

Issue Number 12

11 May 2025

Policy Salmon Watch Ireland

We have updated our policies to reflect the current state of salmon population declines

Please assess our policy statements on the following topics this week

Habitat, Water Quality, Climate Resilience



Predation of Salmonids



Salmon Watch Ireland Newsletter

- **Introgression of Farmed Salmon into Irish Rivers**
- **Collapse of Spring Salmon**

“GeneFlow Project 2024: Safeguarding the Genetics of Ireland’s Wild Salmon”

Salmon Watch Ireland welcomes this recent publication concerning the project to examine genetic introgression in Irish rivers.

We note the cooperation between the three agencies, IFI, UCC and Teagasc. This is a welcome development and hopefully studies like this will continue allowing a wider perspective to be gained by all.



Full Project Link: [GeneFlow Report IFI 2024](#)

Overview:

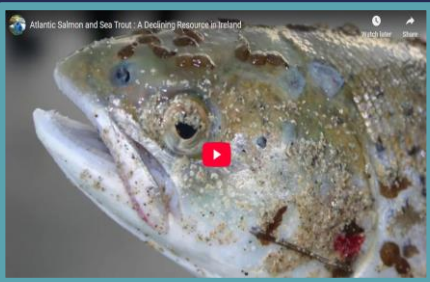
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), University College Cork (UCC), and Teagasc continued their collaborative effort in 2024 as part of the GeneFlow project—a nationwide initiative to monitor and safeguard the genetic integrity of Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). The primary goal is to detect and measure harmful gene flow (genetic introgression) from farmed escapee salmon into wild stocks.

Protection and Co-operation



Explore some of our Video

Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout: A declining resource in Ireland



Why This Matters:

The risk of hybridisation between wild and escaped farmed salmon is no longer a theoretical concern. These genetic intrusions can weaken local adaptations, reduce productivity, and destabilise entire salmon populations. A significant farm escape event in Killary Harbour in August 2024 underscored the urgency of this issue, with farmed salmon detected in rivers across the western seaboard soon after.

SWIRL is also concerned that many smaller escapes may be taking place. These escapes may be the result of increased usage of well boats and physical transfers of fish from cages. It is also noted that the increasing intensity of storms can undermine the integrity of cages and escapes may not be noticed for a considerable period of time

Extent of Survey – 2024:

Between July and September, two dedicated IFI sampling teams visited 55 river catchments, collecting a total of 1,411 juvenile salmon samples from 44 rivers. Despite challenges—including low salmon abundance in some rivers—these build on 2023 efforts and brings the total sampled rivers to 122 of Ireland's 144 designated salmon rivers.

- Sampling used electrofishing to gather 0+ fry from a range of rivers.
- Genetic material was preserved in ethanol later for DNA and transcriptomic analysis.
- The sampling effort also included identifying other fish species and assessing site difficulty for future planning.

Looking Ahead:

Year three of GeneFlow (2025) will focus on:

- Revisiting sites where introgression signals were detected.
- Sampling remaining un-surveyed rivers.
- Enhancing protocols based on past field data.

As Ireland faces increasing pressure from aquaculture expansion, projects like GeneFlow are critical in preserving the unique evolutionary heritage of Irish salmon.

Recent Newsletters

Issue Number 11 Deenish Island

Issue Number 11
25 April 2025

Policy Salmon Watch Ireland

We have updated our policies to reflect the current state of salmon population declines

Please access our policy statements on the following three topics this week.

Salmon Farming



Salmon Watch Ireland Newsletter
Deenish Island Aquaculture Update
Urgent Concerns Raised by Salmon Watch Ireland

Licence Breach: Introduction of Pre-Adult Salmon

The recent transfer of fish to the Deenish Island site appears to breach key conditions of the extant aquaculture licence (AQ199).

The licence strictly permits the introduction of smolts only—juvenile salmon—up to a cap of 400,000.

