

Council

CNL(10)23

*Annual Report
on Actions Taken Under Implementation Plans*

EU – UK (Northern Ireland)

Annual Report on actions taken under Implementation Plans for the Calendar Year 2009 – UK NI

The Guidelines for the preparation of ‘Implementation Plans and for Reporting on Progress’, NSTF(06)10 (copy attached) indicate that the primary purpose of the annual reports is to provide a summary of all the actions that have been taken under the Implementation Plan in the previous year. In addition, details of any significant changes to the status of stocks, new factors affecting stocks, any changes to the management regime in place, and any changes to the Implementation Plan should be included in the report. Details of actions taken in accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the Convention are also needed by the Council. **Please provide the following information to the Secretariat by 2 April 2010**

Section 1: Details of any significant changes to the management outlined in the introduction to the Implementation Plan.

The functions, staff and assets of the Fisheries Conservancy Board (NI) transferred to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (NI) on 1 June 2009.

The Loughs Agency introduced a regulation to prohibit angling adjacent to fish counters and their associated dams for sections of the River Strule, Clanrye River and the Mourne at Sion Mills in 2009.

Section 2: A description of any significant changes in the status of stocks and information on catches. The Council has asked that the following information on catches be provided:

- (a) the provisional catch of salmon in tonnes for 2009;**
- (b) the confirmed catch of salmon in tonnes for 2008;**
- (c) an estimate of unreported catch in tonnes for 2009;**
- (d) the number of salmon caught and released in recreational fisheries in 2009.**

- (a) 16.7t
- (b) 21.1t
- (c) Zero
- (d) 414¹

The most comprehensively developed conservation limit (CL) for N. Ireland at present is that for the R. Bush, derived from a whole

¹ FCB area only

river stock/recruitment relationship, based on estimates of ova deposition and subsequent smolt counts. In 2009 the **R. Bush attained around 62% of CL**. This represented a reduction from 2007 & 2008 when the conservation limit was achieved, with 170% & 103% of respective target egg deposition realised from wild spawning.

Conservation limits have been determined for a number of important salmon rivers in the DCAL area of UK (N. Ireland), through the transport of optimal productivity metrics determined from the River Bush stock recruitment study to measured habitat parameters for each donor river. **In 2009 the River Main achieved around 68% compliance** against CL which represented a significant decrease on the previous year 2008 (170%) and a reduction on the previous 5 year average (82%). **The Glendun River exhibited 33% compliance** against CL which represented a decrease on the previous year (96%) and was the lowest value recorded in the time series (2002-2009). Persistent technical problems have prevented a viable count for the Blackwater in 2009.

The Loughs Agency has established conservation limits and compliance monitoring for a number of rivers within the catchment, including the Finn, Mourne, Roe and Faughan. **CL was exceeded on the R. Roe (268%) and the Mourne (105%) in 2009**. Fish counts were compromised on the Rivers Finn, and Faughan in 2009 preventing assessment of compliance against CL. A comprehensive independent review of the counter programme has been undertaken by the Agency in 2009.

Section 3: A description of any new factors which may significantly affect the abundance of salmon stocks.

No factors identified that may significantly affect abundance.

Fishing effort has stabilised since 2007 within a largely unchanged regulatory regime (netting and angling restrictions).

The most complete, longest term measures of juvenile abundance are available for the R. Bush. Fry recruitment was low in 2009 despite a good escapement of spawners the previous year when the R. Bush achieved 103% of its CL. Density independent factors may have significantly influenced recruitment on the river in 2009. **Exceptional flood events** were recorded in both 2008 and 2009 which are likely to have increased mortality of year classes in the river at the time.

Juvenile abundance surveys have been undertaken on a wide range of other rivers throughout N. Ireland, using the same methodology to that used in the R. Bush. Fry indices measured on these river systems in the DCAL area again exhibited variable patterns in 2009 but these cannot be correlated easily with specific factors or events. On the Foyle, electric fishing surveys show that the juvenile population index has remained relatively stable since 2002 for the monitored catchments.

