpose of this short article is to highlight the dangers these installations may pose to salmonids, and to highlight to those interested in preserving salmonids that hydro-electricity generation is not necessarily a win-win that does no harm to any aspect of the environment.

Problems may arise for salmonids with upstream and downstream migration, and where it occurs, with passage through turbines. It is incumbent on all of us to be interested in the preservation of salmonids to ensure any applications for new hydro-electric installations are thoroughly explored, and where concerns arise to voice appropriate concerns.

Should you become aware of a development, either completely new or the redevelopment of an old mill or former hydro-electricity installation, you

Latest News

All the latest news from
Salmon Watch Ireland



Updated 04 January 2025

Commercial Salmon Fisheries Operating in 2025

There are approximately 73 public licences available for commercial engines to catch salmon in Ireland.

No nets operate in bays where inflowing rivers are deemed to not have a surplus.

In addition, there are private netting rights on several rivers which can only operate if a surplus exists.

The last available data from 2022 puts commercial catch at just over 4000 fish.

should as first steps check the planning permission and alert the local IFI Director to ensure they are aware of the development.

Further action, including involvement in the planning process, may be warranted should you remain concerned.

Upstream Migration – Dams and weirs, depending on their size and the quality of fish passage facilities provided, may hinder, delay, or in extreme cases end upstream migration. Upstream migrating salmon are naturally drawn to the areas of stronger flow. Where hydro-electric installations are in place the water flow from the turbine tailrace may be sufficiently strong to draw salmon to that flow. This may frequently be the case at times of low river flow.



Downstream view of fence - Note high water will attract salmon towards pass. Low water conditions can lead to a buildup of adult salmon at fence

In some instances, the tailrace may be a separate lengthy channel, without the necessary grating at the tailrace return to the river (as prescribed at Point 123 of the Fisheries (Consolidation) Act, 1959 – see below), with no upstream exit for ascending salmon.

Conditions such as described can lead to lengthy hold ups of migrating salmonids. Fish numbers may build up in a comparatively small area where they are more exposed to poaching, predation, stress and potential disease.

At times of winter drought fish may well be prevented from reaching their natal spawning streams.

Downstream Migration – In regard to salmonids we are concerned with post spawned salmon and trout and migrating smolts. At weirs these may be delayed upstream at times of low flow but at times of moderate and higher flows fish will pass down over the weirs or through fish passes.

Catch Data Commercial

Table 3 - Commercial Salmon and Sea Trout (over 40 cm) Catch 2001 – 2022

Year	TAC	Total Reported Harvest	% of TAC
2001	-	247,889	-
2002	710,444	108,387	15.4%
2003	780,000	108,810	14.1%
2004	101,001	145,203	144.8%
2005	130,500	122,044	93.5%
2006	91,007	86,000	94.5%
Total for 2001-2006 reported harvest at sea and 0 harvest for 2007 (no commercial catch)			
2007	17,000	8,977	53.0%
2008	17,214	8,940	51.9%
2009	18,211	8,000	43.9%
2010	18,000	14,200	78.9%
2011	18,000	12,000	66.7%
2012	18,000	10,000	55.6%
2013	18,000	14,700	81.7%
2014	18,000	9,431	52.4%
2015	18,000	7,100	39.4%
2016	11,111	6,000	53.9%
2017	8,000	8,700	108.8%
2018	8,000	8,016	100.2%
2019	7,007	5,700	81.3%
2020	8,000	6,000	75.0%
2021	7,007	6,000	85.8%
2022	6,000	4,717	78.7%

Table 3 shows the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of salmon and sea trout (over 40 cm) provided for in the commercial sector in 2022 was 6,000. The total commercial contained salmon and sea trout harvest of 4,717 represents 78.7% of TAC (Table 3).

Historic and Recent Research on Atlantic salmon

Atlantic salmon are the most researched fish on the planet. We have all been fascinated by this fish since the last ice age. The Salmon at Sea Project was the largest international effort to explore the Atlantic salmon at sea.

Atlantic salmon at sea:

Findings from recent research and their implications for management



At large dams, descent will be through fish passes, over spillways, or through turbines. Safe passage through dams can be perilous and while mortality levels may run very high, this is dependent on several variable factors that differ from one dam to the next.

If migrating smolts are delayed at an obstacle we can expect numbers to congregate, and predation will increase. Stress levels can also be expected to rise. The planning authorities can play an important role by not authorising generation at time of the smolt run, or in not permitting generation below a defined moderate flow level over the weir.



