

Salmon Watch Ireland – Newsletter Number 40 – 09 June 26

River Glyde Fish Kill



Introduction

Salmon Watch Ireland expresses its profound shock and deep concern at the devastating fish kill on the River Glyde, an environmental disaster that has resulted in the loss of more than 20,000 fish and the destruction of a significant portion of one of the region's most important river ecosystems.

Early reports indicate that Atlantic salmon, brown trout, eels, pike and numerous other species have been affected across an extensive stretch of the river. The scale of mortality reported makes this one of the most serious fish kill incidents recorded in Ireland in recent decades.

The River Glyde is not merely a watercourse; it is a vital salmonid river, an important component of the wider Dundalk Bay catchment, and part of Ireland's natural heritage. Wild Atlantic salmon populations are already under severe pressure nationally from habitat degradation, declining water quality, climate change and poor marine survival. The loss of entire generations of fish from a river system can have ecological consequences lasting many years.

A Wider Issue.

The devastation on the River Glyde must also be viewed in the context of the environmental pressures already identified within the wider catchment. The EPA's Catchment Assessment for the Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee Catchment found that only a small proportion of surface waters were achieving Good or High Ecological Status, while almost half of all waterbodies were classified as being At Risk of failing their environmental objectives. Agriculture, hydro-morphological pressures and urban runoff were identified among the principal pressures affecting water quality, with nutrient and organic pollution highlighted as significant issues within the catchment.

Several sections of the River Glyde were already identified as being under pressure from nutrient, sediment and organic impacts and formed part of a designated restoration area under the River Basin Management Plan. These findings demonstrate that the river system was already recognised as environmentally vulnerable before this incident occurred.



While speculation has emerged regarding the source of the pollution event, the precise cause remains under investigation. Salmon Watch Ireland believes it is essential that the investigation be allowed to establish the facts and determine the exact circumstances that led to this catastrophe. However, regardless of the eventual source, the scale of the fish kill raises serious questions about the resilience of the river system and the effectiveness of measures currently in place to protect vulnerable watercourses from major pollution incidents.

Guidance Measures Organic Pollution

It is important to recognise that extensive guidance, best-practice measures and regulatory frameworks already exist across a range of sectors to minimise the risk of pollutants entering rivers and streams. The vast majority of landowners, farmers and river users take their environmental responsibilities seriously and play an important role in protecting water quality. The focus now must be on establishing what happened, identifying any failures that may have occurred, and ensuring that lessons are learned to prevent a recurrence of an event of this magnitude.

Salmon Watch Ireland commends the efforts of Inland Fisheries Ireland staff, local angling clubs, volunteers and all those involved in responding to the incident and gathering evidence. However, response alone is not enough. There must now be a comprehensive, transparent and independent investigation to establish the full circumstances surrounding this event, identify those responsible and ensure that appropriate enforcement action follows where breaches of environmental law are identified.



We are calling for:

- 1. A full public report detailing the cause, extent and ecological consequences of the fish kill.**
- 2. A comprehensive ecological assessment of impacts on salmon, trout, eel and other aquatic species throughout the affected catchment.**

- 3. An urgent review of pollution prevention measures in the River Glyde catchment, particularly in areas already identified as being under significant environmental pressure.**
- 4. Robust enforcement action where breaches of environmental legislation are established.**
- 5. A long-term restoration and recovery programme supported by adequate resources, monitoring and reporting.**
- 6. A review of the effectiveness of current catchment protection measures in waterbodies already designated as At Risk under the Water Framework Directive.**
- 7. Enhanced public engagement and citizen science initiatives to strengthen early detection and reporting of pollution incidents.**

Salmon Watch Ireland also believes that local communities can play an important role in protecting vulnerable river catchments through responsible citizen science and environmental stewardship. We encourage anglers, walkers, residents, schools and river users to become more aware of activities and environmental conditions that may pose a risk to water quality, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall or when rivers are especially vulnerable to pollution events.

Members of the public who observe discoloured water, fish in distress, unusual odours, significant runoff entering watercourses, algal blooms, or any other signs of potential pollution should report their observations promptly through the [Salmon Watch Ireland](#) reporting portal where contact details to the relevant statutory authorities are available. Timely reporting can assist in the early detection of incidents, support investigations and contribute to the protection of fish populations and aquatic habitats.

As part of this effort, Salmon Watch Ireland will encourage greater public awareness of river catchment pressures and promote a "Know Your River" approach, empowering communities to become active custodians of their local waterways. Citizen observations can provide valuable supplementary information to official monitoring programmes and help build a stronger culture of shared responsibility for the protection of Ireland's rivers and wild salmon habitats.

This incident serves as a stark reminder that Ireland's rivers remain vulnerable to pollution despite years of policy commitments and river basin planning. Environmental protection cannot exist solely on paper. Where risks have been identified, there must be sufficient oversight, resources and enforcement to prevent irreversible ecological damage.

Salmon Watch Ireland stands in solidarity with local communities, anglers, landowners, conservation groups and all those who value healthy rivers and thriving wild fish populations. We will continue to monitor developments closely and will work with stakeholders to ensure that lessons are learned from this tragedy.

The devastation witnessed on the River Glyde must become a turning point for river protection in Ireland. The loss of more than 20,000 fish in a single pollution event is not simply an environmental incident; it is a warning that known pressures on our freshwater ecosystems can no longer be ignored. If a river can lose more than 20,000 fish in a single event, then the protection of our freshwater ecosystems must become a national priority, not merely a policy aspiration.

The recovery of the River Glyde will require a transparent investigation, effective enforcement where warranted, and a long-term commitment to restoration, monitoring and the protection of water quality throughout the catchment.

Given the exceptionally challenging weather conditions experienced in many areas this year, Salmon Watch Ireland urges all farmers and contractors to exercise the utmost caution when planning slurry applications. Slurry should only be spread when soil and weather conditions are suitable and where there is no risk of runoff entering nearby watercourses. A moment of care can prevent lasting environmental damage. Protecting rivers, fisheries and drinking water sources depends on everyone playing their part and following established best practice at all times.

Is it safe to spread slurry?

Teagasc Guidelines Here

Is it Safe to Spread Slurry?

Poorly Draining Soil

- Ground soft/heavy
- SMD < 5 mm
- Heavy rain forecast < 2 days
- Soil temp < 6°C (no growth)

STOP
no spreading

Free Draining Soil

- Ground soft/heavy
- SMD < 0 mm
- Heavy rain forecast < 2 days
- Soil temp < 6°C (no growth)

- Ground yielding
- SMD 5-10 mm
- Heavy rain forecast 2-3 days
- Soil temp 6°C (growth starts)

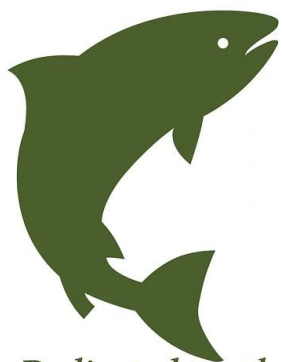
PROCEED
with caution

- Ground yielding
- SMD 0-5 mm
- Heavy rain forecast 2 days
- Soil temp 6°C (growth starts)

- Ground good or good/firm
- SMD > 10 mm
- Heavy rain forecast > 3 days
- Soil temp > 6°C (growth constant)

SAFE
to spread

- Ground good or good/firm
- SMD 5-10 mm
- Heavy rain forecast > 2 days
- Soil temp > 6°C (growth constant)



SALMON WATCH IRELAND

Dedicated to the restoration of salmon abundance in Ireland"

SAVING THE IRISH SALMON