



Bord Iascaigh Réigiúnach an Iarthuaiscirt

The North Western Regional Fisheries Board



Annual Report

2008



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Front cover picture: An angler plays a sea trout on beautiful Glencar Lough which straddles Counties Sligo and Leitrim

Background Information

The Board's Role

The functions of the Board are set out in the Fisheries Act, 1980, as amended by the Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1999, and include the following:

- Protection of fisheries and enforcement of the Fisheries Acts;
- Preparation and submission of fisheries development plans;
- Ensuring that any fishery in the possession or occupation of the Board is managed, conserved, protected, developed and improved;
- Promotion and encouragement of the management, conservation, protection, development and improvement of fisheries which are not in the Board's possession or occupation;
- Development, promotion and marketing of angling;
- Organisation and co-ordination of inland fisheries catchment management plans.

The Region

The North Western Fisheries Region extends from Pigeon Point, Clew Bay, Co. Mayo, to Mullaghmore Head, Co. Sligo and includes the catchment areas of all rivers and lakes which flow into the sea between those two points as well as the sea area from coast to baselines, and 12 miles from baselines out to sea, between the two points.

The Board

The Board itself is comprised of twenty-one members of whom thirteen are elected by various interest groups, as specified in the Fisheries Acts, and eight are appointed by the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Board Members normally hold office for a period of five years but the term of office of the present Board members has been extended a number of times, most recently from December, 2008, due to an ongoing review of the inland fisheries service.

Organisation and Staffing

The Board's headquarters are in Ballina, Co Mayo, and it has work bases in Sligo, Bangor Erris, Lough Conn (Knockmore, near Ballina) and Lough Arrow (Ballinafad, near Boyle, Co. Roscommon). It had a complement of forty-two permanent staff in 2008 and employed a number of additional staff on a contract basis, mainly for protection of salmon stocks during the summer period. The organisation is headed by the Chief Executive Officer who reports to the Board.

Budget

The Board's budget for 2008 was approximately €4.1m of which €3.32m was provided by the exchequer with the balance, €78m, being raised by the Board through sales of fishing licences, angling permits, the collection of fishery rates etc.

Mission Statement

The Board is committed to the conservation and sustainable development of the region's inland fisheries, sea angling and molluscan shellfish resources and to the management of these valuable resources in a way which will yield the maximum return to the local economy, on a sustainable basis, while, at the same time, providing a valuable and attractive recreational outlet for local people.

Key Objectives

- (1) To conserve and protect the region's inland fisheries, sea angling and molluscan shellfish resources so as to ensure the long term survival of fish stocks at optimum levels;
- (2) To conserve the habitats, other species of flora and fauna and the biodiversity of inland water systems;
- (3) To develop the region's fishery resources to their optimum potential on a sustainable basis;
- (4) To manage exploitation of these resources in a rational manner, based on the principle of maximum sustainable yield, so as to produce the best return to the local economy in terms of net output and employment;
- (5) To pursue a catchment based approach to management of the region's fisheries;
- (6) To optimise the amenity, recreational and environmental value of the region's fisheries resource;
- (7) To ensure there is adequate access to angling for local and other Irish anglers as well as for overseas visitors including disabled anglers;
- (8) To provide an efficient, effective and value for money service in accordance with the Board's statutory remit.

Protection and Conservation of Fisheries

Protection and conservation of the region's highly valuable salmon fisheries again accounted for the bulk of the Board's work in 2008. The coastal area was patrolled on a regular basis throughout the main salmon season with the Board's RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats) which generally operated in pairs for safety reasons. All inland, salmon bearing waters were patrolled as necessary with the more important rivers being patrolled on a daily basis and some, such as the Moy, being patrolled two or three times in each 24 hour period. In general, there was very little illegal fishing activity along the coast but inland waters required constant vigilance especially when water levels were suitable for netting although the high water conditions, which persisted for much of the season, made illegal fishing much more difficult. The following were the main elements of the Board's protection activities during the year:

- A total of 2,044 staff days were devoted to patrols of inland waters including 95 boat patrols.
- A total of 258 staff days were devoted to sea patrols including twenty-five 2-boat RIB patrols and twelve single boat RIB patrols.
- A total of 197 staff days were devoted to land based coastal patrols.
- Just 4 staff days were devoted to protection of oyster fisheries in 2008.
- A total of 43 nets measuring 2,935 yards, were seized.
- On the Spot Fines were issued in 22 cases.
- Prosecutions were initiated in 14 cases related to alleged illegal fishing incidents. At the time of this report, a conviction had been recorded in just one case, charges had been struck out in another case on the basis of a financial contribution to the court, three cases had been withdrawn, the Probation Act had been applied in one case and eight were still pending.
- The Salmon Tagging, bag limit and quota regulations were enforced throughout the region with angling licences/logbooks been checked in 6,485 cases.
- At the Board's request, the Minister introduced three new conservation bye laws during the year; one of these restricted angling on the River Deel to the months of June, July and August, in order to conserve salmon stocks, another increased the minimum size limit for brown trout taken on Loughs Conn and Cullin to 12 inches (30.48 cms.) while a third brought forward the close of the season on Loughs Conn and Cullin for brown trout fishing to 30 September.

Management of Salmon Stocks

In addition to protection and conservation of salmon stocks, as reported above, the Board devoted considerable effort to operation of the new salmon management regime which had been introduced by the Government in 2007 following the cessation of the drift net fishery. This involved the closure of a number of rivers for salmon fishing, the operation of a *Catch & Release* system on some rivers and the enforcement of bag limits on several other rivers. Commercial fishing in the region was limited to 23 special local draft net licences, which operated in the Tullaghan Bay area, and one ordinary draft net licence which operated on the Newport River estuary. In accordance with the law, following consultation with the Bangor Fisheries District Committee, the Board's CEO decided on the allocations of total allowable catch to commercial fishermen and anglers in respect of the Owenmore, Owenduff

and Newport Rivers and also determined the individual allocations commercial fishermen operating on those rivers. Tags were then distributed in accordance with the allocations in each case and catches were monitored throughout the season. In addition to the specific protection role discharged by the Board, as reported above, the following were the main elements of the work carried out in regard to salmon management in 2008:

- The Board issued 25 commercial salmon fishing licences and 6,158 salmon angling licences.
- Quotas were allocated to commercial salmon fishermen in accordance with the regulations and tags distributed to each licence holder accordingly.
- Commercial fishing licences and logbooks were checked on a regular basis and a total of 6,485 checks were carried out on anglers' licences/logbooks checked by Board staff.
- The Board further developed its fish counter programme during the year with the provision of a new counter on the Owenduff River, in a joint project with the fishery owner, further development of counter facilities on the Moy at Ballina and ongoing management of existing counters on the Munhin, Owenmore, Ballysadare and Garravogue River counters.
- The Board again assisted the Marine Institute with the operation of a smolt trap and a fish counter on the River Deel.
- For the seventh consecutive year, electro fishing surveys were carried out at 30 index sites on the Owenmore, Owenduff, Glenamoy, Newport and Owengarve Rivers in the Bangor Fisheries District in order to monitor stocks of juvenile fish.
- For the third consecutive year, electro fishing surveys were carried out at 19 index sites in the Moy Catchment in order to monitor stocks of fish present.
- Board staff carried out five minute fishing surveys at 42 sites in the Ballina District and at 52 sites in the Sligo District in accordance with a countrywide study of salmon stocks being carried out by the Central Fisheries as part of the new salmon management regime.