Inniscarra Dam pictured: There may be significant smolt mortality during passage through large dams.

Turbine Passage and Damage – This is a hugely complex and technical subject where downstream safe passage is determined by many variables particular to each location including: head of water, magnitude of river flow, turbine type, turbine speed (revs per minute), turbine blade design, abrupt pressure change, turbulence, fish size, fish type.

It is important to recognise that every site is unique and outcomes at a site may change as the variables alter. Similarly, a system proven to provide a high percentage level of safe passage at one location may not necessarily repeat those results at another location as the variables will likely differ. Radinger et

This paper by Dr. A.E.J. Went from the 1960's gives a unique insight into the recapture of tagged kelts along the Irish coast and in Greenland.

II. IRISH KELT TAGGING EXPERIMENTS
1961-62 TO 1966-67.
By
A. E. J. Went

Another paper by Dr. Went examined the statistics surrounding the catches of salmon in Ireland.

This period from the 1920's to 1969 is a fascinating read.

IRISH FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS

SERIES A (Freshwater)

No. 7
(1970)

AN ROINN TALMHAÍOCHTA AGUS IASCACHA
(Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)
FOROINN IASCACHA (Fisheries Division)

DUBLIN
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE

al (2021) published a study on mortality of fish passing through hydroelectric turbines, based on data from 122 locations across 15 countries worldwide, 276,890 individual fish from 75 species, and covering all turbine types at high and low head installations. It found 61,797 fish, 22.3%, were killed or showed severe potentially lethal injuries.

They also found that fish mortalities at VLH (very low head) installations varied from 1 to 6%. Okland et al (2017) found that simple disorientation from passing through a turbine may add to overall mortality due to predation of the disorientated migrant. Ferguson et al 2006, and Mueller et al 2020, found in their studies that mortality rates may be underestimated due to less obvious internal injuries that cause delayed mortality.



Parteen Weir - An issue that needs to be solved - Poor water management and poor management of fish passage.

When considering mortality levels, we should also bear in mind that in some rivers smolts face more than one set of turbines on their migration, adding greatly to total mortality levels from the multiplier effect. Turbine damage to fish can come from several causes, the most obvious being blade strike. Deng et al 2007, found that strike risk to fish of a given length is related to rotational speed (revolutions) and spacing between the blades.

Damage may also be caused by abrupt pressure change, cavitation (bubbles created internally that may implode), shear forces, turbulence. Injuries typically involve amputation, laceration, bruising, emboli (blood clots, fat globules, air or other gas bubbles), scale loss.

Scientific Repository

It is our stated intention to design and compile a large repository of scientific studies available to the public, students and researchers.

This resource will be a first in Ireland whereby you can access all materials in one place.

This project will be taking place over the coming months, and we will certainly be asking our supporters for their input and support.

We also see this resource as being a source of material for legal professionals acting for conservation bodies.

University Under-Graduate Research

We intend to approach several universities to request that they actively involve their students in research projects which have Atlantic salmon and sea trout as principal components.

Fish Friendly Turbines – Frequent reference is made to fish friendly turbines but regard such references with extreme caution as they do not guarantee safe passage for fish. One manufacturer promoting its “fish friendly turbines”, on its website openly refers to mortality being “comparatively low”, but that is in comparison with older traditional design turbines.



Conference presentation on barriers - click on link to view.

Recent decades have seen improvements in turbine design aimed at improving the outcome for fish. These include altering blade design with a view to avoiding pinch points for fish, reducing blade strike, and where blade strike does occur thicker and more rounded blade edges aim to reduce the impact and improve the outcome for fish.

While these developments are very welcome, we have already seen there are many factors which impact mortality in fish passage through turbines.

The Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959 – (available online) affords protection to fish. Part VIII, chapter 5 deals with “Dams” and at Point 115 defines: for “this section” dam means... “any dam, weir, dyke, or other erection placed in or across a salmon river for sustaining the water of such river for mill power, navigation, irrigation, or other purposes”. Point 123 covers the requirement for gratings ...“there shall be placed at the points of divergence from and return to the river, of such watercourse, cut, channel or sluice and above and below such sluice a grating (the space between the bars whereof shall not exceed two inches in any place) extending across the whole width of such watercourse, cut, channel or sluice and from the bottom of the bed or sill thereof to the level of the highest winter or flood waters.”

