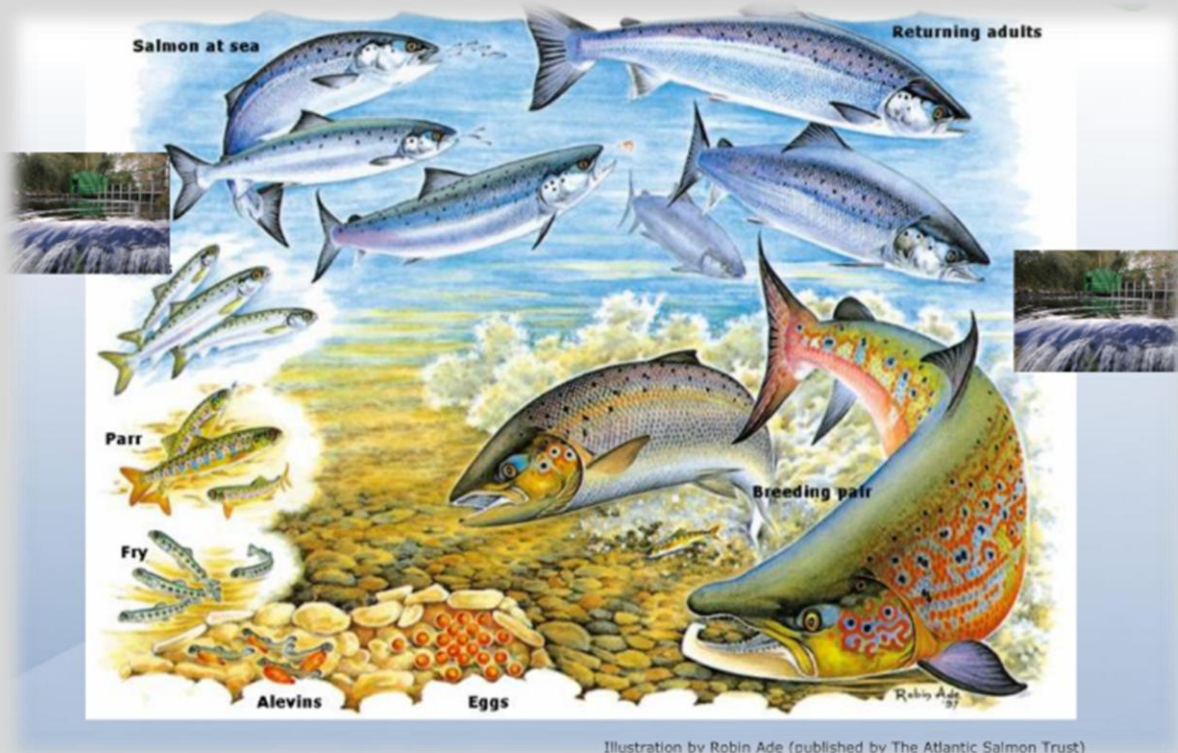


SALMON WATCH IRELAND

Newsletter No. 45 – August 2026

Protecting Our Salmon – Every Fish Matters



As we approach the final part of the 2026 salmon season, the need to protect Ireland's remaining wild Atlantic salmon could hardly be clearer.

Our salmon have endured another challenging summer. Low flows and elevated water temperatures have placed additional stress on fish already facing poor marine survival and numerous pressures throughout their life cycle.

In this newsletter we update members on Salmon Watch Ireland's appeal against the renewal of the Deenish Island salmon farm licence, remind anglers of the mandatory catch-and-release requirement from 1 September, ask Blackwater anglers to continue supporting the genetic study through adult scale collection, and encourage everyone who cares about our rivers to remain vigilant for pollution.

Deenish Island Salmon Farm – Appeal Lodged

Salmon Watch Ireland has formally lodged an appeal against the decision to renew the aquaculture licence for the **Deenish Island salmon farm in Ballinskelligs Bay, County Kerry**.

We believe the decision raises fundamental questions about how Ireland can continue to license intensive open-net salmon farming while wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout populations are under such severe pressure and the marine environment itself is changing rapidly.



Our appeal raises a number of significant issues, including the history of exceptionally high farmed salmon mortality at Deenish and the wider Kenmare Bay, fish health and welfare, sea lice and disease, risks to wild salmon and sea trout, climate change, environmental carrying capacity and whether the cumulative pressures affecting already depleted wild salmonid populations have been adequately considered.

The mortality history at Deenish is particularly important. Salmon Watch Ireland believes that previous production performance cannot simply be separated from an assessment of whether a site remains environmentally and biologically suitable for future production. Repeated or exceptionally high mortality should be regarded as a warning signal requiring the closest possible scrutiny when a licence is being renewed.

Climate change makes that scrutiny even more important. Rising sea temperatures, marine heatwaves, harmful algal blooms, changing disease dynamics and periods of reduced oxygen availability are creating increasingly difficult conditions for salmon farming.