Development and Improvement of Fisheries

- The Board provided a new facility for disabled anglers, adjacent to an existing Board car park which had been developed along the Moy at Derryguary, Foxford, in recent years. The new facility will enable a wheelchair bound angler to drive to the river bank and to gain access to one of the best salmon fishing pools in that part of the river via a specially constructed concrete ramp and fishing stand.
- In a joint project with a group of local farmers and Mayo Co. Council, the Board organised and part funded a major restoration project on the Glencullin River, a tributary of Carrowmore Lake, Bangor-Erris, which had been devastated by a huge flood in 1997. The project, which cost a total of €121,000, attracted a grant of €60,000 from the Community Fund established by Mayo Co. Council as a condition of planning permission for the Corrib Gas terminal, with the Council providing a further €20,000 and the Board funding the balance of €41,000. More than 2km of river bank were rebuilt with 4,140 tonnes of imported rock, new spawning beds were created over a 683-metre stretch of river and 35 new holding pools were created. The project protects valuable land as well as enhancing the main spawning tributary for Carrowmore Lake and is an excellent example of how state agencies and landowners can work together in the common interest.



A beautifully restored river bank on the Glencullin River, near Bangor-Erris



A newly constructed facility for disabled anglers on the Moy at Foxford, Co. Mayo

- In the Lough Gill catchment, enhancement works were carried out on a 1.5km stretch of the Skinneadha River, a tributary of the River Bonet in Co. Leitrim. Works included clearance of excess shrubbery, introduction of spawning gravel, leveling and loosening of existing gravel and fencing of river banks.
- Works were carried out on a severely eroded section of the Mad River, a tributary of the Upper Moy in the Cloonacool area. Bank protection, using imported rock, was carried out along a 220-metre stretch of the river. In addition, compacted gravel was loosened along a 170-metre stretch and holding pools created to improve habitat for juvenile fish.
- On the Cuilacorraun River, also in the Moy catchment, bank protection was carried out along a 140-metre stretch and compacted gravel loosened along a similar length of channel.
- On the Castlehill River, a tributary of Lough Conn, compacted gravel was loosened along a 100-metre stretch.
- Enhancement works were carried out at nine separate sites on the Cloonaghmore (Palmerstown) River which flows into the western side of Killala Bay. A total of 7,387 square yards of habitat were improved through the loosening of compacted gravel, the introduction of 460 tonnes of new gravel and the pruning of excessive shrubbery at several locations. It is hoped that these improvement works will greatly assist in restoration of salmon stocks in this river where stocks are currently below the Conservation Limit.
- Improvement works were also carried out on the Ballinglen River, North Mayo, which is also below its Conservation Limit. On this river, existing gravel was loosened and 20 tonnes of new gravel introduced resulting in the enhancement of 20 square metres of river channel.
- Access for anglers along several rivers was improved with the construction of new stiles and footbridges and the repair or replacement of several old structures. On the Ballina Salmon Anglers stretch of the Moy, for example, eleven new footbridges were constructed by Board staff with materials funded by the Association. Repair and replacement works were also carried out on the Pollagh and Manulla Rivers both of which are tributaries of the Moy.
- A FÁS Community Employment Scheme was operated by the Board during the year and excellent work was carried out on the scheme on several parts of the Moy catchment. As well as general amenity improvement works at a number of locations e.g. along the Moy Fishery waters in Ballina, workers employed on the scheme cleared huge amounts of excessive shrubbery along tributaries of the Moy thus improving access for anglers as well as improving fish habitat.
- The Board continued with its ongoing stock management programmes on the region's main brown trout fisheries. These operations resulted in the removal of 2,078 pike (6,919 kg) from Loughs Conn, Cullin and Arrow of which 1,378 pike (4,728 kg) were restocked to nearby, designated pike fisheries.
- A total of more than 6,000 juvenile fish were removed from the River Deel when water flows in that river reached a critically low level in June. The salvaged trout were removed to a lower section of the river where there was an adequate flow of water. Approximately 500 trout were salvaged from the Aughagower River, in the Lough Arrow area, in similar circumstances.



The Palmerstown (Cloonaghmore) River enhanced by imported spawning gravel



Bank restoration works underway on the Mad River, a tributary of the Moy

- Also in the Lough Arrow catchment, small incubation units were utilised by the Board on the Cartron, Castle and Hollybrook streams, to provide a boost to wild brown trout stocks in Arrow.
- Spawning bed improvement works were carried out on the Brickeen and Cartron streams, in the Lough Arrow catchment, with the introduction of 25 tonnes of spawning gravel at selected sites.
- A total of 13,200 trout were stocked to six lakes in the region during the year. These included 3,850 adult brown trout, 2,966 adult rainbow trout, 900 1-year-old rainbow trout and 5,484 juvenile rainbow trout. The fisheries stocked were Loughs Bo, Bilberry, Lannagh, na Leibe, Gall and Ballin Lough.

Protection of Water Quality

The Board continued to deploy two staff on a full-time basis on protection and monitoring of water quality in the region. The Board's laboratory at Ballina was in continuous operation throughout the year and extensive sampling programmes were carried out in a number of catchments. Planning applications were monitored and submissions made as necessary for the protection of water quality. Proposals for forestry developments and clearfelling were reviewed and comments submitted as appropriate. In addition, Environmental Impact Statements for various, proposed projects were examined and detailed comments submitted. Inspections were carried out at a wide range of locations following reports of water pollution or threats to water quality submitted by members of the public or by the Board's own staff. An incident which was of particular concern to the Board during the year was the discharge of a large volume of raw sewage to the Castlebar River which continued for a period of a week in January. The incident resulted in prosecution by the Board of Mayo County Council which was convicted in respect of the offence. The main features of the Board's work in relation to protection and restoration of water quality during the year were as follows:

- A total of 1,407 water samples were collected and analysed in the Board's laboratory. A further 68 samples, collected by Board staff, were analysed externally for the Board and 120 samples were collected and forwarded to the Central Fisheries Board laboratory as part of long-term monitoring programmes for Loughs Conn and Arrow which has been ongoing for more than 30 years.
- A total of 74 planning applications were examined and comments submitted as considered appropriate for the protection of water quality. Two appeals were submitted to An Bord Pleanála following decisions by Local Authorities which the Board felt were detrimental to the protection of water quality. Both appeals were successful.
- Three Environmental Impact Statements were assessed during the year and submissions made.
- Eleven applications for effluent discharge licences were assessed and comments submitted as necessary for the protection of water quality.
- A total of 98 forestry proposals were assessed and comments submitted as appropriate. Despite strong objections from the Board, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry granted a licence for the spreading of fertiliser from the air in the River Deel catchment. The Board's worst fears were realised when the operation went ahead, in unsuitable weather, and several of the conditions attached to the licence were breached.
- A total of 95 pollution reports were received and investigated with appropriate follow-up action taken in all cases.

