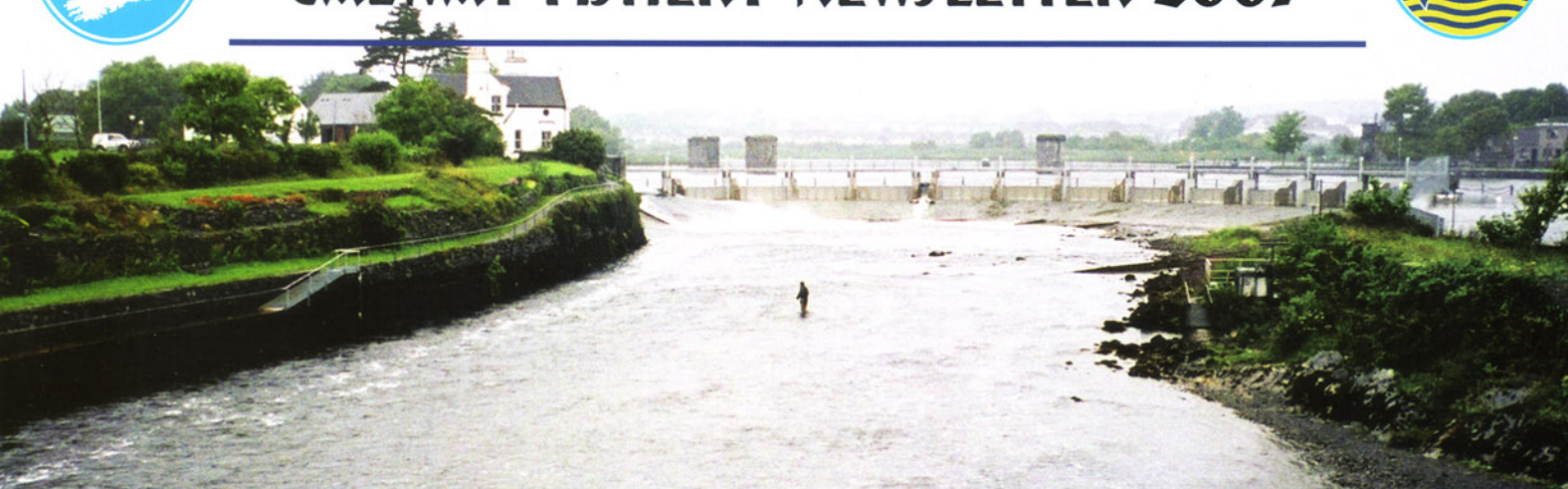


# GALWAY FISHERY NEWSLETTER 2007



## Reasonable catches recorded considering the adverse angling conditions during the season.

After the bumper season in 2006 despite the late run of fish and the cessation of commercial drift nets at sea, anglers waited in anticipation for the start of the new angling season. New bye laws were introduced by the Department of Communications Marine & Natural Resources regarding the Conservation of Salmon & Sea Trout outlined a quota system for rivers that were deemed open around the country. A number of rivers were closed to angling completely, while others were on catch & release only. The Corrib system was initially allocated a quota of 375 fish for the season, but this was later adjusted upwards to 788, with the Galway Fishery getting a quota of 315 fish from this figure.

The season was slow to get started with early spring fish catches low despite favourable angling conditions. Towards the end of April early May spring fish catches improved somewhat, but grilse had not appeared in any significant numbers until the third week in June again this year. This was similar to the 2006 season when the peak run of grilse was three to four weeks later than normal. The peak run continued into July and August but water levels were high after a very wet summer, which showed no sign of improving as the season ebbed away. The tally for the season was 395 fish on the Weir, with an estimated 155 fish from the local beats down-stream and above the Weir bringing the overall figure to 550 fish. A further 79 fish were caught on the weir, pit/floy tagged and released to monitor what percentage of these fish used the fish pass during migration upstream.