Point 123 (1) (b) stipulates “during the months of March, April, and May and such periods of the year as the brood of salmon and trout shall be descending such river, there shall be placed or stretched over the entire surface of each such grating a wire lattice or network of such dimensions as will effectually

We have helped several students in the past number of years, and we may endeavor to put this on a more structured basis.

Citizen Science

While there has been some excellent work completed regarding training by LAWPRO. It may be the time to further expand the scope of these activities to include angling clubs and other bodies to bolster the effectiveness of water quality analysis. It is imperative that river trusts receive our support and that they have an independent source of knowledge facilitated by Salmon Watch Ireland

What's in the News

A series of newspaper articles involving Salmon Watch Ireland
The Examiner



prevent the admission of salmon fry or other small fish into such watercourse, cut, channel, or sluice”.

This legislation is clearly intended to grant protection to salmonids, and especially to migrating smolts. However, point 123 (3) does afford the Minister power to grant an exemption to these requirements, and elsewhere, there are other legislative provisions which grant certain exemptions to the ESB.

For the most part the existing legislation is old and does not consider the modern changes in the use of water. For example, when originally framed much of the legislation was aimed towards mills and water wheels, where use was often seasonal or intermittent, whereas modern hydro electricity generation is 24 hours 365 days a year operation.

Neither has the legislation been updated to reflect the new environmental legislation envisaged by the Habitats Directive 1994 and the Water Framework Directive 2000. However, when considering applications for hydro electricity generation the planning authorities must consider the protections afforded in the existing fisheries legislation.

Conclusion

Our salmon population has seen an alarming decline, and we know marine survival levels have fallen dramatically. To arrest this decline we have been urged to ensure our rivers are maximising their capacity to produce strong, healthy, and fit smolts. Science has shown these have a better chance of marine survival. Every smolt is now important, and keeping smolts out of turbines will help with our objective to arrest the decline in salmon numbers.

The notion of a tolerable level of smolt mortality at hydro-electric power plants is inconsistent with our desire to preserve and restore our runs of salmon which are already facing more challenges on most of our rivers than they can withstand.

There is a need for vigilance.

Kenmare Bay – Salmon Farms and Delay

The same man-made issues persist in 2025 with salmon farming high on the suspect list pertaining to the survival of salmon smolts and sea trout.

The specter of climate related warming of the seas on the southwestern coast of Ireland is certainly being felt by the salmon farming industry. There are two salmon farms presently operating in Kenmare Bay in County Kerry. The

Numerous other articles appeared during 2024 in other national publications including the Irish Times.



Salmon Farm Escapes

One of the biggest stories in 2024 was the escape of farmed salmon from a facility in Killary Harbour.

We sought to bring this escape to national prominence through several postings and articles published in national papers.

We were greatly helped by the local stakeholders who were very informative regarding the damage to the net pens which allowed many fish to escape.

We certainly did not have to wait long for these fish to ascend local rivers.

We still await the final report on these escapes.

mortality of farmed salmon on both these farms is to say the least extraordinary.

Our recent submissions have illuminated the scale of mortalities on both Deenish Island and Inishfarnard. The total mortality figures contained in the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) reports note exceptional rates of up to 45.8% and 46.9% on Deenish and Inishfarnard respectively which obviously demonstrate a substantial animal welfare issue at the site. While environmental challenges have existed in recent years due to higher water temperatures it is abundantly clear from the climate models that this will only deteriorate further.

Harmful algal blooms, sea lice and jellyfish infestation will only be amplified by declining marine conditions. The many causes of mortality include Pancreas Disease, Amoebic Gill Disease, Viral disease, Sea Lice Damage, Early Maturation, Jellyfish and Harmful Algal Blooms. This is replicated across Ireland and other countries where salmon farming is located.

A question to be asked is how do these mortality figures affect wild salmonids. Moribund fish on the farms are certainly more at risk of parasitic infestation while also being affected by the causative agents which cause amoebic gill disease.

It is believed that sea trout due to their near coastal residence are prone to AGD and repeat infestation by sea lice from these farms. It is worth noting that sea trout angling returns fell from over 500 sea trout (over 40cm) in 2009 to a low of 81 fish in 2022 in the Waterville fishery. The 2009 figure was coincidentally the year before the salmon farms reopened after a fallowing period since 2005.



A heavily compromised sea trout post smolt from the Waterville fishery - Will these fish survive in the presence of open cage salmon farming and the impact of sea lice and disease?

