

Shannon Regional Fisheries Board



Shannon Regional Board Members

Chairperson	<i>Michael O'Callaghan</i>
Salmon Rod	<i>Jim Horgan Andy McCallion</i>
Draft Net	<i>Gabriel McKenna John Slattery</i>
Drift Net	<i>Patrick Peril Matthew Benn</i>
Eel Licence	<i>Michael Flanagan</i>
Rated Occupier	<i>Edmond P. Costello</i>
Trout Angler	<i>Martin McEnroe Michael Callaghan</i>
Coarse Angler	<i>Sean Young Joe O'Donoghue</i>
Sea Angler	<i>Jim Robinson</i>
IFT Life Member	<i>Patrick J. Isdell</i>
Ministerial Appointees	<i>Seamus McDermott (Staff Rep.) Cllr. Mary Bohan Declan Quigley Mary Candler-Kennedy Peg Ward Heslin Breege Murray Paddy Mackey Cllr. Hugh Lynn</i>

General

The conservation and protection of fish stocks and their habitat played a major role in the Board's successful accomplishments during 2002. The programmes to detect and eliminate water pollution were increased. The new salmon quota system for the commercial sector was successfully introduced with co-operation from the commercial fishing community. The relocation of the Board's headquarters to new modern office accommodation with laboratory facilities, and the completion of negotiations with all staff on the introduction of flexibility and change agreements, were major contributing factors in the ability of the Board to improve service delivery.



The Region's Fisheries

■ *Sea Angling*

Sea Angling again produced good results bearing in mind the poor weather conditions. High winds and poor weather conditions over much of the month of May limited angling. Liscannor bay yielded black pollack up to 5lbs., Kilkee beach fished well for flounder, mackerel turned up at Castle Point Kilkee, and the usual spots in west Clare returned wrasse and pollack. September will be best remembered for its nighttime fishing, which produced good results. Horse mackerel provided fine sport on a light spinning rod or fly rod, and whiting, dogfish, rockling, conger eels, mackerel and pollack were caught at Cappagh pier in Kilrush.

■ *Trout Angling*

The fishing season started well with good angling weather in the early season. However, as the season progressed, weather conditions declined with a resulting knock on effect on angling returns. Reports from Lough Ree and Lough Derg during the mayfly season were very encouraging with significant stocks of juvenile fish averaging 1lb. being reported which augurs well for future years. Returns from the midland lakes were patchy overall, yet Lough Owel continued to supply excellent sport throughout the season. A number of individual anglers reported good river angling experiences, nevertheless the general view was that the river angling season was slow and while weather conditions played their part, pollution and habitat damage were also contributing factors.

■ *Salmon Angling*

The region's salmon waters produced some excellent individual catches with one lucky angler officially catching 30 salmon during the season. The main Shannon catchment above Limerick produced poor returns to the rod, meanwhile the Fergus, Maigue and Shannon around Limerick continued to give fair sport. Once again the Mulcaire and Feale produced excellent opportunities for anglers. Spring salmon were in relative short supply, although spring fish taken were of good size. Throughout the season a notable feature of the salmon returns in 2002 was the increase in the number of large fish taken.

■ *Coarse Angling*

While 2001 will be remembered as the year restricted by the Foot and Mouth crisis, 2002 could well be remembered as the year that was confounded by unseasonable summer weather leaving rivers and lakes flooded for prolonged periods. This resulted in mixed coarse angling catches that varied throughout the region. The best months proved to be April and May on the coarse and pike angling calendar with great catches and specimen records broken. Once again the northern shores of Lough Derg at Portumna yielded bumper catches of mainly bream to visiting anglers. Pike angling again produced some excellent results with over 50% of the specimen fish recorded in the country being caught in the region's waters. Good carp and tench fishing were also reported at a number of venues throughout the region.

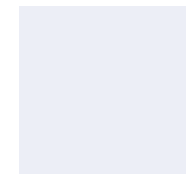
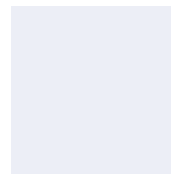
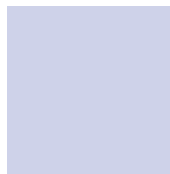
Shannon Regional Development Societies

The Upper Shannon Trout and Coarse Fish Development Society had a quiet year with no applications for grant funding being received. This possibly reflects the inclement weather curtailing angling in general, although preliminary vetting of fishery development projects was on-going. Approximately 370 annual share certificates were issued and concern was expressed at the lack of shares purchased by visiting anglers.

The Lower Shannon Development Society had a busy and successful year with 8 angling clubs receiving €28,144 in grant aid for fisheries development projects. The society received €2,324.72 from the sale of share certificates, €28,144 in corporate donations and €28,144 was made available by the Board. The society continued its work of developing suitable projects with angling groups.

Habitat Conservation

Water quality continues to be of major concern with negative impacts on fish stocks and fish habitat. The Board attaches high priority to this issue and a large portion of its resources goes towards monitoring and eliminating this problem. During 2002, the Board extended its environmental services in the Upper Shannon catchment. As a direct result 220 inspections



were carried out and 11 prosecutions initiated in the agricultural, local authorities and industrial sectors. This programme has greatly increased the effectiveness of the Board in this area.

