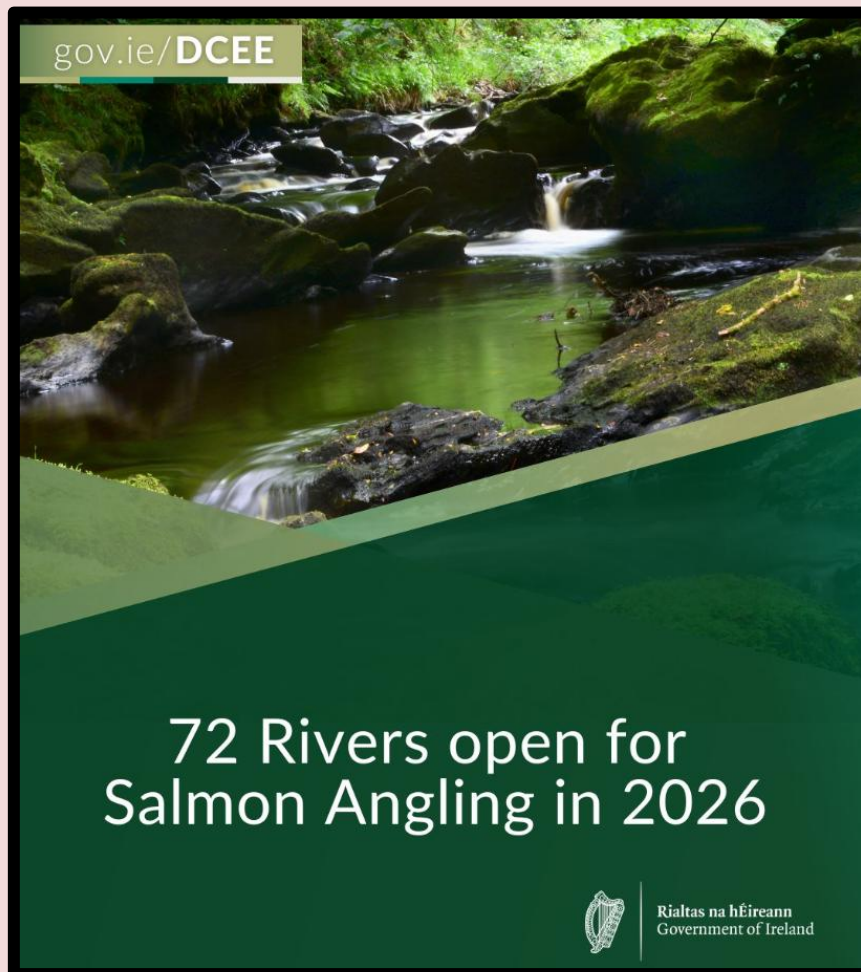


Salmon Watch Ireland

Newsletter Number 36 – 10 April 2026

New Regulation Wild Salmon and Seatrout



Current management advice is not sufficiently precautionary. If stocks remain at their current low levels, all sectors may face closure to harvest—not as a result of regulation, but through stock collapse

Introduction.

We acknowledge the inclusion of certain positive measures within the proposed regulations, notably the closure of salmon harvest in September and the further curtailment of spring fisheries. These steps reflect, at least in part, the serious and ongoing decline in wild salmon stocks and the need for a precautionary response.

However, the proposed seasonal bag limit of seven salmon represents a substantial departure from original management advice. It is not supported by the available evidence and cannot be defended as a meaningful conservation measure, as it does not materially reduce overall exploitation. The data are clear: the majority of salmon anglers catch no fish, and only 12.6% harvest any salmon at all. Among those who do, the vast majority take three or fewer fish, with only a small minority accounting for higher catches. In addition, approximately 58% of salmon caught by anglers are released.

At a time when many river systems are failing to meet conservation limits, and where surpluses are declining even in historically productive catchments, such an approach risks undermining the credibility of the management framework. Conservation policy must be grounded in biological reality and evidence, not shaped by short-term considerations or competing interests.

We are also deeply concerned by the continued operation of commercial salmon fisheries. We await the forthcoming Control of Salmon Fishing Order. However, any expansion beyond previously understood management parameters contained in the original management advice would be incompatible with the urgent need to reduce pressure on already vulnerable stocks. In particular, increases in quota or the issuing of a greater number of district licences than originally envisaged would have the effect of increasing overall harvest and fishing effort at a time when reductions are clearly required.

This concern is compounded by parallel developments within the recreational sector, where some fisheries have transitioned from catch-and-release management advice toward harvest. In combination, these trends risk driving a cumulative increase in exploitation pressure across both sectors, directly at odds with conservation objectives.

There is also a clear need for specific restrictions on commercial fishing activity during periods of low water, when salmon are particularly vulnerable. In such conditions, exploitation can become highly concentrated over short timeframes, resulting in a disproportionate share of the annual harvest being taken in a limited period. This level of intensity is inconsistent with sustainable management and must be addressed. Management must consider not only total harvest, but the concentration of effort in time and under particular environmental conditions.

A key gap in the current proposals is the absence of timely, in-season data. There is a clear need for mandatory in-season reporting of angling catches and harvests to enable responsive management. Without such information, it is not possible to assess

exploitation levels as the season progresses or to introduce appropriate measures where pressure becomes excessive.

As a conservation-focused body, our concern is the long-term protection and restoration of wild salmon populations. In that context, we have included a voluntary code aimed at reducing exploitation and promoting a stronger culture of restraint and stewardship across the fishery. While such measures can support conservation outcomes, they cannot compensate for insufficient regulation.

What is required is a coherent, evidence-based approach that aligns management measures with conservation need. The current proposals fall short of that standard and risk accelerating, rather than reversing, the decline they are intended to address.

All the bylaws and tagging regulations are set out below:

Tagging Regulation 2026

Angling Bylaws - 2026 - Wild Salmon and Seatrout

Voluntary Code Adoption

In light of the ongoing decline in wild salmon stocks, Salmon Watch Ireland is asking anglers to act with restraint and consider the long-term future of the resource.

Rather than relying solely on the legal harvest limits, anglers are encouraged to adopt a more responsible and precautionary approach to salmon retention.

Where anglers choose to harvest salmon, the following voluntary measures are recommended:

- **Limit total harvest to a maximum of three salmon during the period 1 June to 31 August, in line with original management advice**
- **Retain no more than one salmon per day**
- **Release all salmon over 65 cm to protect key breeding fish**
- **Practice catch-and-release responsibly, minimising handling and stress**
- **Report all catches, retained and released, to Inland Fisheries Ireland in a timely manner**
- **These measures are intended to reduce overall exploitation, protect the most valuable spawning fish, and avoid concentrated pressure during sensitive periods.**

Adopting this code represents a practical step anglers can take to support the recovery of wild salmon stocks.

“When Stocks Are Collapsing, Every Fish Matters”