- Water conditions too high for fishing during February & March.
- Angling effort for spring salmon was generally low on the Fishery.
- Late April onwards sees an improvement in catches of spring fish.
- Balmy summer weather conditions in late April early May see temperatures rise and water levels drop.
- Ideal angling conditions up to mid June but few grilse observed in the system.
- Grilse numbers increase as run commences in earnest from the last week onwards.
- Poor weather continues, and water levels rise as peak run of grilse starts from the first week in July.
- Water levels increase further by the third week in July, and weather continues wet and unsettled.
- Fluctuating water levels frustrates anglers, while fish access the river upstream in ideal conditions.
- Angling conditions in August/September improve, but main run of fish had migrated upstream at that stage.
- The catch for the season was reasonable, considering that weather and water conditions this summer were far from ideal. Coupled with quota's applied throughout the season, angling effort was curtailed at critical periods, when under normal circumstances angling would have yielded better results. This year favoured the fish, and hopefully in future years anglers will reap the benefits!

## First Salmon

Local Galway angler Sean O'Toole caught the first salmon of the season on April 3rd spinning just down-stream of Jimmy's Pool on the high bank, weighing approximately 5.77kg (13lbs). The fresh run fish was quickly brought under control to the bank unhooked and released successfully back into the river. Normally the first salmon of the season is donated to a local charity, but this year as a contribution towards the conservation of salmon it was decided to release the first fish caught on the Fishery.

The first grilse was recorded on April 24th by Michael Brown from Co. Clare caught on shrimp tipping the scales at 3.11kg (7lbs).

## First Salmon on Fly

The first salmon on fly was caught on April 6th by Waterford angler Thomas Toomey a fresh run springer weighing 4.22kg (9.5lbs).



Contrasting water levels on the Fishery. Left picture river in high flood Autumn/Winter '06 highest levels recorded since the 1950's. Right picture Autumn/Winter '07 one of the driest periods recorded for the time of year! Global Warming?



## Spring Run

The season opened on the Fishery on Thursday 1st February with a reasonably good contingent of anglers both locally and from around the country. Angling conditions were far from ideal with 11 sluice gates open on the weir, but the water clarity was good! Only a few anglers ventured to fish on the day, and despite their efforts the capture of the first salmon of the season eluded them. However a good social day was had by all present, with old acquaintances renewed and lively banter ensued!

- Water levels remained high throughout the month with no angling taking place.
- March sees no change in angling conditions with 16 sluice gates open up to the third week. Levels start to drop towards the last week, with no fish recorded.
- Angling conditions from early April ideal with 2 sluice gates open on the weir.
- A quota of 12 spring fish allocated to the Fishery, 9 on the Weir and 3 on local beats above the Weir and down-stream of the traps.
- Fish numbers generally low despite the favourable angling conditions during the month.
- Catch for the month was 14 fish, 12 spring salmon averaging 4.70kg (10.5lbs) and 2 grilse averaging 3.33kg (7.25lbs).
- Early May sees balmy type weather conditions generally associated with summer, with high temperatures more

suitable for sunbathers than anglers! Water levels are ideal throughout the month with 2 gates initially, dropping to 1 gate from 14th onwards to the end of the month.

- Spring fish quota filled by late April so anglers on catch & release up to May 12th.
- Reasonable numbers of spring salmon observed in the system as the month progressed.
- Catch for the month was 34 fish, 23 springers averaging 5.04kg (11.35lbs) and 11 grilse averaging 2.50kg (5.64lbs).
- Heaviest fish recorded was shared jointly by two anglers, David O'Reilly (Dublin) and Tony Kavanagh (Galway Resident) with two magnificent specimens of 6.66kg (15lbs) both taken on fly!
- Up to the end of May a total of 35 spring salmon and 13 grilse were caught on the Fishery.
- Due to the late run of spring salmon again this season a further 5 springers were recorded up to the first week in June.
- The 2007 spring salmon run could be classed as reasonable when various factors are taken into account. The low spring fish quota allocated to the Fishery, coupled with the late run of fish brought about a reduction in angling effort, with some anglers reluctant to operate catch & release once the quota had been reached. This in some cases was not solely because anglers could not retain a fish, but concern was expressed about the survival of the fish after release!