Open-net cages cannot isolate farmed fish from these changes. The environmental conditions upon which the existing production model developed are changing, and licensing decisions must recognise that reality.

There is also a much wider issue at stake.

Wild salmon returning to our rivers are already dealing with poor marine survival, high summer water temperatures, low flows, habitat degradation, barriers, water-quality pressures, predation and exploitation. Where populations are depleted, we believe regulators must seek to reduce every significant and manageable additional source of mortality.

This is particularly relevant to aquaculture because open-net cages operate in direct biological connection with the surrounding marine environment. Parasites, pathogens and waste are not contained within the farm boundary, while escaped farmed salmon can potentially interact with wild populations.

Salmon Watch Ireland's position is that Ireland should begin a planned transition away from intensive open-net cage salmon farming towards **land-based closed-containment production**. Such systems offer the potential to substantially reduce direct interaction between farmed and wild salmonids, improve biosecurity and waste management and provide greater control over the environmental conditions experienced by farmed fish.

Our appeal against the Deenish renewal should therefore be seen in the context of a much larger question:

How much additional pressure are we prepared to place on wild Atlantic salmon populations that are already struggling to survive?

For Salmon Watch Ireland, conservation must come first.

The lodging of the appeal begins the formal appeal process. We will continue to examine the decision and supporting evidence and develop our arguments as the appeal proceeds, insofar as the applicable procedures permit.

Wild Atlantic salmon cannot wait for certainty after the damage has occurred. The precautionary principle must mean acting before potentially irreversible impacts take place.

From 1 September – Catch and Release Is Mandatory

Salmon Watch Ireland reminds anglers that **catch and release becomes mandatory for salmon and sea trout over 40 cm on all catchments from 1 September**. Any salmon or sea trout caught from that date must be handled carefully and returned alive to the water.

This requirement is particularly important this year.

Water temperatures remain on the high side in many catchments following what has been a difficult summer for salmon and the rivers on which they depend.

Extended periods of warm weather and low flows can place considerable stress on salmon. Higher water temperatures can reduce dissolved oxygen and increase the physiological stress associated with migration, holding in pools and being caught and handled by anglers.

Many of the salmon now in our rivers have already survived an extraordinary journey. Having returned from the North Atlantic, they have then faced the additional challenge of negotiating rivers affected by periods of low flow and elevated temperatures.

For that reason, **catch and release must mean more than simply putting a fish back**. A short video from Scotland demonstrates best Catch and Release practice.



Anglers should minimise playing time, use appropriate tackle, keep salmon in the water wherever possible and avoid unnecessary handling or prolonged photography. Fish should be given sufficient time to recover before being released.

Where water temperatures remain particularly high, anglers should consider whether fishing for salmon is appropriate at all.

Every returning adult salmon is important. A fish released during the closing weeks of the season may soon contribute to the next generation.

At a time when Atlantic salmon stocks remain under severe pressure, getting as many of these fish as possible safely onto the spawning grounds must be our priority.

From 1 September: release every salmon, handle every fish with care and remember that, after a difficult summer, every returning fish matters.

Munster Blackwater Genetic Study – Keep Collecting Adult Scales

Salmon Watch Ireland would like to remind anglers on the **Munster Blackwater** that while the main sampling programme for the salmon genetic study is now effectively complete, **scales from adult salmon and trout should continue to be collected wherever possible.**

The Blackwater is already operating on a catch-and-release basis, and any scale sampling should therefore be undertaken quickly and carefully, with handling kept to an absolute minimum and fish returned safely to the river.

Additional adult scale samples remain valuable and can help support and strengthen the genetic work being undertaken.

Understanding the genetic structure of salmon and trout populations within such a large and complex river system can provide important information for their future conservation and management.

Salmon Watch Ireland would like to thank the anglers, clubs and everyone else who has contributed samples and assisted with the study. That cooperation has been extremely valuable.

We would also like to thank Inland Fisheries Ireland for their work on this study which will be of enormous benefit going forward.

Please continue collecting adult scales where the opportunity arises. Every additional sample can add to our knowledge of Blackwater salmon and help inform their future protection.

See Pollution? Report It

Salmon Watch Ireland Pollution Reporting Portal

Salmon Watch Ireland reminds anglers, clubs and everyone who spends time beside our rivers to remain vigilant for signs of pollution and to use the **Salmon Watch Ireland Pollution Reporting Portal** when problems are observed.

Anglers are often the eyes and ears of our rivers.