- Warning letters were issued in respect of 43 pollution incidents or potential incidents detected by the Board.
- One prosecution, in respect of water pollution, was initiated by the Board during the year. This related to a major pollution incident in Castlebar in respect of which Mayo County Council was convicted.
- Inspections were carried out by Board staff on 104 farms and follow-up action was taken as appropriate in individual cases including the issue of warning letters in some cases.
- A total of 62 inspections were carried out at various wastewater treatment plants in the region; these were followed up as necessary by letters to the Local Authorities or, in some cases, meetings with the relevant officials, in an effort to have particular problem cases dealt with.
- Infrastructural projects in the region were monitored during the year and a total of seventeen specific inspections were carried out in order to detect any particular pollution problems and to have remedial action taken as necessary.
- General inspections were carried out at a total of 64 other locations which represented potential threats to water quality in the region.
- Work was completed on monitoring the effects on local fisheries of a bog rehabilitation programme implemented by Bord na Móna following cessation of peat harvesting operations in North Mayo. Work carried out by the Board included the collection and analysis of 54 freeze core samples from river/stream beds and the recovery of salmon ova boxes which had been planted out in various streams, at the end of 2007, to monitor egg survival. Most of the ova had hatched out successfully indicating the water quality had improved in several streams.
- Potential impacts on water quality arising from the Corrib Gas Project were monitored closely and the Board's CEO sat on two committees whose functions were to monitor the operation of the project in relation to (a) construction of the terminal (the biggest construction site in the country during the year) and (b) the "upstream" pipeline from the sea to the terminal site. Both committees operated satisfactorily and were beneficial in facilitating the exchange of information and the briefing of all parties in regard to progress on the project.
- The Board was directly involved in implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the Western River Basin District. The Board's Assistant CEO was a member of both the Steering Group and Management Committee for the project. Board staff assisted the Central Fisheries Board in carrying out surveys, relating to implementation of the Directive, on five lakes, nine rivers and five estuaries during the year.

Promotion and Marketing of Angling

The Board reorganised its marketing and promotional activities during the year. A new Fisheries Information Officer was appointed to work under the direction of a Fisheries Information Manager whose responsibilities were broadened to include management of fisheries information generally as well as the Board's promotional and marketing efforts. A wide range of marketing and promotional activities were undertaken during the year including production of a weekly angling report during the main fishing season, responding to a wide range of angling enquiries, hosting angling journalists, maintenance and updating of the Board's website, participation in marketing events and working closely with other Boards, Fáilte Ireland and various local groups involved in tourism marketing.



The awarding winning Cathedral Angling Centre, above, which was designed to blend in with its surroundings and, below, left to right, Vincent Roche, NWRFB, Heather Michael, Ballina Tidy Towns Committee, and architect, Vincent Coleman, who designed the winning building.



The main features of the Board's work in this area of activity during the year were as follows:

- A total of 379 angling enquiries were dealt with; these were received by telephone, e-mail and letter as well as from personal callers to the Board's office.
- Angling guides, brochures and other material were distributed in response to 156 of the above enquiries.
- A total of 30 angling reports were produced and these were distributed to the local and national press as well as being posted to the Board's website and forwarded to the Central Fisheries Board for inclusion in regular national reports.
- A total of 35 advertisements were placed in Irish and overseas angling publications encouraging anglers to come and fish in the region.
- Seven trade shows were attended during the year including, for the first time, a major angling marketing show in the USA.
- The Board hosted six visits by angling journalists; fishing was arranged and the Board provided boats and ghillies as required. In addition, direct support and guidance was provided by the Board's marketing staff.
- A major event during the year was the official designation of Ballina as the Salmon Capital of Ireland. The Board was a very active participant in the work of Ballina/North Mayo Marketing Initiative and worked closely with Ballina Chamber of Commerce and Ballina Town Council in arranging the official designation which took place in June, at a function in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, attended by An Tánaiste, Ms. Mary Coughlan, TD.
- Following the designation of Ballina as Salmon Capital of Ireland, the Board commissioned a feasibility study on the possible establishment of a salmon based visitor centre in the town. The study, which was carried out by Tourism Development International, was funded with a 50% grant from Fáilte Ireland and a 25% grant from Ballina Town Council/Mayo County Council.
- The Board organised, or directly supported, eight juvenile angling events, involving 143 participants, during the year. In addition, it provided evening fishing, free of charge, for an additional 22 anglers on the Cathedral Beat of the Moy Fishery in Ballina.
- The Board's website was maintained and updated as appropriate. For the first time, a webcam was utilised to transmit pictures of the Ridge Pool on the Board's website. The site experienced a total of 83,435 visits during the year, an increase of 19% on 2007.
- A crew from the Eco Eye television series spent two days in the region in September filming footage for a programme on management of the River Moy by the Board; the programme was screened on RTE in January, 2009 and highlighted a range of Board activities.
- Having already won an RIAI national architecture award, the Board's Cathedral Angling Centre received further national recognition when it took the architecture award in the National Tidy Towns Competition. Local architect, Vincent Coleman, and Board CEO, Vincent Roche, were presented with plaques at a ceremony in Westport and a prize of €1,000 was presented to Ballina Tidy Towns Committee.



Pictured at the official launch of Ballina as Salmon Capital of Ireland were, left to right, Declan Cooke, River Moy Manager, NWRFB, John Walkin, Chairman, NWRFB, Ms. Mary Coughlan, TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Vincent Roche, CEO, NWRFB, Ann Campbell, Board Member, NWRFB, and Rory Sheehan, Angling Information Officer, NWRFB.

- Sales of angling licences for 2008 were analysed to determine the origin of anglers who purchased licences in the region. A total of 6,158 salmon angling licences were sold in the region which represented a decrease of 8% on 2007. The decrease was attributed to the exceptionally high water levels which prevailed on the Moy throughout a large part of the season with the result that many intending visitors stayed away. Of total licence sales, 70% were purchased by anglers from outside the region while 48% were purchased by anglers from outside the 26 counties and 35% of the total were purchased by anglers from outside the 32 counties. Anglers came from 33 countries including the USA, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Australia with the biggest numbers coming from England, Northern Ireland, France and Germany.

Management of Board Fisheries

The Board was directly responsible for management of a number of state fisheries in the region. The most important of these was the State-owned Moy Fishery at Ballina and the Cloongee Fishery, also on the River Moy. A number of trout lakes were also managed by the Board. The main features of the year in regard to management of Board fisheries were as follows:

- Angling on the Moy Fishery was allocated in accordance with the Board's established criteria. A total of 718 applications were processed with offers of angling being issued in respect of 1,372 rod days. The fishery accommodated a total of 2,910 anglers, from 19 countries, and they accounted for a total catch of 1,009 salmon, an increase of 108 % on 2007 which was a particularly bad year at the fishery due to the impact of severe floods during the peak salmon run.