## Grilse Run

- Grilse run late again with no significant show of fish until the third week in June.
- Angling conditions ideal from early June with 1 sluice gate open on the Weir.
- Fish numbers generally low in the system with few fish observed on the tides.
- ~~Water levels start to rise after period of inclement weather from the 22nd to 3 gates open on the weir.~~
- Start of grilse run co-incides with increase in water levels making angling conditions difficult.
- Catches start to improve despite the adverse conditions, as good numbers of grilse run into the system as the month draws to a close!
- Catch for the month was 87 fish, 9 salmon averaging 4.28kg (9.63lbs) and 78 grilse averaging 1.87kg (4.22lbs).
- Continuous broken weather for the month of July kept levels high, with no sign of respite in sight.
- Water levels rise from 3 to 6 gates from 21st onwards dropping back to 3 gates towards the end of the month.
- Fluctuating water levels gave the fish every opportunity to access the system upstream soon after entering the river.
- Anglers on the other hand experienced frustration, especially fly anglers trying to cope with the difficult conditions.
- Despite the adverse conditions some anglers had excellent sport during this period.
- Top of the list are three Waterford fly anglers who had tremendous fishing over two sessions in early July. They landed 11 fish on the fly with 3 gates open and hooked several others during that period. They very sportingly

released all the fish back into the river.

- Catch for the month was 215 fish, 6 salmon averaging 3.85kg (8.66lbs) and 209 grilse averaging 2.36kg (5.2lbs).
- The weather took a turn for the better and water levels dropped from early August.
- Catches remained steady with some reasonable numbers of fish recorded during the first week.
- Thereafter angling was disrupted somewhat with sluice gates changed around to facilitate the Office of Public Works maintenance programme.
- Catch for the month was 31 fish, 1 salmon 3.37kg (8.5lbs) and 30 grilse averaging 1.92kg (4.33lbs).
- Settled water conditions during September resulted in good angling conditions.
- Reasonable numbers of fish in system, the majority were resident for some time.
- Some fresh run fish were observed in the river, but angling effort overall was low, with anglers showing no great enthusiasm to fish.
- Catch for the month was 14 fish, 2 salmon averaging 4.55kg (10.25lbs) and 12 grilse averaging 2.44kg (5.51lbs).
- The average weight of grilse at times fluctuated during the season on the Fishery. In June they were slightly smaller than the average size in 2006, while in July they were 0.28kg (0.64lbs) heavier. August saw a reduction in size by 0.08kg (0.20lbs) and an increase of 0.21kg (0.47lb) in September. This overall reduction in size has taken place over the past two seasons, and indicates there may be some problem in the food chain at sea. This may also explain the change in run patterns over the last two seasons!

## Down Stream & OPW Beats

Local anglers fishing above the Weir and down-stream had mixed fortunes during the season. In spring the low quota of spring salmon resulted in reduced angling effort, and when the grilse run started in earnest from late June water levels were higher than normal for the time of year! Nevertheless some anglers enjoyed some decent catches during the season especially on the lower section of the river, despite the adverse angling conditions.

The run of salmon continued well into July/early August, and anglers willing to put the effort in were duly rewarded with some decent catches. When water levels dropped later in the season, they had reasonable catches into September, with fish tending to rest up in the lower sections of the river, affording the anglers an opportunity to fish for them under decent angling conditions. Catch for the season for both beats was approximately 155 fish, well down on the previous season's estimate of 350 fish. Taking into account the quota restrictions and the wet summer, with fluctuating water levels throughout the season, the catch could be considered reasonable under such circumstances.



# Top 10 Heaviest Fish 2007

Date	Angler	Nationality	Weight	Method
May 7th	David O'Reilly	Ireland	6.66kg (15lbs)	Fly
May 13th	Tony Kavanagh	Ireland	6.66kg(15lbs)	Fly
June 6th	Fintan Murphy	Ireland	6.22kg(14lbs)	Shrimp
May 11th	John Anderson	N. Ireland	6.00kg(13.5lbs)	Fly
May 18th	Liam Gilsenan	Ireland	6.00kg(13.5lbs)	Fly
April 3rd	Sean O'Toole	Ireland	5.77kg(13lbs)	Spinning
April 22nd	Tony Coakley	Ireland	5.55kg(12.5lbs)	Fly
May 14th	Eoin Warner	Ireland	5.44kg(12.25 lbs)	Shrimp
April 29th	Crispin Rodwell	N.Ireland	5.33kg(12lbs)	Fly
May 8th	Michael Leonard	Ireland	5.33kg(12lbs)	Fly
* Average Weight 5.90kg (13.27lbs)				

## Nationality of Anglers

Nationality of Anglers fishing on Galway Weir in 2007

Republic of Ireland	75%
Northern Ireland	9.26%
British	9%
European	5.2%
Others	1.54%

## Number of Salmon taken by different Angling Methods Salmon Weir 2007

Method	Numbers of Salmon	Percent %
Fly	259	65.56%
Shrimp	120	30.37%
Spinning	16	4.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Eel Research

Following on from the eel tagging project carried out in October/ November 2006 in which 22 eels were tagged and released as part of the Galathea Eel Project data was collected during 2007 from this scientific programme. The Origin of the eels used; Corrib 9, Shannon 8, Burrishoole 2, Lough Neagh 3, and all eels ranged between 1.9 – 2.3 kg (4.25 – 5.17lbs) average length 95 cm (30ins) large silver eels. Data came back from 15 of the 22 eels tagged, that recorded depth, temperatures, and most importantly direction and location during migration.

Individual eels with specific tag numbers were located by the Argos Satellite at varying distances from the west coast of Ireland from where they were released. One of the last tags picked up by the satellite was located near the Azores 1,400 km out in the Atlantic, heading in the right direction to the perceived spawning grounds in the Sargasso Sea. The preliminary results from this project would indicate that; it is possible to tag eels with satellite tags and the technology seems to work, with data recovery from 68% of the eels tagged. The locations of the tags identified in the Atlantic would indicate that the eels were heading in the right direction. The results show that the migration time for the journey was underestimated when the project was initially planned. Indications are that funding may be available from the EU for a larger European Project in the coming years! "Watch this space".



Satellite tag attached to eel before being released in Galway Bay.

## Galway City Waterways: Canal (Eastern Conduit Phase III)

In late March work commenced on the third phase of the city canals restoration project from Newtownsmyth Footbridge to the Smolt Pass in Waterside. Prior to the commencement of the work Western Regional Fisheries Board Staff electro-fished the stretch from Waterside to the Penstock Sluice at Bowling Green, and removed fish from the section and relocated them up-stream of the works site. The Office of Public Works diverted the water from the stretch, by construction of a Cofferdam adjacent to the smolt-pass to facilitate the envisaged works to be undertaken. This involved the removal of silt, debris, pruning/removal of vegetation and restoration of the stone walls on the canal. Spawning gravel was placed at various sites along the stretch after this work was undertaken. Board Staff monitored this project for the duration of the works. This restoration project was carried out under the auspices of the Natural Environment & Waterways Group of which the Western Regional Fisheries Board is an active member.



Electro-fishing operation by Western Regional Fisheries Board Staff on stretch of canal before restoration works began.



## Stocking/Smolt Tagging

On April 4th & 5th staff stocked 34,550 smolts from the Boards Hatchery in Cong into the River Corrib outside Galway City. Out of the total 11,550 were fin clipped and micro-tagged and 23,000 were fin clipped only. The fish were released into the river from Dangan Slipway and at Menlo Pier upstream of the Weir. Some weeks previously 63,500 were released into the river at Cong Hatchery of which 11,500 were fin clipped & micro-tagged and 52,000 were fin clipped. It is envisaged that the ranching programme from Cong Hatchery will be re-assessed in the future, after the cessation of the commercial drift net fishery at sea.