On the R. Bush, egg to smolt survival from the most recent fully-recruited ova deposition (2005) was 1.50% which was similar to 2003 (1.52%) and an increase on 2004 (0.86%) and the previous 10 year average (0.99%). While recent increases in ova to smolt survival may be due, in part, to the contribution made by enhancement stocking conducted since 1997 it may also reflect the emphasis that has also been placed on in-river habitat rehabilitation works and predator control measures during the period.

An increase in predator marks on adult salmon was noted in 2009.

Section 4: An account of all actions taken under the Implementation Plan with regard to the management of salmon fisheries; habitat protection and restoration; aquaculture and related activities (not required in 2010); and other influences affecting salmon abundance or diversity (including the marine environment).

Management Action	Reporting Update	Achieved Management Action (Yes, No, Ongoing, Completed)
Fisheries Management		
<i>FCB Area</i>		
Voluntary buy-out scheme for remaining 6 commercial fishers	Scheme available in 2009. No uptake.	Objective not achieved.
A scientific review to provide the basis for additional precautionary fishery conservation measures and an assessment of their implications and impacts	Completed in 2009.	Yes
Public/ stakeholder consultation on additional fishery conservation measures	Papers in preparation.	Ongoing
Ban sale of rod caught salmon	Target date of September 2010.	Ongoing
Promote catch and release in rod fisheries	21 ² % in 2009	Ongoing
<i>Loughs Agency area</i>		
Catchment status reports	Completed autumn 2009	Yes
Review of impact of closure of interceptory mixed stock fisheries and	Reported to ICES Working Group in April 2009	Yes

² Provisional figure until 2010.

genetic structure of extant fishery		
Data collection to inform fishery and catchment management (CMP's)		
<i>FCB Area</i>		
Develop adult counting facilities	Weir complete on Shimna River. Testing to commence in 2010. Project for facilities on Clady and Garvary underway.	Ongoing.
Habitat survey	Six Mile Water, Clady and Ballycastle Rivers	Ongoing
Juvenile population assessments	1200 sites electric fished	Ongoing.
Inform population composition of alleged mixed stock fisheries and complete genetic baseline of Irish populations.	Genetic analyses complete. Report due mid 2010.	Ongoing
Smolt counting facilities	Upgrade of R. Bush smolt traps completed in 2009	Yes
Fish passage assessments	Acoustic tags procured	Ongoing.
<i>Loughs Agency Area</i>		
Comprehensive independent review of fish counter programme	Finalized 2009	Yes
Habitat Protection and Restoration		
<i>FCB Area</i>		
Publish River Basin Management Plans (EU Water Framework Directive [WFD])	22 December 2009	Yes
Upgrade Lower Bann key fish pass at Portna	Joint project proposed under WFD Programme of Measures.	Ongoing.
Habitat improvement projects	Carey, Bush, Main, Six Mile Water, Blackwater, Banagh, Kesh, Ballinderry (see 2009 FAR)	Ongoing
<i>Loughs Agency Area</i>		
Habitat improvement projects	Various (see 2009 Habitat FAR)	

Other influences affecting salmon abundance or diversity (including marine environment)		
Supportive Breeding Programmes (in context of SRP's)	Programmes on following rivers: Clady, Glenarm, Glendun, Agivey, Moyola, Kilkeel	Ongoing
Strategic approach to improving the marine environment	The UK Government's Marine and Coastal Access Act gained Royal Assent on 12 November 2009.	Ongoing (as regards a NI) [The Northern Ireland Marine Bill will contain provisions for marine planning and marine nature conservation within Northern Ireland's territorial waters]
Contribution to SALSEA programme	a) increased smolt tagging b) genetic analyses of river stocks c) Loughs Agency staff participation in Marine Institute (Ireland) cruises	a) Ongoing b) Complete c) Ongoing

Section 5: Details of any proposed revisions to the Implementation Plan.

The programme for the development of further conservation and management targets and Catchment Management Plans 2008 – 2013 (see IP 4.1.2) will be flexible.

The Loughs Agency has set up a trust fund with local fishery owners to oversee a habitat enhancement programme as a result of funds obtained through settlement of pollution incidents. It is intended for this work to commence in 2010.