- The Board issued a total of 817 permits in respect of the Cloongee Fishery which produced a total catch of 250 salmon, a decrease of 27% which was somewhat surprising given that high water conditions should have favoured this upstream fishery.
- Booking arrangements were operated for all Board fisheries and boats were provided for hire on a number of lakes.
- A total of 4,409 rod days were fished on Board managed fisheries in 2008 compared with 4,617 in 2007, a decrease of 4.5 %.
- Permit and boat hire income amounted to €233,724 in 2008 compared with €242,902 in 2007, a decrease of 4%. The decreases were due mainly to adverse weather conditions which prevailed for much of the summer and, in particular, to the impact of high water levels on angling at the Moy Fishery. Licensing of Board fisheries to angling clubs yielded a further €9,460.

Fish Catches and Angling

Commercial Salmon Fishing

In accordance with the provisions of the Regulations, a quota of 2,000 salmon was allocated to the holders of 23 special local draft net licences on the Owenmore and Owenduff River estuaries and a quota of 30 salmon was allocated to the holder of draft net licence on the Newport River estuary. Despite extension of the commercial fishing season to mid-August, the delay in the arrival of the main grilse run, combined with flood conditions during a substantial part of the season, resulted in a total catch of just 1,540 salmon being taken. Details of commercial and rod catches of salmon, as well as graphics illustrating trends in catches, are contained in Appendix 3.

Salmon Angling

For the second year in succession, the salmon angling season was dominated by exceptionally high water levels which, for the most part, had a detrimental effect on angling. Persistent high water had a particularly negative effect on the Moy Fishery at Ballina as it made fly fishing impossible for most of the main season while the upstream fisheries fared somewhat better. On some of the smaller, spate rivers, periodic flood conditions provided a boost to angling and the Ballisodare River enjoyed a good run of fish throughout the main season. The total recorded salmon catch on the Moy in 2008 was 7,392 fish which represented a decrease of 18% on the 2007 catch which was 8,997. In the Bangor District, the rod catch was also down with the total catch in 2008 at 1,366 compared with 1,623 in 2007, a decrease of 16%. In the Sligo District, the catch in 2008, at 1,358 fish, was very similar to the 2007 catch which was 1,365. Details of commercial and rod catches of salmon, as well as illustrations and trends, are contained in Appendix 3.

Brown Trout Fishing

Angling for brown trout on the region's main lakes was again somewhat disappointing. As with salmon angling, fishing conditions were hampered by bad weather with unseasonably high water levels impacting on fly fishing. Trout angling on Lough Conn was again quite "patchy" with some anglers enjoying reasonable catches while others experienced poor fishing. The adjacent Lough Cullin also proved quite disappointing compared to previous years when this lake produced good fishing during the

Mayfly period. The total recorded catch on Lough Conn was 1,837 trout, compared with a recorded catch of 2,081 in 2007, a decrease of 12%. The average weight of trout caught in 2008 was 1.03 lbs. (0.47kg) compared with 0.95 lbs. (0.43kg) in 2007. However, it should be noted that a new minimum size limit of 12 inches (30.48 cms.) took effect in 2008 compared to the previous limit of 10 inches (25.4 cms.) with the result that an increase in the average weight of trout reported would be expected. The lake continued to produce some large trout during the season with the largest fish reported at 12 lbs. Fishing on Lough Arrow improved in 2008 and, at the season end, some local anglers were expressing confidence that 2008 would mark the start of an upturn in trout angling on this once famous trout fishery which had experienced poor fishing over a number of years.

Rainbow Trout Fishing

Ballin Lough, the Board's rainbow trout fishery, near Westport, again proved very popular with both local and visiting anglers. This small lake accounted for 600 rod days in 2008 compared to 556 rod days in 2007 (an increase of 8%). The lake accounted for a total of 881 rainbow trout and 107 brown trout (total 988) of which 415 rainbow trout and 73 brown trout (total 488) were returned to the water. The Board decided to keep Ballin Lough open, on an experimental basis, throughout the winter months, but, by the year end, there appeared to be little interest in winter angling.

Sea Trout Fishing

Since the collapse of sea trout stocks in the Burrishoole and Lough Beltra fisheries, as a result of sea lice infestation, sea trout angling in the region has been confined mainly to Carrowmore Lake and the Moy Estuary. Carrowmore enjoyed some excellent sea trout fishing during the season while fishing on the Moy Estuary was disrupted significantly by flood conditions. Nonetheless, the estuary reported a recorded catch of 1,001 sea trout in 2008, compared with a reported catch of 1,526 in 2007 (a decrease of 34%).

Sea Angling

The year was a challenging one for sea angling in the region as inclement weather resulted in difficult angling conditions throughout most of the season. However, despite the bad weather, some fine catches were reported. Shark fishing improved and notable catches of Homelyn Ray were also recorded. Shore angling along the North Mayo/West Sligo coasts was reported to be good. A number of successful boat and shore angling competitions were fished in the region.

Commercial Eel Fishing

The Board issued 19 eel fishing licences which included 14 longline and 5 fyke net licences. Of these, 7 longlines and 3 fyke net licences were actually fished. The total reported, regional eel catch was 4.4 tonnes compared with 6.6 tonnes in 2007 and 7.2 tonnes in 2006. The continued reduction in the eel catch reflects the shorter season introduced in 2008, a reduced effort and, in particular, the continued decline in eel stocks and the absence of any appreciable recruitment to the fishery. Details of eel catches in recent years are contained in Appendix 3.

Oyster Fishing

No oyster fishing took place in the region during 2008.

Corporate Governance

The Board managed its operations in accordance with best practice and the requirements of the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies. The main features of the year in this regard were as follows.

- The Board produced and implemented a Business Plan for the year. Regular reports on implementation of the plan were prepared for the Board.
- An Annual Report for 2008 was produced and submitted to the Central Fisheries Board by 31 March, 2008 as required by the Fisheries Act, 1980.
- The Board's Accounts for 2008 were prepared and submitted to the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources by 28 February, 2009 in accordance with Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies. The Accounts were submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) by 31 March, 2009 in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
- An internal audit of the Board's financial management procedures was carried out, on behalf of the Board, by Sheehan Quinn & Company, Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors. They reported that Board management had implemented an adequate system of internal financial control in the areas which were subject to audit. The auditors confirmed that issues raised in the 2007 internal audit had been satisfactorily addressed and made some further recommendations for improvement in controls.
- The Board operated within budget for the year and submitted accounts to the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on a regular basis.
- The Board's audit sub-committee met four times during the year and had discussions, in the absence of Board management, with both the internal and external auditors.
- The Board had in place an assessment of Business Risks and this was reviewed by the Board.
- Ten Board meetings were held during the year and details of attendance are contained at Appendix 1.
- The Board complied with the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies. A new Code of Conduct for Employees was introduced. A report by the Board Chairman, as required by section 10.2 of the Code, is contained at Appendix 5.
- Board members were reminded of their responsibilities arising from the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001. The CEO submitted a statement to the Board Chairman in accordance with the provisions of the Acts.
- The Board's Safety Committee met four times to review safety matters. Recommendations made by the committee were implemented as appropriate. A number of training courses, on safety related issues, were attended by Board staff.
- In accordance with a government decision of October, 2007, the Board consulted with the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in relation to a proposed development project.