During April & May the smolt trap on the Fishery was operational with a total of 3,501 wild smolts through the trap, of which 2,095 were fin clipped and micro-tagged using various codes by Marine Institute Staff and released back into the river down-stream afterwards. The smolt run through the trap was curtailed during the period concerned with on-going restoration work in the canal adjacent to the trap! This stocking/tagging programme over the years has provided valuable information on sea-survival, growth rates etc of hatchery reared fish compared to that of wild fish!

## Tag Recoveries

As in previous years in conjunction with the smolt tagging programme staff on the Fishery monitored the catch of adult salmon during the season. All fish retained by anglers were checked regarding the presence of the adipose fin. Fish without this fin were checked for micro-tags, with measurements, weight and scale samples taken and recorded. Over the season a total of 34 fin clipped fish were recorded, 15 of which were micro-tagged. The numbers recorded this year was influenced by the quota allocated to the Fishery for the season, which in turn meant that the numbers of fish sampled were not consistent with previous seasons.

A big thanks to anglers who were vigilant during the season, who contributed to the tag recovery by checking themselves for fin clipped fish, and alerting staff to the fact.

## New Fish Counter

A new fish counter was installed on April 16th in the fish pass on the Galway Weir. The counter was located at the head of the fish pass upstream of the weir. An underwater camera was placed at the tube entrance, in order to verify fish numbers passing through with figures from the counter. The counter was monitored regularly throughout the season, and data on fish numbers compiled by designated Board Staff. Over a period of weeks from mid June onwards a trial pit-tagging and floy tagging programme was undertaken to determine the proportion of the salmon run passing up-stream through the fish counter on the Weir. This information was to be used in conjunction with the counter figures, to form and assessment of the run of salmon into the Corrib System. Up to the end of November figures released show that just fewer than 6,000 fish were recorded through the counter since it was installed back in April.

The underwater camera installed in Jimmy's Pool in July 2006 again proved a major attraction for anglers and visitors in the Angling Lodge in 2007. The original camera was swept away in the high winter floods, and a new one was again installed on April 11th when water levels subsided enough to gain access to the pool. Anglers having a break in the Lodge one morning soon after its re- installation witnessed a fish taking an anglers shrimp in the pool and being hooked live on camera! The camera has proved to be a major success, and it is hoped to have a "web-cam" link to the camera for the 2008 season.

## Down Memory – Lane (1971)

In January 1971 the death occurred of one of the most noted gillies on the Galway Fishery Eddie Lydon. He was part of the Lydon Family lore of gillie's, fly tiers and fishing tackle salesmen of Galway that goes back to his great –grandfather for approximately 150 years.

Eddie Lydon spent sixty years on the Fishery, fishing in rain or shine from February 1st to September 30th six days a week! It was estimated that during that time he hooked and played 20,000 salmon to his own rod, having landed many thousands more for his clients. This might "possibly be a world record for salmon on rod & line". He was considered by skilled generations of salmon angling men and women from various parts of the globe as a maestro at the art of presenting a fly to a salmon. Anglers who fished with Eddie had great admiration for him, and considered him a gentleman, a philosopher and friend, with an agreeable sense of humour always. Some were of the opinion that "his job was a vocation rather than a business, and the weir will scarcely see his like again".

Published by: The Western Regional Fisheries Board,  
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## Sea Trout

Numbers of sea trout in the system during the summer was difficult to ascertain with fluctuating water levels throughout the season. Some finnock (juveniles) were recorded by anglers, but observations were that numbers overall were generally low, as has been the trend in recent years. Again bigger adult fish were not encountered in any significant numbers by anglers during the season.

