



CNL(02)75

*NGO Statement*

*Federation of Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Anglers*

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Mr President, International Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

History will not be kind to the new incoming Irish government if they fail in their duty to secure the survival of the wild Atlantic salmon. Re-elected Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahearn has to ensure that his government leaves as part of its legacy to Ireland and all salmon nations of the Atlantic the survival and return to abundance of the wild Atlantic salmon.

HOWEVER we in FISSTA have grave fears that this will not happen, based on past experience, and the announcement that the vital Department of the Marine and post of Marine Minister has been abolished and instead has been absorbed into the Department of Communication and Natural Resources. What a sick policy joke for an island nation with rich seas and rivers.

FISSTA had hoped for a new Minister for the Marine in place of the outgoing one who was a disaster, in our view, as far as salmonid matters were concerned.

In an article and editorial in the "Irish Examiner" newspaper, 15 May last, it stated that the Irish are now "the lepers of Europe" as far as salmon conservation is concerned. It continued that "Minister Fahey had been presented with a report which he had commissioned from his own scientists, which had been two years and millions of Euros in the making. So stark were the conclusions, that the Minister could not be under any illusion about the radical steps demanded.

The advice to the Minister was that the catch taken by commercial, drift net fishermen must be reduced by a MINIMUM of 40% - roughly, a reduction of 70,000 salmon a year from an average of 195,000 over the last five years. The Minister decided that the scientists had over-reacted and took a POLITICAL decision rather than one of conservation. He decided on a cut of just 7% - slightly more than one sixth of that which was recommended. "The greatest worry now is that the commercial fishermen of Greenland and the Faroese who stopped fishing on the salmon feeding grounds in the hopes of restoring stocks, will say that there is no point in continuing to save salmon only to have them killed by the Irish." The final amount granted to nets was 237,000 less 7% approx. average.

FISSTA respects the restraint of the Greenlanders and the Faroese people and indeed the great efforts made by other nations in trying to preserve the wild salmon stocks. We will keep the international salmonid nations informed.

We are giving the new governmental administration in Dublin a short 'settling in' period of weeks only to see if they will finally 'grasp the great opportunity' of finally acting in a responsible and very positive conservation manner in the salmonid world.