- The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) continued for all staff and training courses were provided for staff as appropriate. Three staff completed a full-time Certificate in Fisheries Management Course at Sligo Institute of Technology.
- The Board collected €55,498 in fishery rates in respect of rated fisheries in the region.

Services for Persons with Disabilities

The Board made significant progress, as follows, in relation to improving access to its services for people with disabilities:

- (a) As reported above, access for disabled anglers was provided at a Board owned fishery at Foxford and a new angling cot was deployed on the Ridge Pool to facilitate disabled anglers wishing to fish there.
- (b) The Board's website was further enhanced and was compliant with *W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines*. Details of accessible facilities are also included.
- (c) A loop system was provided in the Board's reception area to facilitate persons with hearing impairment.
- (d) As part of its commitment to improving access for people with disabilities, all Board staff received disability awareness training.
- (d) A survey of Board staff (*Count me in*) completed in March, 2008 indicated that the Board was achieving the 3% target for employment of people with disabilities. As part of its commitment to improving access for people with disabilities, all NWRFB staff received disability awareness training during 2008.

Appendix 1

Attendance at Board Meetings 2008

Board Member	No. Meetings Held	No. Meetings Attended	No. Meetings Absent
Ann Campbell	10	10	0
Finian Dodd	10	10	0
Tony Ferguson	10	10	0
Ann Geary	10	2	8
Seamus Henry	10	10	0
Mary Hensey	10	8	2
John Hughes	10	9	1
Peter Layden	10	8	2
Jimmy Maloney	10	4	6
John Munnely	10	9	1
Mary Gallagher McBride	10	9	1
Brendan O'Mahony	10	8	2
Paddy Quinnn	10	9	1
Francis Taaffe	10	10	0
Melvin Tighe	10	10	0
Padraic Traynor	10	8	2
Declan Turnbull	10	5	5
John Walkin	10	10	0
Michael Waters	10	9	1

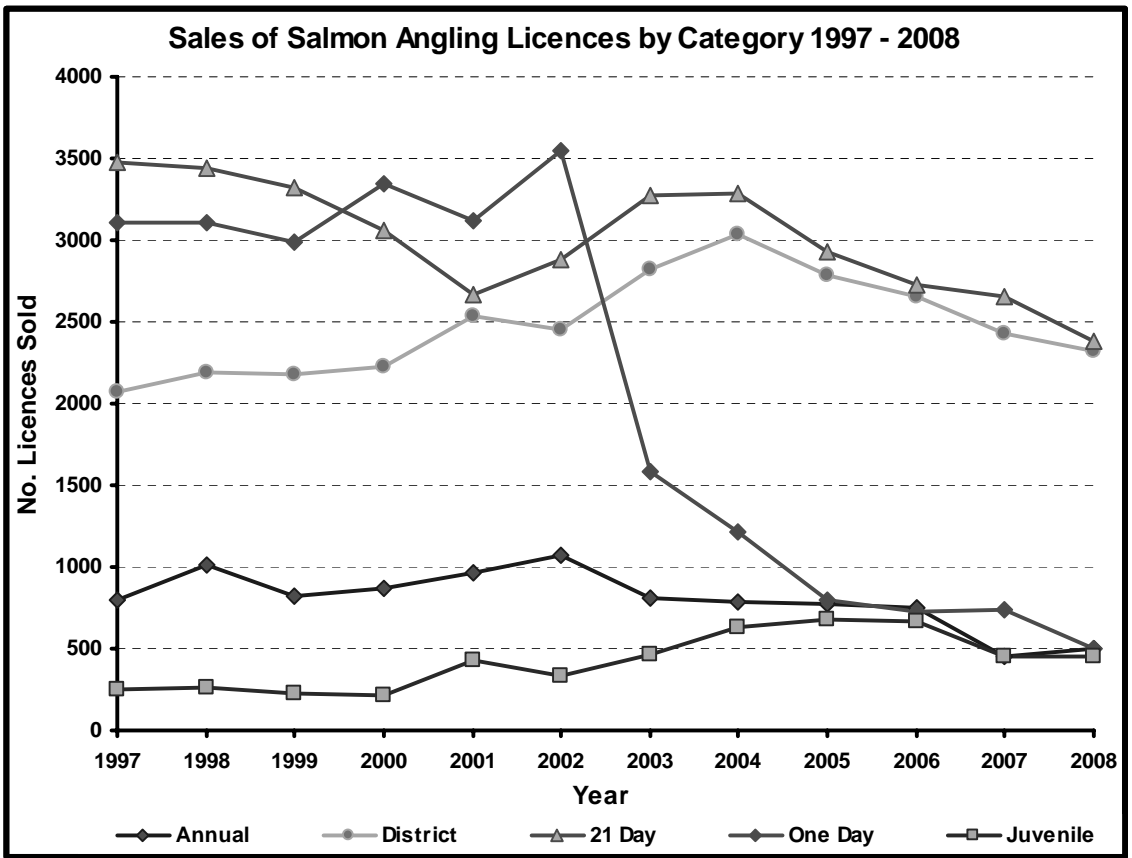
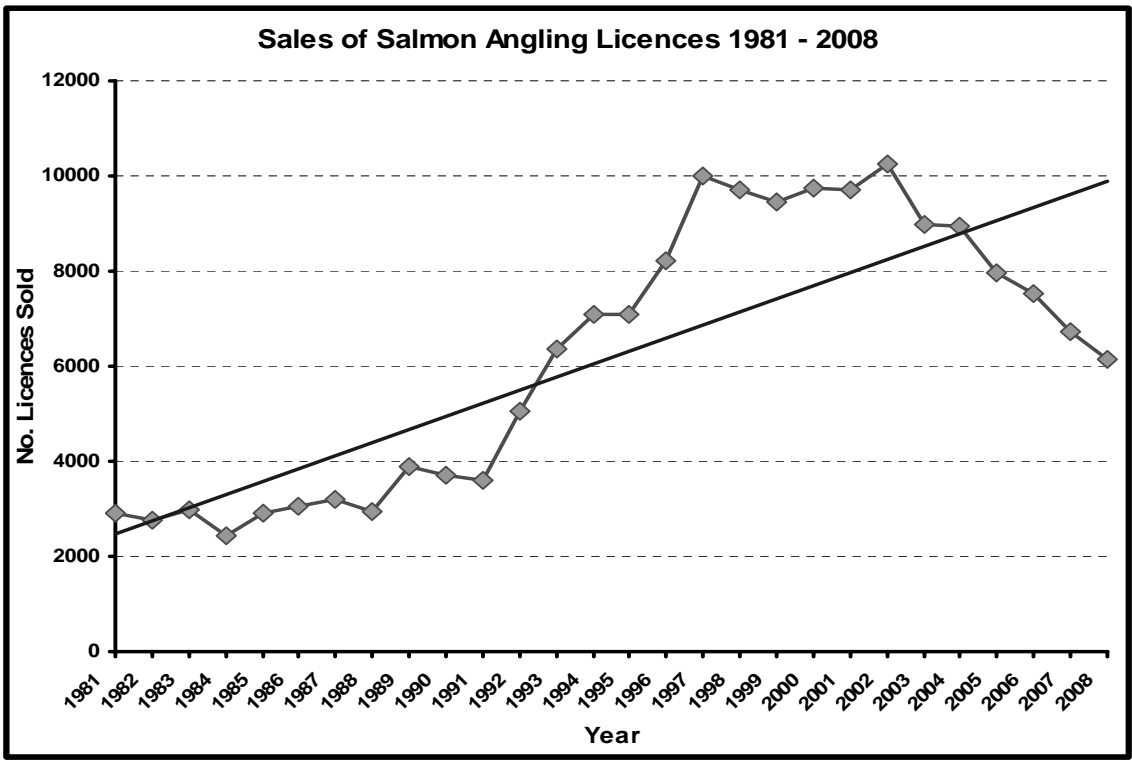
Appendix 2