The recent stocking of 406,450 pre-adult salmon, each averaging 2.155 kg, appears to represent a clear breach of this stipulation. This information was provided on foot of a request for [AIE](#) (Access to Environmental Information) to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

We strongly contend:

- No adult or pre-adult salmon may be transferred to the site.
- Original licence conditions remain. The farm operates under Section 19 A (4) of The Fisheries Act.
- No licence amendment is in place. Must operate under terms and conditions of original licence.


The original licence states that there is a limit on stocking at the site

- Stocking Limit: Not to exceed 400,000 smolts.
- Harvest Cap: Not to exceed 500 tonnes (dead weight) annually.


Issue Number 10 Transparency Blocked by DAFM

Issue number 10
16 April 2025

Selected Recent Newsletters
28 Feb



10 March



Salmon Watch Ireland Newsletter

Transparency Blocked: DAFM Refuses Access to Salmon Farm Data

On 4th March 2025, Salmon Watch Ireland submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) seeking essential data on mortalities, stocking, and harvest figures from several open-net salmon farm licence applications. These licences—T10/054, T10/058, T10-067, and T12-276—are currently under public consultation, yet crucial operational data has been redacted. We argue that this information is vital to enable the public to make informed submissions and fully engage in the environmental oversight of salmon aquaculture.

Request Refused

On 1st April 2025, DAFM issued a formal refusal of our FOI request (Ref: FOI/25/072). The refusal was grounded in the following legal provisions under the FOI Act 2004:

- Section 37(1): Claiming the data includes *personal information*.
- Section 36(1): Asserting the data is *commercially sensitive* and could cause material financial loss or impact competitive positions if disclosed.

DAFM maintains that these justifications outweigh the public interest in transparency.

Internal Review Submitted

In response, Salmon Watch Ireland submitted an internal review request on 5th April 2025. We emphasized that:

- The request explicitly excluded *personal information*.
- The data sought relates solely to operational performance and environmental outcomes—not proprietary trade secrets.
- The public has a legitimate right to scrutinize aquaculture practices that impact our shared marine environment.

We are pursuing the review process and have arranged the statutory fee of €30 to initiate formal reconsideration by a senior official.

We strongly advocate against salmon farming in open cages and will maintain our support for this type of research.

Collapse of Spring Salmon Ireland 2025.

Appeal to reduce exploitation.

Anecdotal reports from around Ireland and indeed Scotland would suggest very poor catches of MSW Atlantic salmon thus far in 2025. We did highlight the recent report on the Greenland fishery in 2024 in which catches were poor thus it should come as no surprise that MSW salmon are not in great numbers in our rivers this year. West Greenland is the area where our MSW salmon feed during their second year at sea.

We in Salmon Watch Ireland have strongly advocated for an end to commercial fisheries in Ireland, and certainly that fisheries presently licensed should not commence until 01 June and not be allowed to operate from the 12th May which occurs in several catchments.

The present legislation allows for some netting stations to commence on 12th May and we believe that an intervention even at this late stage could allow more fish to enter these catchments.



We would also suggest that the angling community should further engage with conservation measures and return as many wild salmon above 65 cm as possible.

Please Donate to Salmon
Watch Ireland

We offer a limited research
function regarding legal and
environmental issues.

Please contact us

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Murphy

Donate and Support

salmonwatchireland.ie

The tagging legislation allows three salmon per day from 12th May and the angling community must consider a voluntary limit of one salmon per day.

It is also imperative that larger salmon are safeguarded and as many as possible be allowed to spawn.

Salmon need our concerted efforts to help them – Do your part and engage in active conservation.

While it is difficult to change legislation at this late stage, the dearth of MSW salmon this year highlights the need for active real time management, and we ask that Inland Fisheries Ireland might consider an active campaign to highlight the need for conservation especially for larger salmon above 65 cm.

“We know that the angling community will play their part”



MSW Salmon are the lifeblood of the majority of catchments.

Up to 80% are female carrying up to 800 ova per pound weight.

Think again before exploiting these fish.



North Atlantic Salmon
Conservation Organisation



Pure Salmon Campaign