SWIRL Killary Update

Salmon Escape Killary Update



SWIRL Killary Escape

Salmon Farm Escape – Killary Harbour, County Galway

REPORTED ON 10/01/2020 BY: M. O'NEILL
A 100% OCEANIC ATLANTIC SALMON, CUMMINS COMPLIANT, FARMER OWNED, SALMON FARM WITH DEDICATED
FACILITIES AND OFF FARM LOGISTICS



This table from the Marine Institute showing the deterioration of adult sea trout runs in Burishoole readily demonstrates how a sea trout population is effectively eradicated. There has been no explanation from the Marine Institute as to the cause.

Table 6-1: Annual runs of sea trout recorded in the traps.

Year	Mill Race	Salmon Leap	Total	Amended Total
1970-74	1365	762	2127	
1975-79	829	1775	2604	
1980-84	458	780	1238	1719 *
1985-89	386	590	978	
1990-94	134	72	206	
1995-99	86	91	177	
2000-04	32	64	97	
2005-09	21	44	65	
2010	10	62	72	
2011	15	53	68	
2012	19	120	139	
2013	20	50	70	
2014	16	126	142	
2015	31	28	59	
2016	8	73	81	
2017	1	9	10	
2018	5	16	21	
2019	2	16	18	
2020	3	33	36	

However, this collapse coincided with the salmon farm industry opening and expanding in Clew Bay in the 1980's.

Getting back to the Kenmare Bay situation, it is obviously a scandal that the Deenish Island farm owned by MOWI continues to operate unhindered despite a closure order being served on the company in 2019. This closure order was appealed to the High Court but adjourned as MOWI had not exhausted the appeal process through the Aquaculture Licence Appeal Board, ALAB. The appeal is with ALAB for six years and appears to be no closer to a resolution. This is certainly a scandal and cannot be allowed to continue.

We have put together a short video concerning the plight of sea trout and salmon in the Waterville area and ask the simple question as to the cause of the near disappearance of the wonderful sea trout resource.

It is no exaggeration that these wonderful fish on which the tourism angling product was built upon have all but disappeared with angling returns being about 15% of catches of a mere fifteen years ago. The town of Waterville has gained enormous economic investment over the years from visiting anglers who undertook multiple annual trips and invested heavily in the local tourist economy.

It would be remiss not to mention the number of houses built by anglers in the area who wished to retire near Lough Currane. The magnificent sea trout of Waterville has given this town so much, it is now time for local and

International Cooperation

We cooperate at an international level with likeminded bodies, especially in the field of salmon farming. We are members of the Global Salmon Farming Resistance (GSFR)



This body seeks to eliminate open cage salmon farming due to its impact on the coastal ecosystem through pollution and the ecological harm to wild salmonids and other near coast species.

This is a global organization and its advocacy is ongoing.

We have also linked to NGO'S In both Ireland and international.

national and indeed international support to energise a campaign to highlight their plight.

We certainly call on all anglers to support this cause and to show your support to the local boat hire operators and Ghillies by amplifying this campaign to national and international prominence. Please visit Waterville and demonstrate your support.



Short Film regarding the demise of Waterville's Sea trout

It is essential that questions are answered, and that real progress is achieved in 2025 through the continued legal and advocacy process undertaken by groups like Salmon Watch Ireland.

The Bantry Bay Case: A victory for Wild Atlantic salmon.

The long running high court case against the Aquaculture Licence Appeals Board and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine received judgement on Friday 12th July, 2024 and we were successful along with fellow applicants, in having the decision to issue a salmon farm licence at Shot Head in Bantry Bay quashed and sent back to ALAB for re-decision effectively forcing MOWI to start the entire process of applying for a licence again which will be subject to our full consideration and renewed objection on numerous environmental grounds.

Briefly put, the Aquaculture Licence will be quashed for inadequate:

- AA Screening of the risk of effects of seal scarers on seals of the SAC.
- EIA as to the risks of escape of salmon from the fish farm. This finding relates to necessity of re-consideration of bespeaking the DAFM reports on the 2014 farmed salmon escape in Bantry Bay, and comprehensiveness of the EIA as it related to the specification and structural integrity of the cage installation.

Salmon Farm Submissions

The renewed attempts to renew extant licences are at full tilt with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine seemingly intent on renewing and extending in all areas.

We have been to the forefront of submitting our objections and will continue to do the same.

We will appeal all licences granted to ALAB and will certainly consider Judicial Review if necessary.

Our Recent Submissions

[Deenish](#)

[Inishfarnard](#)

[Ballinakill](#)

[Mc Swynes Bay](#)

- reasons for the conclusion that the proposed fish farm will not lead to a breach of WFD limits as to Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen – specifically, reasons for reliance on RPS’s “typical” data in reaching that conclusion.