Sales of Salmon Angling Licences 1981-2008

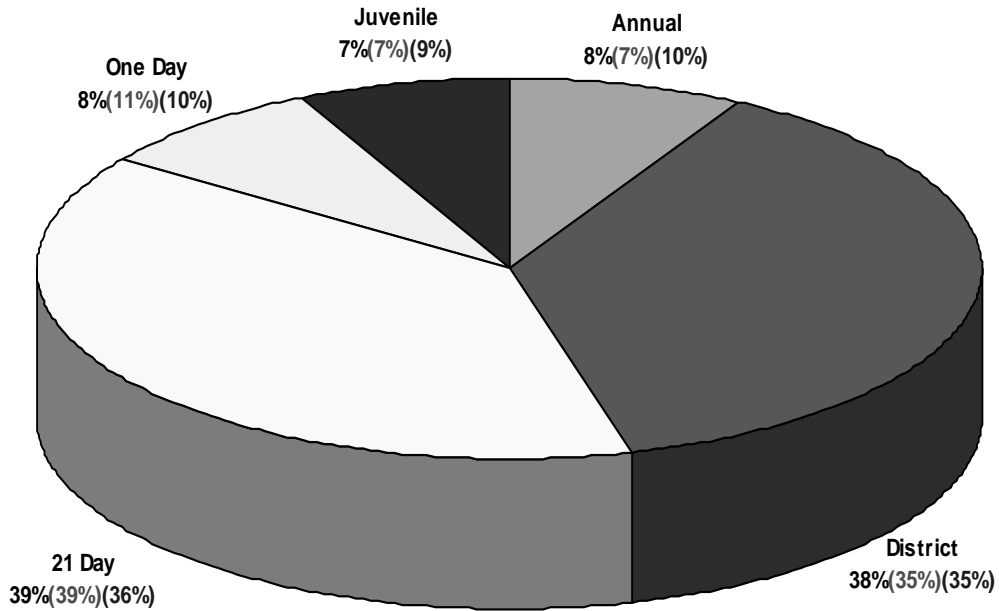
Year	No. of Licences	% Increase/Decrease
1981	2,898	-
1982	2,765	-5%
1983	2,966	+7%
1984	2,422	-18%
1985	2,908	+20%
1986	3,051	+5%
1987	3,203	+5%
1988	2,959	-8%
1989	3,895	+32%
1990	3,716	-5%
1991	3,612	-3%
1992*	5,063	+40%
1993	6,352	+25%
1994	7,101	+12%
1995	7,081	-
1996	8,240	+16%
1997	10,013	+22%
1998	9,704	-3%
1999	9,444	-3%
2000	9,723	+3%
2001	9,712	-
2002	10,257	+6%
2003	8,967	-12%
2004	8,954	-
2005	7,967	-11%
2006	7,519	-6%
2007	6,714	-11%
2008	6,158	-8%

Notes

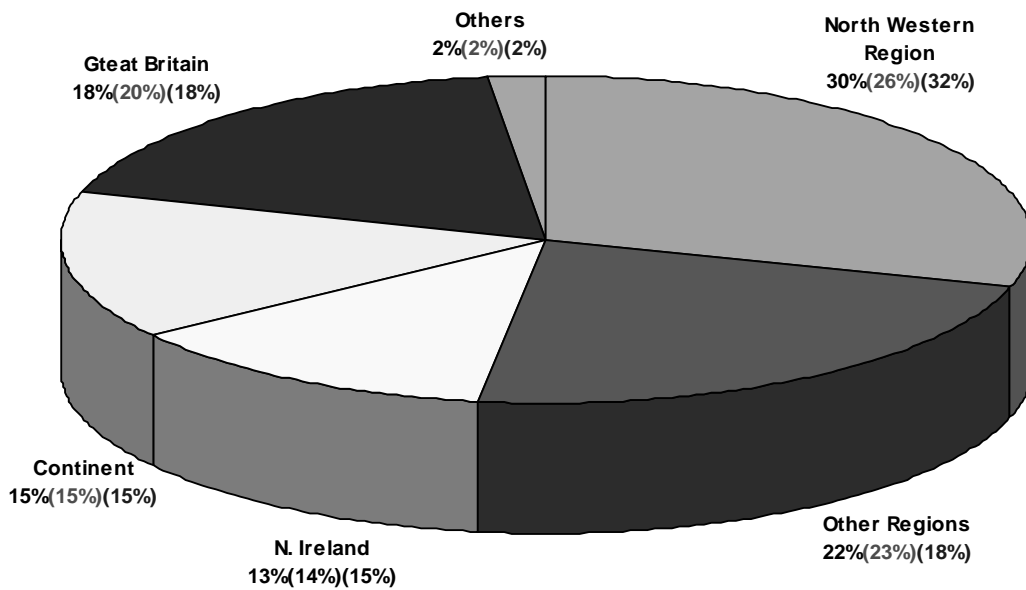
- One- day licence introduced in 1992
- Change in pricing structure in 2003
- Introduction of Conservation Stamp in 2007
- Overall increase 1981-2008: 112%



Categories of Salmon Angling Licences Sold in the Region in 2008



Origins of Anglers who Purchased Salmon Angling Licences in the Region in 2008 (N = 6,158)



Appendix 3

Recorded Salmon and Eel Catches

Rod Catches 2008

<u>District</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Released</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ballina	7,283	655	7,938
Sligo	521	837	1,358
Bangor	<u>925</u>	<u>441</u>	<u>1,366</u>
TOTALS	8,729	1,933	10,662

Commercial Catches 2006 - 2008

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Ballina	10,091	Nil	Nil
Bangor	5,460	1,292	1,540
Sligo	<u>1,343</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>
TOTALS	16,894	1,292	1,540

