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From:
Sent: Saturday 14 February 2026 22:11
To: DCEE IFD Public Consultations
Subject: River Slaney 2026 Objection Letter February
Attachments: River Slaney 2026 Objection Letter February.docx

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Inland Fisheries Section,

Department of the Climate, and the environment,

Elm House, Earlsvale Road,

Cavan Town,

H12 A8H7.

Re: Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Dear

I am writing to submit my objection regarding the recent proposals for the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2025 and Conservation Measures for the 2026 Season. In particular, I refer you to the proposals made for the River Slaney in the Wexford District.

My reason for writing is to request that you reconsider the draft proposals regarding angling on the river Slaney specifically for the 2026 fishing season. The first request being the changing of the rivers status from closed for salmon angling to open on a catch and release basis for 2026. Secondly, I request that you consider changing the opening day from the 1st of June 2026 to the 17th of March 2026. Over the course of this submission, I will be also be making reference to a letter submitted previously by the Slaney River Trust in 2025 during the first consultation for these proposals, which raises several points with a similar view to mine.

I consider the following points are valid to be considered when reviewing the final status for the Slaney for 2026 and should be considered before closing the river for salmon angling until June 1st 2026:

-Confusion:

As I am sure you are aware, this is the second time that the consultations for these regulations have been opened. Anglers received notification in early 2026 that for the upcoming season, all regulations would revert to the status they were in 2025. In other words, there would be no changes in regulations and all anglers knew exactly where they stood regarding when and where they could legally participate in their sport. However, this second consultation has now left a large number of anglers unsure of what is actually happening regarding the Slaney. It seems that the angling community have received many mixed messages from the Inland Fisheries Section and many are unsure if the opening date has indeed been changed or not and if the river is open for catch and release or not.

-Fry Count:

As stated in the draft guidelines for 2026, the Slaney's 5-year average fry count consisted of an average score of 14.93 fry per 5 minutes. Which does fall short of the target of 17 fry per 5 minutes, it is my understanding that this year was low in relation to the fry count, but I would like to reiterate a point made by the Slaney River Trust that the most recently published survey from Inland Fisheries Ireland which was in 2022 showed quite a high score for the fry count with 28.39 fry per 5 minutes. Perhaps 2025 was an outlier due to the very unusual spells of warm weather around the country which led to the closures of several state fisheries (Such as the Moy and Galway Fisheries to name but a few) due to high water temperatures and had conditions have been more favourable, the count could have potentially been higher which would have led to a higher 5-year average.

-Catch and Release:

It is understood that nationally, and indeed globally the Atlantic Salmon have been in decline for a long time. As you are aware, there are several factors that contribute to this decline (Such as pollution, overfishing at sea, freshwater barriers to name but a few…) but it is my firm view that anglers practicing catch and release are not contributing to this decline of the species. The leisure anglers are indeed the custodians and the keepers of this majestic river and it is their vigilance on the river banks that report any issues to the relevant authorities. An interesting point made in the SRT letter highlighted that Inland Fisheries Ireland reported in 2015 that Atlantic salmon survival rates after being caught with a fly and released was 98%. This mortality rate was deemed accurate and reiterated when compared with catch and release studies in Canada, Norway and Russia. If we take that statistic and apply that in the context of the Slaney, unfortunately in recent years the rod catch has been quite low and we would estimate that less than 50 salmon were landed on the Slaney for the 2025 season. As all of these fish were released, statistically that would imply that potentially over the course of a full season, the mortality rate would equate to less than one salmon. Further to this, I would consider that this would be even less and could possibly equate to a full 100% survival rate for the salmon as our anglers are well practiced in catch and release methods and are very concerned regarding the welfare of these precious fish.

-Policing the river banks:

The river Slaney is situated within the Wexford district for Inland Fisheries Ireland. The Slaney along with several other rivers (such as the Avoca, Ahare & Owenavorragh) fall within the remit of the staff in this district. Not only this, but these staff are also responsible for 12 nautical miles out from shore along a stretch of coastline within this district. It is my understanding that there are between 10 and 12 members of staff assigned to patrol the entirety of this vast number of freshwater and saltwater bodies. I would consider the district to be understaffed for the amount of river and coastal waters, which raises the concern that if the Slaney were to be designated to be closed,

how is it possible that the river will be patrolled in an effective manner without the presence of anglers on the river banks? Not only would the presence of anglers alleviate part of the burden on IFI staff having to cover a large amount of water in a short amount of time, but the salmon anglers can, and have in previous years acted as the proverbial 'eyes and ears' for IFI and have reported instances of poaching on the riverbanks for IFI, who have been very responsive to our calls and we commend the hardworking staff who patrol this district. Furthermore, if there is a presence of anglers on the riverbanks, then it is less likely for illegal fishing/poaching to occur on our waters. When illegal anglers see club members on the riverbanks, they are less likely to fish the river and potentially kill a salmon should they be successful in their pursuit. In fact, over the last number of years there have been several instances where our anglers have been inadvertently saving the lives of several salmon by confronting poachers and reporting their illegal activities to IFI. It has been the vigilance and dedication of our anglers that have truly been a large part of protecting our salmon stocks in conjunction with the IFI staff. Another point that I would like to raise here are the environmental factors to consider also when anglers are on the banks of the river. As mentioned previously, anglers act as custodians to the river and keep a watchful eye for pollution and irritants being dumped in the river. When any of these such concerns have arose, they have been recorded by the anglers and reported to IFI and the EPA subsequently.

In summary, my point of view is that the river Slaney should be kept open on a catch and release basis from the 17th of March for the 2026 season. The reasons being that without anglers on the riverbanks, it will be virtually impossible for IFI to patrol the entirety of the river without having to take patrols from other areas within the Wexford district due to massive understaffing. I see Catch and Release as a sound methodology for fly angling that has little to no impact on the stocks that currently exist in the Slaney. The lower 2025 fry count may have been an outlier influenced by unusually warm weather and elevated water temperatures, which affected fisheries nationwide. I also feel that the presence of salmon anglers on the riverbanks will deter illegal anglers from poaching thus protecting our stocks of salmon for future generations of anglers on the River Slaney. Without immediate action to safeguard our stocks, there will be nothing left for our future generations of anglers to fish for, thus leaving our sport as well as this fantastic species of fish confined to history.

I appreciate your careful consideration on the various matters raised here and I am open to further discussion at any time during the consultation period to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely