

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wild Atlantic Salmon to run free from Irish driftnets.

- Irish and European anglers welcome Government decision to close the Irish Drift Net Fishery

From the office of EAA in Brussels, November 2nd, 2006.

The European Anglers Alliance (EAA) and Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers (FISSTA) welcomed the decision by the Irish Government to adopt the Independent Salmon Group Report to end mixed stock fisheries immediately. A compensation fund of € 30 mill. has been approved to pay commercial driftnet fishermen over 5 times their annual salmon income so that Ireland will no longer be in breach of the EU Habitats directive in 2007.

The Minister for the Marine, Noel Dempsey TD, is to be applauded for taking the Independent Salmon Group's (ISG) recommendations to ban drift-netting to the Cabinet against much opposition. The rivers of Europe can now hope for a recovery process to begin as their salmon will no longer be intercepted by the Irish driftnets. Others in the feeding countries such as Greenland, Faroe Islands and Iceland will now see some reward for their decision to forego netting rights to fish for salmon as a part of an international drive to help speed the recovery.

The EAA were joined in Brussels today with Ireland's premier salmon angling body, Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers (FISSTA), who has led the campaign for the lifetime of six Irish Governments in conjunction with the North Atlantic Salmon Fund.

In 2004, FISSTA decided to form a united angling and stakeholders group to lobby the politicians in what later became known as 'Stopnow'.

The success of this single issue campaign hastened the decision to end such a damaging practice which was long overdue and all anglers are delighted that no more salmon will be lost to the commercial nets off the Irish coast. Scientific evidence has long supported the need for this ban to ensure the long-term survival of Irish & EU salmon stocks.

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The office of EAA has assisted FISSTA in ensuring that all EU obligations in the protection of the salmon habitat are met and has led the non Government organisations campaign at NASCO for over 15 years.

The EAA and FISSTA are delighted that the efforts by all involved in the long campaign to convince the Irish Government to end this damaging practice to our wild Atlantic salmon has been listened at last by this Minister for the Marine, Noel Dempsey TD, and is to be commended in taking the ISG recommendations to ban drift-netting to the Cabinet for such a historic decision.

With this success, now comes the responsibility for Irish salmon anglers and stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of more salmon returning to Irish rivers are translated into enhanced stocks and a sustainable angling and recreational industry. EAA assemblies will continue to hear from FISSTA on level of progress and will hopefully encourage many of our five million EAA members to include Ireland in their future angling holiday plans to view that wonderful scene of our wild Atlantic salmon leaping the waterfalls on their way back to their natal pool for spawning.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

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EAA, European Anglers Alliance is *the* pan-European umbrella organisation for recreational angling having as members angling peak bodies from 17 European nations with 5 million affiliated anglers.

Web: www.eaa-europe.org

FISSTA, Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers is the Irish salmon affiliated member of EAA. FISSTA is *The voice of the Irish Salmon and Sea Trout Angler*.

Web: www.fissta.com

Stop Now! campaign: <http://www.stopnow.ie/>

Some campaign supporters: <http://www.stopnow.ie/links.html>

Press release from Irish Government:

Dublin, 1st November 2006

Noel Dempsey T.D., the Minister for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources, today announced that the Government has adopted the key recommendations of the report by the Independent Working Group on Salmon. The key recommendation of this report is the creation of a hardship fund for those affected by the compulsory buy-out of drift net fishermen.

The Government's primary motivation in adopting the report is that of conservation of the wild salmon species, which has long been regarded as one of Ireland's most prized fish, instilled in our traditional mythology as the Bradán feasa, the salmon of knowledge, and valued as a cultural and economic resource.

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Expert scientific advice available shows marine survival of salmon in the North Atlantic has decreased significantly in the past decade. Less than half to one third of the salmon returning to rivers in the 1970s and 1980s are currently returning to Irish rivers. In this regard it is vital to afford every protection to the remaining stocks and to clearly prioritise conservation over catch. The current imperative must be to maintain stocks above conservation limits or at the very least halt the decline.

The Government realise that these proposals will entail hardship for commercial fishermen and vulnerable coastal communities. To offset this they have established a hardship scheme for those affected. This fund, worth over €25 million, will give each fishermen a payment equal to six times their average annual catch over the period 2001-2005 multiplied by the average price per salmon over the period (€23). Each fisherman will also receive a payment equal to six times the current licence fee.

Although the scheme is compulsory for drift net fishermen the scheme will also be open to other commercial Salmon fishermen who use nets such as snap and draft.

An additional €5 million fund will be available for a community support scheme. This support scheme is designed to aid the development of those communities where the impact of the cessation of drift netting will be hardest felt and provide alternative employment and economic opportunities for those affected.

From now on we can expect our management of wild salmon will be based on an individual river basis. This is a quantum leap from our previous management of the fishery and will ensure that we can optimise the potential benefit of returning salmon, as well as ensuring that in each river salmon stocks will in time return to a healthy status.

This means that the harvest of salmon, by any means, will be restricted to those stocks of rivers that are judged by the scientific advice as meeting their conservation limits. Commercial fishing and recreational angling can continue only on the scientifically identified exploitable surplus.

However in the region of 68,000 fish that might otherwise have been taken in the at-sea drift-net fishery in 2007 will be available for redistribution to their natal rivers. As a consequence of the redistribution of the foregone at-sea drift-net catch up to ten rivers, which would otherwise not meet their conservation limit in 2007, will now have a surplus over the conservation limit requirement.

The National Salmon Commission, in the context of the report, will now bring forward advice to the Minister on measures for management of the wild salmon fishery in 2007. Regulations governing the management of the 2007 season will be published for public consultation before the end of the year. ENDS

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ISG, Independent Salmon Group

- Report of the Independent Salmon Group - *Managing for the Conservation of our National Salmon Resource in 2007 and beyond*; here:

<http://www.dcmnr.gov.ie/Marine/Inland+Fisheries+Marine+Leisure+and+Research/Inland+Fisheries/Report+of+the+Independent+Salmon+Group.htm>

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