In addition, Judge Holland declared that ALAB delayed unreasonably as to AA Screening from the making of the Appeals in October 2015 to embarking on AA Screening after the Oral Hearing Report of November 2017.

The Foreshore Licence will be quashed as

- contingent on the quashed Aquaculture Licence, Ministerial regard to which was a statutory requirement of granting the Foreshore Licence.
- the Minister erred, in breach of s.82 of the 1997 Act, in granting the Foreshore Licence in 2022, in having regard to his Aquaculture Licence decision of 2015 rather than to ALAB’s impugned Aquaculture Licence determination of 29th June 2021.

If you desire, you can read the full judgements at the following link

[Court Judgement – There are 4 judgements included.](#)

Charting the Future for Salmon Watch Ireland

Campaigning for salmon conservation in Ireland

Salmon Watch Ireland (“SWIRL”) is a non-governmental organisation, dedicated to protection of wild salmon. Its origins go back to ending Drift Netting salmon in 2007.

It is supported by anglers, fishery owners, and tourism businesses. SWIRL is an observer at the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (‘NASCO’). Atlantic salmon have an iconic image.

Their survival is now threatened on virtually every level. Wild populations in Ireland have declined by approximately 90%, from c.1.75 million in the 1970’s, to around 175,000 today.

Our Policy Document Review ongoing in 2025



Please have a read of these policies and help us review in this much changed time for the conservation of salmon and sea trout

Threats include.

- Habitat Loss and Degradation
- Pollution from industry and agriculture
- Overfishing: Illegal fisheries both national and international – Overfishing at feeding grounds of pelagic fish with bycatch inevitable.
- Climate Change Freshwater: Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, loss of river flow, disrupting the life cycle of salmon
- Climate change in ocean: Currents change with warming ocean, prey distribution has changed, weather patterns change with warming ocean. Zooplankton assemblage changing causing a cascade of effects.
- Aquaculture and Escapes from salmon farms introduce diseases, genetic introgression and farms amplify sea lice causing mortality at scale of wild salmonids.
- Changing predator interaction, both avian and marine mammal interaction with wild salmon and sea trout.
- Invasive species threat from pink salmon- Introduction of disease and competition

SWIRL invites you to support us and local communities to restore habitats, mitigate climate impacts, regulate aquaculture, and protect spawning areas.

SWIRL works with local organisations on river barriers, fish-passes, and regulatory processes. Its limited resources have prevented the spread of salmon farms and pollution.

SWIRL opposes policies, which are 'light touch' regulation of salmon farming, and a compliant approach to aquaculture in general. It opposes inappropriately sited salmon farms with a strong belief that open cage salmon farming cannot be accommodated.

SWIRL is expanding its membership to increase funding and enhance public awareness to face challenges for wild salmon. SWIRL seeks to develop community initiatives to protect salmon.

We seek to further engage with Inland Fisheries Ireland, NPWS, LAWPRO and Leader programmes to assist community organisations;

Please join SWIRL in a science-based approach to salmon conservation with community involvement.

Otherwise, it will not be possible to prevent salmon decline, and without which there will be no prospect of conserving Atlantic salmon in Ireland.

Contact Us

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Thomastown
County Kilkenny

Phone 353 086 3991074

Email:

salmonwatchireland@gmail.com

Website

<https://salmonwatchireland.ie>

COMPLETE THE STANDING ORDER FORM AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD BELOW.

TO JOIN SWIRL FOR

30.00 EURO PER ANNUM AS AN INDIVIDUAL

100.00 EURO PER ANNUM AS A CLUB OR INTERESTED CONSERVATION BODY

BECOME A PATRON BY COMMITTING TO AN ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION OF
 €1,000 FOR 3 YEARS.

We have secured limited funding from the Community Foundation of Ireland through an anonymous donor for the next three years and this will allow us to broaden our policies and indeed help in a practical way to secure better conservation of Atlantic salmon.

This funding has allowed us to employ on a part-time basis an individual for the next six months to actively pursue our broad goals and aspirations for Atlantic salmon.

If you wish to become a supporter of Salmon Watch Ireland, you can do so by several methods online or by standing order mandate.

[Donation](#)

[Membership](#)

[Standing Order](#) Please present at your bank branch and notify Salmon Watch Ireland. Standing orders may also be set up in your own online banking portal

[By mail or credit transfer to Salmon Watch Ireland](#)

