



Shannon Regional Fisheries Board

Bord Iascaigh Réigiúnach an Sionainne

SHANNON REGIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

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

General

The Board reacted quickly to the FMD crisis, in establishing angling guidelines based on recommendations set out by the "Expert Group". A list of recommended suitable fisheries for angling was issued whilst the restrictions were in place. This information was disseminated via the Boards Web Site and the mainstream media. We maintained this information service throughout the crisis advising local and tourist anglers.

Angling Review for 2001

Coarse Angling

Bags in excess of 100lbs of bream were taken from Lough Derg and an incredible 1000lb catch of bream was reported between three anglers in one session in September. November was a particularly good month for pike anglers, most notably in the Shannon and River Suck. Forty-three anglers took part in the second leg of the Dublin Pike Anglers winter league on the Suck and at Shannonbridge on the Shannon. A total of 73 pike were taken, 19 doubles and four over the 20lb specimen weight.

Game Angling

Salmon Angling was fair during 2001. The River Fergus fished well in April, over 30 fish reported caught. Grilse began arriving on the Lower Shannon in mid June and good results were reported for both Plassey and Castleconnell. The lack of rain throughout most of the summer kept water levels low in spate rivers such as the Mulkear resulting in small catches. Small grilse (2lbs to 4lbs) were noticeable this year however three specimen salmon were reported from the Shannon, including a 21lb wild salmon taken at O'Brien's Bridge.

Despite the FMD and water quality problems brown trout angling continued to be very popular, with a number of angling clubs, in association with the Board, running courses to increase the number of anglers on the water. Local anglers caught two specimen trout in Lough Ree, at the end of April, while a specimen trout weighing over 12lbs, was caught on the Shannon at Athlone. Good angling was reported in September from Loughs Sheelin, Owel, O'Flynn and Ennell. Improvements in trout angling on the River Inny along a number of stretches were noted this year.

Shannon Regional Fisheries Board

continued

Sea Angling

Sea anglers fishing from charter boats reported fair angling during the summer. Shore angling also produced good fishing. Noted species were cod, red gurnard, John dory and pollack. With a fine spell in May anglers reported good mackerel fishing off the Rosses and Dunlickey, Co Clare. Spur dog were reported in the Doolin area with lots of pollack off the reefs. A red gurnard of 2lbs was caught off Loop Head by Albert de Gier (NL) using baited feathers in August. Dutch anglers caught two specimen three bearded rockling in the Shannon Estuary. A Specimen ballan wrasse of 5.67lbs was produced at Ross Co Clare

Shannon Regional Fisheries Development Societies

The Upper and Lower Shannon Fisheries Development Societies held regular meetings in 2001. A number of angling clubs carried out stream rehabilitation works with assistance from the Fisheries Development Societies.



Aquatic Environment

Reversing the decline in water and habitat quality, which is adversely affecting fish stocks and the enhancement of angling tourism, was the major priority of the Board during the period of this report and progress was made.

The expansion in the economy and the implementation of the NDP, brought about a considerable increase in planning applications coming to the Board's attention. These ranged from single dwelling housing to complex motorway developments. The Board made recommendations and applied constraints to many of these to ensure that the impact on the aquatic environment was minimised.

Despite the expenditure of €80m on sewage treatment facilities in the Region some remain over loaded while others are not managed to their optimum. The Board has brought these issues to the notice of the Authorities concerned and has sought limits to proposed expansion.

Damage caused by agricultural waste continued. Slurry spreading during inappropriate periods is a persistent problem, while excessive use of chemical fertiliser continues to over enrich our waters.

The development of a hydroelectric scheme at Tarmonbarry Weir was monitored closely by the Board. To prevent damage to both salmon and coarse fish comprehensive measures were put forward to the Planning Authority. The construction of the hydroelectric scheme will be subject to the provision of 10mm screens on the turbines.

The largest fish kill of 2001 occurred on the River Shannon in Limerick City. Estimates suggest that at least 10,000 smelt (a Red Data Book species requiring protection), 2,000 trout and 1,000 salmon perished in the incident. Despite intensive investigations the Board was unable to identify a cause, although high aluminium levels were recorded in the gills of smelt sent to Scotland for analysis.



Catchment Management Process

The Mulkear Catchment Management Plan was finalised and published following consultation with the stakeholders and the public. A process has now been put in place to further the agreed aims of the stockholders. It is the intention of the Board to extend the process to other suitable catchments.

Fisheries Enhancement

A number of projects were undertaken to further enhance the Board's fisheries and their facilities, in association with the Angling Clubs. Surveys were carried out on a number of fisheries to ascertain present fish stock levels. Maintenance work was undertaken on structures constructed under the TAM Programme.

Over 1,000,000 trout were stocked out in 2001 to offset the damage caused by pollution in the short term.

Predator control programmes continued on a small number of wild trout waters in accordance with scientific advice from the Central Fisheries Board. Many of the pike and other coarse fish removed were transferred alive to other suitable lakes in either the Shannon or Eastern Region.

Enforcement

A new salmon tagging system was introduced to enable better management of the stocks. Generally compliance was good and the merits of the programme was recognised by commercial netmen and anglers.

While illegal salmon fishing is falling generally, the Board continued to be concerned at the levels of illegal fishing in the lower Shannon and discussions were held with the ESB, the fishery owner, to seek ways to address it. The LPVs and RIBs patrolled the Region's coast and estuaries and fishing vessels were boarded and inspected. Salmon Dealers and Hotels were also inspected.

Patrols were also carried out in the main Shannon catchment to check for violations of other fisheries laws, particularly the pike and coarse fish byelaws.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is an important element of the fisheries environment. During 2001 the Board investigated a number of unusual fish species which occur in the Region;

- Smelt, a small fish popular with pike anglers as bait which lives along the coast and in estuaries, but returns to rivers to spawn. The greatest spawning was found to be in the tailrace of Ardnacrusha Dam,
- Croneen, a type of brown trout from Lough Derg, which run the Little Brosna River,
- and the three species of Lamprey in Ireland, all of which occur within the Shannon Catchment.

Promotion and Educational Measures

To develop angling tourism staff attended promotions at home and abroad and assisted over 20 tourist coarse angling matches, which are of economic benefit to local communities.

As part of the Board's Education and Youth Programme presentations were given to schools and assistance provided for the Angling Clubs to encourage the dissemination of fisheries information particularly to the young.

The Website

Our website continued to grow in size and popularity. The site was regularly updated, providing angling information, information on fish, their habitat, fisheries publications, catchment management and other fisheries related issues. Over 300,000 individuals visited the site.

Liaison and Interagency Work

The Board continued to work in tandem with the other seven Fisheries Boards, State Bodies, Local Authorities, Board Fáilte, Shannon Development and other groups to further the fisheries interests.

Staff Support and Development

The Board continued its programmes to support and develop the staff and their skills through training, safety programmes, provision of resources and engaging in a major HR Strategy Review with the other Boards.