Some decent brown trout were observed and caught by anglers during the season on the weir and new beat. These fish are wild brown trout that are specific to the river, and most likely spawn there later in the year! It is vitally important that both sea trout and brown trout stocks should be conserved! In that regard anglers should note that a catch & release policy applies for both species on the Fishery!

## Fishery Staff

The 2007 season proved to be a difficult one in a number of respects, with strict quotas on spring salmon and grilse during the season. That coupled with un-seasonally high water levels during the peak run of grilse meant that staff had to cope with situations beyond their control. The smooth running of the Galway Fishery is a team effort, and in that regard the staff involved made every effort to assist anglers, and make their visit to the weir an enjoyable experience as possible during the season.

Special thanks go to Paddy Glynn, James Quinn both permanent members of staff and Declan Gibbons staff member from the Development Section who joined us on a temporary transfer during the spring and summer. A note of thanks to Inspector Martin Butler, who facilitated the temporary transfer of Declan from his section.

Also special thanks to the Office of Public Works staff in Galway who control the sluice gates on the weir for their cooperation and assistance, during what turned out to be an especially difficult year water levels wise.

## Regulations for 2008

The 2008 season will see some welcome changes on the angling front on Galway Fishery with revised quotas for both multi-sea winter salmon and grilse. Following analysis of figures from the counter in the fish pass by the Standing Scientific Committee revised quotas have been allocated for the Corrib Catchment in 2008. The quota for 2 sea-winter fish is 369 and 1 sea winter (grilse) 2,315 fish. The quota for the Galway Fishery will be determined by the District Committee and will be based on all information available, particularly historically declared catches. This is a significant increase on the quota of 788 for the catchment in 2007, and will result in a considerable easing of restrictions from last season. Indications are that brown tags will not be used in the administration of the above quotas. As in previous years catch & release will be in operation on the Fishery once bag limits have been reached. This may be reviewed during the season at the discretion of local management. It should also be noted that regulations and bye-laws may be subject to change!

## Fishery News

The early days of December brought the sad news that Louis Vambeck Snr had passed away at his residence in Co. Westmeath after a long battle with illness. Louis was a regular on the Weir for many years, for which he had a great fondness, and indeed the West of Ireland generally. He had many interests and hobbies that he enjoyed, angling among them, especially salmon fishing which afforded him the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life.

Louis also had a keen interest in horse racing, having bred and raced some good horses in his day.

He was one of life's gentlemen, who had a word for everyone he met, irrespective of who or what they were! Despite his debilitating illness in recent years, which his fought with great vigor and determination, he made every effort to live life as fully as possible, and enjoyed his angling pursuits and other hobbies. He fought the hard fight but lost the battle in the end.

The high esteem, in which he was held, was evident in the attendance that paid their respects at his residence, and the large number of people at his funeral mass the following day in Mullingar Cathedral.

As we near the year's end, make plans, and look forward to a new season Louis will be in our thoughts, as will other dear friends that have passed on before. As we raise our glasses to toast the start of the new season on February 1st they will be looking down from a different place!

Ar dheis de go raib a anam dhillus!



The late Louis Vambeck Snr. R.I.P



# The Western Regional Fisheries Board

## Galway Salmon Fishery

The following tariffs and regulations will apply during the 2008 Season.

### ROD ANGLING FEES 2008

Period	Full Day	Half Day
	Euro €	Euro €
Feb. 1st - Feb. 28th	30.00	18.00
March 1st - March 31st	45.00	30.00
April 1st - May 31st	55.00	35.00
June 1st - July 26th	75.00	(Fishing a.m. or p.m.)
July 27th - Sept. 30th	35.00	25.00

### NEW BEAT

Period	Full Day	Half Day
	Euro €	Euro €
Feb. 1st - March 31st	15.00	-
April 1st - May 31st	20.00	15.00
June 1st - July 26th	30.00	20.00
July 27th - Sept. 30th	15.00	-

### FISHING TIMES:

From February 1st fishing will be free for regular patrons until the first salmon is caught, thereafter normal angling fees will apply. The Board will donate the first salmon to a local charity of its choice. Normal fishing day is from 9.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. Half days are available from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. or from 2.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.

