

20<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Re: Proposed Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Amendment – 2026 Season**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in relation to the proposed wild salmon and sea-trout tagging scheme amendment to the regulation for the 2026 fishing season. I wish to submit my submission herein. For reference the byelaws in this submission be called previous and current. Previous being the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November to the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2025. Current being the amended byelaws.

Draft net fishing has been a method of fishing for salmon and trout for generations. It has been part of our culture and heritage for hundreds of years, dating back as far as the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. My father and grandfather used this method to catch salmon in the Owenmore River catchment area all their lives. Any such proposal has severe economic and cultural implications for rural Ireland and will erode the heritage of what has been a local community tradition passed down from generation to generation.

There has been no real evidence provided to the general public or the draft net fishermen licence holders, no scientific grounds or regulatory basis for the proposal the ending of draft netting in the Owenmore River (Kerry).

It is my opinion that a small number of draft net fishermen are being singled out as scapegoats for these byelaws. On January the 17<sup>th</sup>, the angling community told the board of Inland Fisheries Ireland that they would be fishing salmon this year regardless of any cessation to salmon and sea-trout fishing. This was not contested by the IFI.

There seems to be a lot of discrepancies between the previous and current byelaws:

1. The figures given for salmon stock in the Owenmore River contradict each other. The previous proposal stated a surplus of 155 fish stock, the current proposal states a surplus of 169. This discrepancy needs to be clarified and casts doubt on the methods of measuring stock from the outset.
2. Some of the rivers that had no fish in the previous byelaw proposal suddenly in 1 month have a surplus. This discrepancy also needs to be clarified and casts doubt on the methods of measuring stock from the outset.
3. Anglers had a limit of 3 fish in the previous byelaw proposal. In the current proposal they can now catch 10. What is the basis of this regulation change which does not make sense?
4. In the previous byelaw proposal, 29 areas were affected. In the current byelaws there is 21. What changed in the interim?

I would like an explanation how in the space of one month, 8 rivers/estuaries have a surplus of fish to deem them open to anglers and commercial fishing. There is something not right about this and yet the Owenmore River (Kerry), which has a surplus of fish cannot be opened? This discrepancy requires clarification and supporting scientific evidence.

There is a surplus of fish in the Owenmore River in the information provided by the IFI. This fact is not highlighted and is leading to an imbalanced approach to the paper which proposes the

A3

cessation of fishing for 2026. I want these regulations delayed and revised because there is a surplus of fish in the Owenmore catchment area.

The method of electrofishing is outdated and no longer considered a reliable and safe method for surveying rivers, therefore this cannot be relied upon. This method is increasingly recognised as outdated for accurately assessing entire river stock status, raising questions about information which is leading to these proposed conservation measures which will lead to the cessation of the tradition in local communities and adversely affect the livelihoods of those involved and will have secondary economic consequences for tourism in local rural areas.

Currently the Owenmore River is owned by the NPWS and is known as 'Páirc na Mara'. There has been no consultation with parties concerned. A comprehensive conservation plan is needed and should have been drawn up for the Owenmore River with input and buy-in from all stakeholders in relation to the future of the Owenmore.

My submission is that this process be ceased immediately and that the Department would enter into meaningful and productive consultation with the stakeholders based on the inaccuracies of the amended proposal. The main stakeholder here are the fishermen, they need to be first placed and are best placed to offer meaningful solutions to the issues raised however the inaccuracies of the reports on fish numbers needs to be corrected firstly. Secondary stakeholders would be beneficiaries of the small traditional industry mainly tourism and accommodation industries.

The most important question I have is where have the fish that 1 month ago were not available all of a sudden be available in certain areas, allowing them to open. However, the Owenmore River (Kerry), which has a surplus of fish cannot be opened to 3 fishermen.

I call on the minister to **not** sign these amended regulations into law, as they are inaccurate.

Finally, if draft net fishermen are put off the water a comprehensive compensation package must be provided to those who are affected by the measures. Tourism interests who will be affected by the knock-on impact of the decision must be provided with an alternative source of income to compensate them for the loss of revenue.

Regards,