The screenshot shows the 'Ireland Water Pollution Reporting Hub' website. The main heading is 'One place to report water pollution, fish kills, slurry runoff, and suspected discharges'. Below this is a paragraph explaining the page's purpose: 'This page is designed as a practical public resource for reporting pollution, understanding who to contact, and finding guidance on fish kills, agricultural pollution, point and diffuse sources, and enforcement routes in Ireland.' There are two buttons: 'FIND CONTACT GUIDANCE' and 'See reporting steps'. Below these are four category buttons: 'Water pollution', 'Fish kills', 'Agricultural runoff', and 'Enforcement guidance'. To the right, under 'What to do first', there are three steps: STEP 1 (Contact the National Environmental Complaints Line (NECL) on 1800 365 123), STEP 2 (If fish are dead, distressed, or habitat is affected, also contact Inland Fisheries Ireland: 0818 34 74 24), and STEP 3 (If the source is an EPA-licensed facility, also contact the EPA: 0818 33 55 99). Below these is an 'ALWAYS' section: 'Give the exact location, what you can see, when it started, whether it is ongoing, and whether fish or wildlife are affected.' At the bottom, there is an 'Important reporting note' stating: 'The National Environmental Complaints Line (NECL) records your complaint and passes it on for follow-up to the relevant authority. Fish kills should always be reported to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) on 0818 34 74 24.' At the very bottom are two large buttons: 'Report now - NECL' and 'Call IFI - Fish kills'.

Ireland Water Pollution Reporting Hub

One place to report water pollution, fish kills, slurry runoff, and suspected discharges

This page is designed as a practical public resource for reporting pollution, understanding who to contact, and finding guidance on fish kills, agricultural pollution, point and diffuse sources, and enforcement routes in Ireland.

[FIND CONTACT GUIDANCE](#) [See reporting steps](#)

[Water pollution](#) [Fish kills](#) [Agricultural runoff](#) [Enforcement guidance](#)

What to do first

STEP 1
Contact the **National Environmental Complaints Line (NECL)** on **1800 365 123**.

STEP 2
If fish are dead, distressed, or habitat is affected, also contact **Inland Fisheries Ireland: 0818 34 74 24**.

STEP 3
If the source is an EPA-licensed facility, also contact the **EPA: 0818 33 55 99**.

ALWAYS
Give the exact location, what you can see, when it started, whether it is ongoing, and whether fish or wildlife are affected.

Important reporting note

The **National Environmental Complaints Line (NECL)** records your complaint and passes it on for follow-up to the relevant authority. **Fish kills** should always be reported to **Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)** on **0818 34 74 24**.

[Report now - NECL](#) [Call IFI - Fish kills](#)

Pollution incidents can develop quickly and evidence can disappear just as rapidly. Reports from people on the ground can therefore be extremely important in identifying incidents and ensuring that concerns are brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Please be particularly alert for suspected slurry or silage discharges, sewage pollution, unusual water discolouration or foaming, fish in distress or dead fish, unusual odours, excessive siltation or any other indication of possible pollution.

Where it is safe to do so, take photographs or video and record the **location, date and approximate time**. Never enter polluted water or put yourself at risk to obtain evidence.

The Portal is intended to complement, rather than replace, reporting to the relevant statutory authorities. Serious or ongoing pollution incidents and fish kills should also be reported immediately to the appropriate agency.

The importance of vigilance is heightened following another difficult summer. Low flows and elevated water temperatures can leave salmon and other aquatic life particularly vulnerable. Under these conditions, a pollution incident can impose an additional and potentially severe burden on an already stressed river ecosystem.

If you see something that does not look right, report it. Good information from people on the riverbank can make a real difference.

A Difficult Summer – But an Opportunity to Protect What Remains

There is a common theme running through each of these issues.

Whether we are challenging potentially damaging developments, returning salmon safely to our rivers, gathering scientific information or reporting pollution, **salmon conservation increasingly depends upon reducing every avoidable source of pressure.**

Wild Atlantic salmon face challenges at sea that Ireland alone cannot control. But there are many pressures within our rivers, estuaries and coastal waters that we can influence.

After the difficult conditions experienced this summer, our immediate objective must be simple: **give as many surviving salmon as possible the opportunity to reach the spawning grounds successfully.**

That requires action from anglers, fisheries managers, regulators, landowners, government and conservation organisations alike.

Salmon Watch Ireland will continue to advocate for stronger protection of wild Atlantic salmon and the rivers and ecosystems upon which their survival depends.

Every salmon matters. Every river matters. And every action we take to protect them matters.

Date for Your Diary

Salmon Watch Ireland Conference 2026

Saturday, 14 November – Athlone

Salmon Watch Ireland's **Annual Conference will take place on Saturday, 14 November 2026 in Athlone.**

This year's conference will bring together scientists, fisheries managers, conservationists, anglers and others with an interest in the future of Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon and their river environments.

A range of important issues affecting salmon conservation will be discussed, including the condition of our salmon stocks, water quality, habitat and barriers, fisheries management and the practical measures required to improve the prospects for wild salmon.

Please put Saturday, 14 November in your diary.

Further details on the programme, speakers and arrangements will be announced shortly.

We look forward to welcoming members, anglers, clubs and everyone with an interest in protecting Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon to Athlone in November.