

Wild Salmon Conservation Newsletter - Exploitation Survey

A Turning Point for Ireland's Wild Salmon

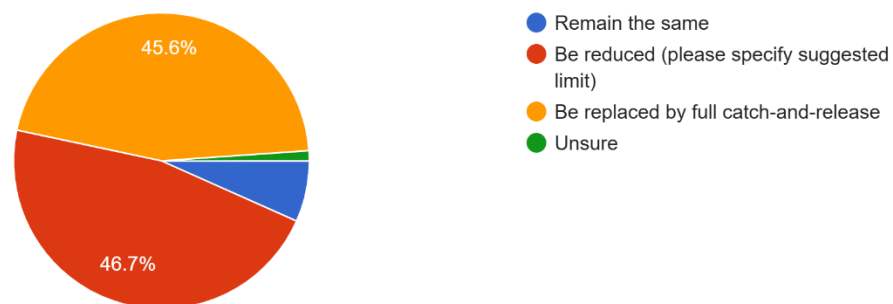
The recent collection of angler and stakeholder feedback reveals a powerful, unified message: Ireland's wild salmon are in crisis, and immediate, decisive action is needed. Across the country, anglers, conservationists, and local communities are expressing deep concern over collapsing salmon stocks and the failures of current systems meant to protect them.

This newsletter captures the initial main concerns, priorities, and recommended actions shared by respondents on how best to manage exploitation and implement policies that will boost wild smolt output and strengthen adult salmon returns.

Protecting Salmon: Reducing Exploitation

Ireland currently allows anglers to retain up to 10 salmon per season. Do you believe this should:

90 responses



Many contributors call for:

- Zero exploitation of spring salmon
- Strict catch limits (0–3 fish) or *nationwide catch-and-release*
- Concern that full closures could increase poaching due to fewer eyes on rivers

In light of declining salmon stocks, do you support the complete phase-out of commercial salmon netting (both public and private)?

90 responses



Despite differing views on methods, the message is consistent: wild salmon must be protected at all costs.

Strong Criticism of IFI and Government Agencies

There is widespread frustration with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and other state bodies responsible for river and marine protection. Respondents cited:

- Failure to enforce existing laws
- Insufficient conservation staff
- Bureaucratic “silo” culture across agencies
- Weak oversight of aquaculture and pollution

Many believe a complete reform — or replacement — of these bodies is necessary to safeguard the future of wild salmon.

Salmon Farming: A Major Threat

One of the strongest messages is opposition to open-pen salmon aquaculture. Concerns include:

- Sea lice damaging vulnerable smolts
- Disease transmission
- Pollution of coastal waters
- Misleading "organic" labelling

Many call for a full ban on offshore farms or a transition to land-based, closed systems.

Marine Survival: The Critical Bottleneck

While river habitat is vital, respondents repeatedly emphasised that the biggest losses occur at sea. Key issues identified:

- Trawlers intercepting migrating salmon
- Pair-trawling and by-catch in mackerel fisheries
- Lack of monitoring of migration corridors
- Offshore netting of returning salmon

There is growing demand for marine protected zones and strict enforcement of offshore fishing activity.

Habitat Restoration & Water Quality

Contributors highlighted a need for major investment in restoring rivers and spawning streams:

- Removal of barriers
- Enhancement of redds and spawning gravels
- Improved in-stream flows and light conditions
- Regular electrofishing and fry surveys
- Real-time pollution monitoring systems

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Pollution — particularly sewage and agricultural runoff — was frequently identified as an escalating crisis.

Angler Engagement & Youth Involvement

Several respondents worry about an aging angler population and the declining number of young people entering the sport. Suggestions include:

- Incorporating salmon ecology into school curricula
- Involving children in citizen science projects
- Public awareness campaigns
- Keeping rivers open for C&R to maintain angler presence and protection

Young people are seen as essential to the long-term fight for salmon conservation.

Modern Monitoring & Technology

Respondents strongly support the adoption of new tools:

- AI-powered river monitoring systems
- Modern ARIS sonar fish counters
- Increased smolt and fry monitoring

Better data means better decisions — and fewer excuses for inaction.

Funding, PR, and Political Advocacy

Many contributors stressed the need to:

- Invest in professional public relations
- Increase public visibility of salmon decline
- Pursue European conservation funding
- Engage with local and national politicians

Public pressure is seen as crucial to overcoming political inertia.

A Clear Message: Act Now

Across all comments, one theme stands out: time is running out. Salmon populations are approaching critical thresholds. Contributors warn that if action is delayed, wild salmon may follow the path of extinction seen in other regions.

“Once the spawning stock falls below a critical level, extinction becomes inevitable.”

The call to action is loud, urgent, and unified.

What Happens Next?

Using this feedback, we aim to:

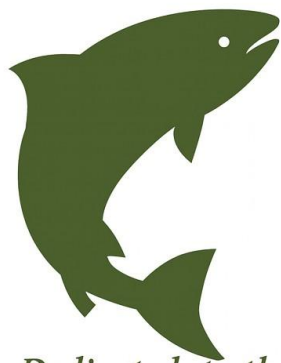
- Shape stronger policy proposals
- Increase public awareness
- Expand our scientific and advocacy work
- Push for immediate government action

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Thank you to everyone who contributed. The passion and commitment shown across these responses demonstrate that while the challenge is enormous, the will to protect Ireland's wild salmon is stronger than ever.

This survey is available on an ongoing basis, and all contributions are welcome.

Survey



**SALMON
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Dedicated to the restoration of salmon abundance in Ireland"

SAVING THE IRISH SALMON