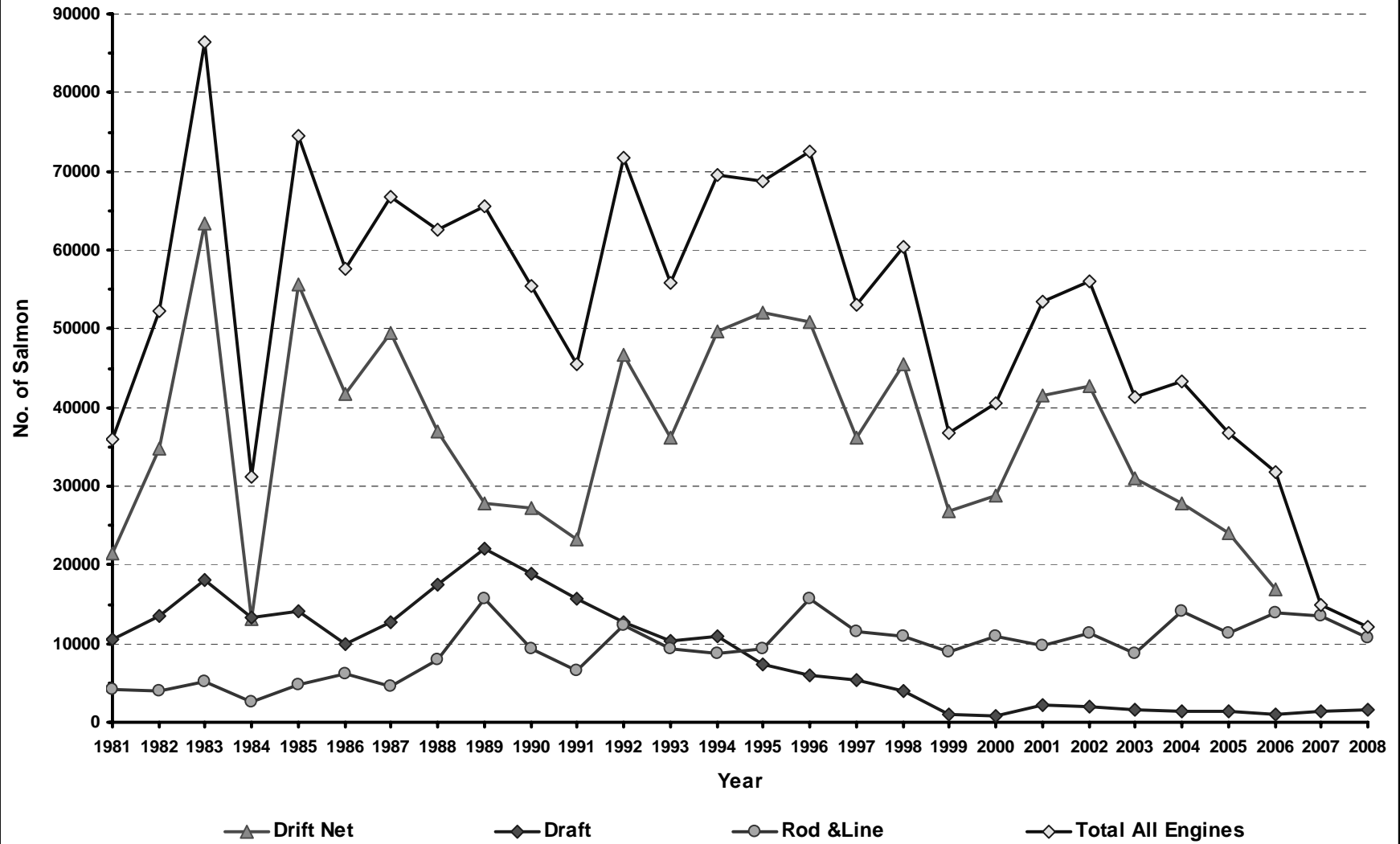
Catches by all Methods 2006 - 2008

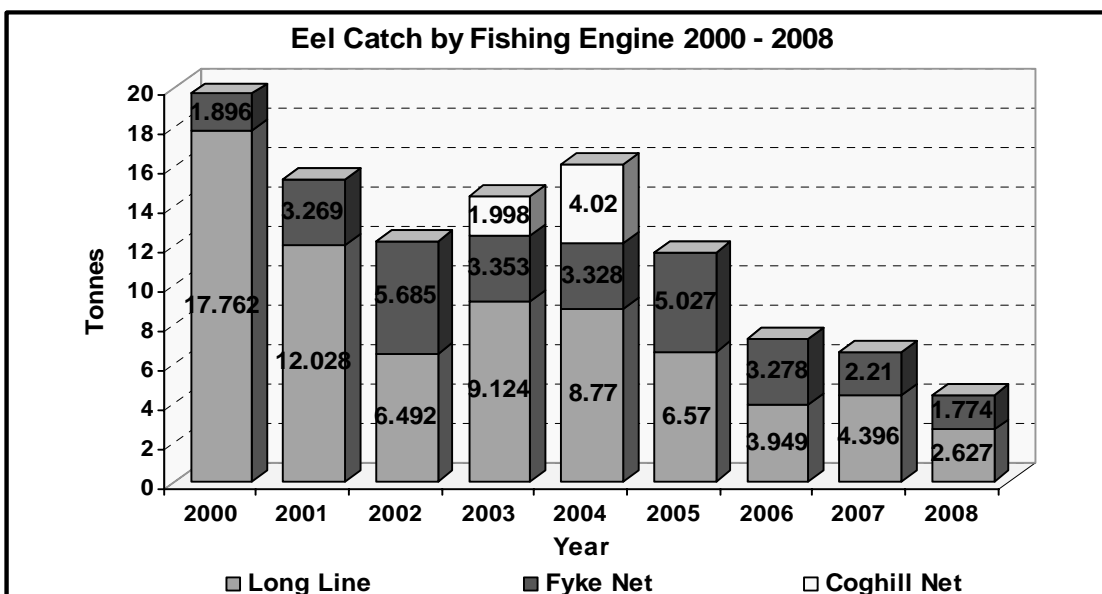
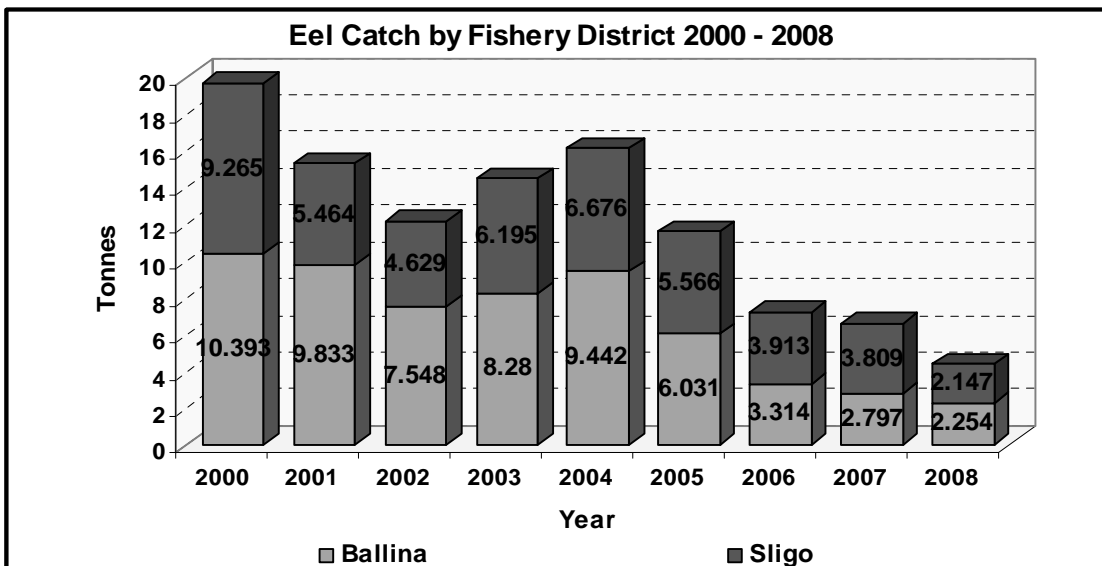
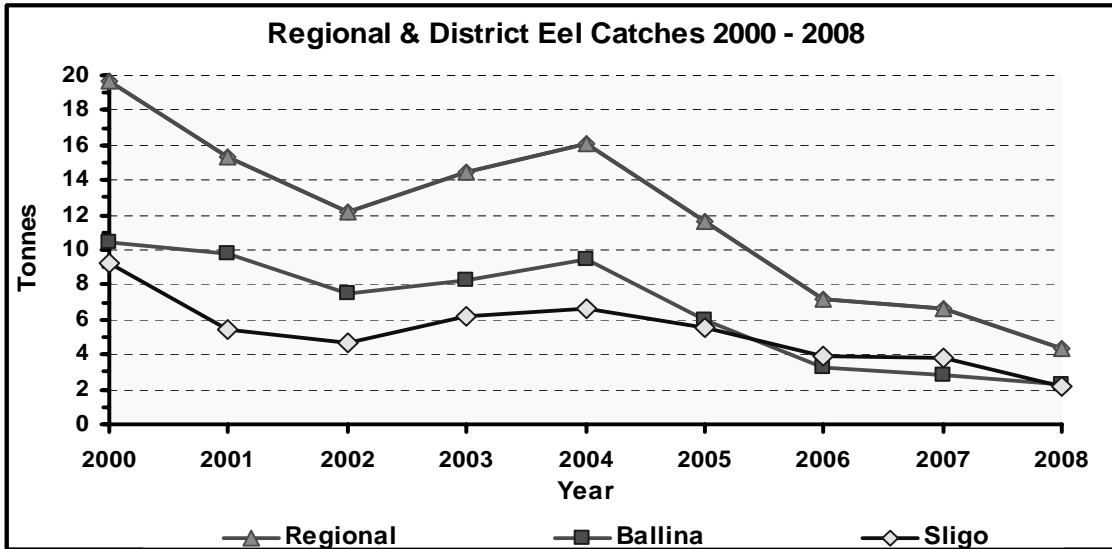
	<u>2006</u>		<u>2007</u>		<u>2008</u>	
	<u>No. Salmon</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>No. Salmon</u>	<u>% of total</u>	<u>No. Salmon</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Ballina	20,950	66%	10,427	71%	7,938	65%
Bangor	7,365	23%	2,915	20%	2,906	24%
Sligo	<u>3,388</u>	11%	<u>1,365</u>	9%	<u>1,358</u>	11%
TOTALS	31,703		14,707		12,202	