In addition to this new initiative, farm surveys, which are on going throughout the region, identified possible pollution threats and warning letters were issued to prevent possible pollution instances. Unfortunately, inappropriate land spreading of slurry continues to be a serious concern. Staff have observed spreading during heavy rain fall and on frozen ground in winter, this inappropriate land spreading gives rise to huge eutrophication problems.

Habitat degradation continued to be a significant issue during 2002. Road construction, drainage works, gravel removal etc. have interfered with many small streams, the lifeblood of our catchments. This loss of habitat is of serious concern and an issue on which the Board has taken its strong position.

The Board's concern at the increasing number of private peat milling operations in close proximity to rivers has lead to regular inspections of such operations. The Board continues to work with local authorities to address this issue that is affecting areas including the River Inny rendering it unsuitable as a fish habitat.

Fisheries Enhancement

Following on from major in stream works carried out in recent years, the Board inspected and maintained nursery streams throughout the region. The Board assisted local groups to draw up enhancement plans and watched over their successful implementation. Such works were carried out in the Lough Ree catchment, Owengarry River, Lough Inchiquinn, Ballylyon River and the Lough Derg catchment.

The Board's trout stocking programme continued with the stocking of over 450,000 in 2002. As part of our ongoing predator control programme, the Board undertook a substantial relocation of fish to other suitable fisheries. Included in this programme were the transfer of over 1,000 pike to Lough Key and the transfer of 9,518 bream and roach to various sections of the Royal and Grand Canals.

Enforcement

135 patrols were undertaken in estuaries and at sea and 1451 yds. of net were seized. On shore our rivers continued to be targeted by salmon poachers. Patrols to check compliance with coarse fish regulations were carried out and also included the checking of 300 boats on the River Shannon with no breaches being reported.

Promotion & Development

The Board's website continues to offer an excellent medium by which information can be made available concerning the angling resource available in the region. The website received on average a staggering 4,000 hits per day during 2002.

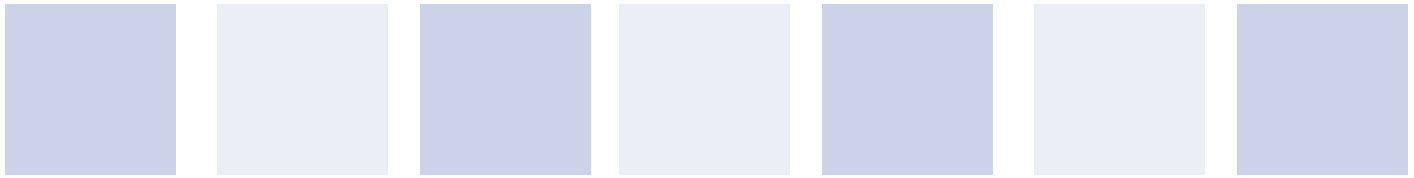
The Board attended a number of angling fairs in Europe to promote the angling product. Stagnation of the tourist angling market during 2002 had a negative impact on local communities who rely on angling tourism for income. The Board continued to work with local groups and provided support for over 20 tourist angling competitions throughout the region.

Public Education/Awareness

The Board considers the education of stakeholders and the public, particularly the young, to be of great importance. As part of the RTÉ series "The State we are in" one programme was co-sponsored by the Board. This programme gave viewers a virtual trip along the Shannon River from a source in Cavan to its Estuary in Clare, and Kerry. The issues affecting the quality of the catchment's waters and its habitat were highlighted.

As part of the REPS programmes, the Board gave presentations to over 1,000 farmers on fisheries and its habitat requirements.

Board staff visited primary schools in a number of areas as part of the Board's youth awareness programme, and junior angling classes were also held. One event in the Sheelin area attracted participants from 16 schools who took part in an environmental art competition, while in association with the local angling club youth angling classes were held.



Bio-Diversity and Rare Fish

This year saw a number of exciting new initiatives undertaken by the Board. Conscious of the neglect some of our more unusual fish have faced, the Board has increased its efforts to create public awareness of these species, e.g. Croneen in the Little Brosna, including press coverage, local radio interviews and lectures on the species involved.

Organisation Support

The development of staff and service delivery is a high priority for the Board. Staff members attended a wide range of training courses, including workshops and conferences related to the introduction of PMDS.

Health and safety is always of utmost concern to the Board and initiatives to highlight health and safety in the workplace, including a safety quiz for staff, were undertaken during the year.

The FOI Act and a number of administrative requirements such as code of practices for the governance of state bodies, were introduced and work has commenced to put systems in place to administer these.

Network and Partnering

In delivering on its active program during 2002, the management and staff worked with a wide range of Government Departments and Agencies, Local Authorities, ESB, OPW, Regional Assemblies, Regional Authorities, Tourism Authorities, Garda, Navy, Air Corps, EPA and others, on issues relating to the conservation and development of fisheries. The Board also met and worked with many angling clubs, community groups and consultants, and the Board hereby wishes to acknowledge and thank all groups concerned for their continued co-operation and support.