Between June 1st to July 26th (inclusive), there will be two angling sessions per day, i.e. from 6.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

### DEPOSITS/FULL FEES:

Booking requests that are received are allocated rods subject to availability. If you receive an offer of angling deposits/full fees must be paid within 14 days of the receipt of the offer. Otherwise it will be assumed that the offer is not being taken up and the rod(s) will be reallocated to another angler on the waiting list. For booking(s) during the peak season between June 1st - July 26th inclusive, full fees must be paid to secure the booking(s). All other times outside of this period a 50% deposit is required.

**Please note: Deposits/Full Fees are non-refundable.**

### EVENING FISHING (FLY ONLY):

Evening fishing starts on April 1st after summer time begins. Between June 1st - July 26th (inclusive) from 8.30 pm to dark €25 per rod. All other times 7.00 p.m. to dark €15 per rod.

### ADVANCE BOOKINGS:

Applications for rod bookings should be made before the start of the season on February 1st by mail, fax or e-mail to:

The Manager, Galway Fishery, Nun's Island, Galway.

Tel. +353-91-562388 Fax +353-91-562930 E-mail: shartgalfish@eircom.net

## FISHERY REGULATIONS

### LICENCES:

Before an angler is permitted to fish a current State Salmon Angling Licence must be produced. Licences can be purchased from the Fishery Office. **Note:** Anglers purchasing a licence will also be required to purchase a Conservation Stamp which will be used for salmon conservation and stock rebuilding in the coming years. The stamp will be the equivalent to each licence category i.e., the cost of stamp for an "annual all district" licence would be €67 and so forth.

### FLY ONLY RULE:

During low water conditions (at a level to be determined by the Fishery Manager) a fly only rule will apply on the Fishery.

### POLAROIDS:

Polaroid glasses are only permitted to be used by anglers fly-fishing on the fishery.

### BAG LIMITS:

There is a general bag limit of 10 fish per angler for the season on rivers where you may catch and retain salmon. From the start of the angling season on February 1st to May 12th inclusive a daily bag limit of one salmon per angler will apply, up to a maximum of three fish during that period. From May 13th a bag limit of three fish per day up to August 31st. During September a bag limit of one fish per day up to September 30th. A bag limit of 2 fish on prawn/shrimp fishing or spinning will apply from the May 13th to August 31st. After the above bag limits or the quota has been reached anglers may be permitted to fish catch and release using single barbless hooks, subject to certain restrictions depending on circumstances at the time i.e., water temperature, height etc. Angling methods, bag limits, catch & release policy may be revised during the season at the discretion of local management. All fish caught must be recorded, and tagged if retained by the angler, with details given to Fishery Staff. It should be noted that regulations and bye-laws may be subject to change.

### FOUL-HOOKED FISH:

All foul-hooked fish must be returned to the river, except in the case of badly damaged or exhausted fish that cannot be successfully revived. In such situations they must be handed up to Fishery staff. Anglers failing to comply with this regulation will be banned from the Fishery.

### PROTOCOL ON THE RIVER:

- Anglers should fish the river down step by step and when at the bridge cease fishing, go upriver and start again.
- Fly anglers wading from the east bank have right of way while fishing down the river.
- Anglers must alternate in the weir pool after one hour's fishing.

**N.B.:** During periods of inclement weather it is advisable to contact the Fishery for information on water levels and conditions before travelling.

**The Galway Fishery and The Western Regional Fisheries Board reserve the right to refuse access to the fishery.**

The Board cannot vouch for the safe state of the fishery at any time due to changing weather and water conditions and the possible presence of hidden and unknown dangers. Anglers are warned to exercise the utmost care for their own safety and that of others using the fishery. This offer is issued on the strict understanding that the Board's duty to you\* is limited to that owed to "recreational users" under the Occupiers Liability Act 1995.