Regional Salmon Catches 1981-2008

1981	-	36,028
1982	-	52,292
1983	-	86,481
1984	-	31,154
1985	-	74,561
1986	-	57,632
1987	-	66,796
1988	-	62,501
1989	-	65,621
1990	-	55,494
1991	-	45,413
1992	-	71,647
1993	-	55,802
1994	-	69,490
1995	-	68,651
1996	-	72,531
1997	-	53,035
1998	-	60,363
1999	-	36,769
2000	-	40,565
2001	-	53,465 (tagging introduced)
2002	-	55,974 (quotas introduced)
2003	-	41,270
2004	-	43,380
2005	-	36,701
2006	-	31,702
2007	-	14,450 (drift nets prohibited)
2008	-	12,202

Regional Salmon Catches 1981 - 2008





Appendix 4

Chairman's Report to Minister regarding compliance with Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies

Minister,

I wish to report to you on the position regarding implementation of the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies by The North Western Regional Fisheries Board. The Board complied with the provisions of the Code. It had in place a Code of Business Conduct for Board Members and each member agreed to comply the terms of the code. All Board members made a Disclosure of Interests in accordance with the provisions section 3, Appendix A, of the Code of Practice. The Board also operated a Code of Conduct for Employees during the year. The Board had in place a Customer Charter and this was posted on the Board's web site. The Board maintained a Register of Business Risks, as required by the Code of Practice, and this was reviewed during the year. With reference to section 10.2 of the Code of Practice, I wish to report the following position in relation to my Board.

- i. There were no commercially significant developments affecting the Board during the year. The Board did not establish any subsidiaries, participate in joint ventures or acquire shares.
- ii. The Board complied with all appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, procurement and disposal of assets.
- iii. I attach herewith a statement on the Board's system of internal financial control, in accordance with the requirements of 10.2 (iii) of the Code.
- iv. As stated above, a Code of Business Conduct for Board Members is in place and members have agreed to be bound by the terms of the Code. A Code of Conduct for Employees is also in place in respect of Board staff.
- v. Government policy on the pay of the Board's Chief Executive Officer is being complied with.
- vi. Government guidelines on payment of director's fees are being complied with; no fees are paid to members of the Board.
- vii. As of now, there have been no significant post balance sheet events. Audit of the Board's accounts for 2008 has not yet been completed by the Comptroller and Auditor General and, therefore, the Board can only provide draft accounts at this time. The unaudited accounts were submitted to your Department before the end of February, 2009, in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice, and to the Comptroller & auditor General for audit in accordance with statutory requirements.
- viii. I am satisfied that the Guidelines for Appraisal and Management of Capital Expenditure Proposals were complied with.
- ix. I confirm that the Code of Practice has been adopted by the Board and that the Board is compliant with the provisions of the Code.

Systems of internal financial control – section 10.2 (iii) of the Code

1. I hereby acknowledge that the Board is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate system of internal financial control is in operation within the Board.

The systems can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely period.

2. Key control procedures

The system of internal financial control operated by the North Western Regional Fisheries Board is based on the following measures:

- The Board takes the major strategic decisions and meets at regular intervals to monitor performance;
- There are clearly defined management responsibilities;
- Major sources of income are subjected to overall reconciliation and where possible, staff duties are appropriately divided taking account of the risks involved and the limited number of staff;
- Monthly accounts and budgets are prepared throughout the year and these are reviewed by the Board Audit Committee and Board;
- Budgets are prepared in respect of each year and monthly statements of income and expenditure are produced to facilitate comparison with budgeted figures;
- The Board has in place a system of internal audit under which an audit is carried out by an external firm of auditors. Reports are considered by the Board's Audit Committee which met four times in 2008 and, also, by the Board as appropriate;
- An evaluation of business risks undertaken in 2008 was adopted by the Board and was reviewed by the Board's Internal Auditor whose recommendations are being implemented;
- The Board has adopted a policies and procedures manual on the internal controls over the receipt and disbursement of funds.

3. Operating Procedures

Formal procedures are in place for the purchase of all goods and services, for approval of invoices in respect of goods and services and authorisation of payment in respect of goods and services, for signing of cheques and for security of blank cheques. Procedures in this regard have been strengthened from time to time and recommendations arising from internal audits, audit committee findings and management reviews have been implemented.

4. Review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Financial Control

The North Western Regional Fisheries Board carried out a review of the system of internal financial control in 2008.

John Walkin
Chairman
4 March, 2009