

Fish in Rivers Factsheet

SWRBD

Owvane (Cork) River Catchment

Factsheet: 2024/07

The Owvane (Cork) River Catchment is located in the South Western River Basin District and covers an area of approximately 43km². The river rises in the slopes of the Doughill, Douce, and Shehy More mountains. It flows in a south-westerly direction for approximately 16km before entering the sea near the village of Ballylicky, Co. Cork. The Owenbeg and the Owngar are the main tributaries, and they join the Owvane River near the village of Kealkill.

The geology of the catchment is mainly comprised of old red sandstone and mudstone (EPA 2016). The Owvane is a spate river as it is mountain fed and has a run of grilse from June to July.

Inland Fisheries Ireland conducts annual nation-wide fish sampling surveys to assess and report the status of stocks in Ireland's rivers, lakes and transitional waters. This report presents the results of a catchment-wide survey of the Owvane (Cork) Catchment in 2024. A total of 13 sites were surveyed across the catchment by electro-fishing (CEN 2003) from 23rd to 26th September 2024.

The survey methods included 10-minute timed Electro-Fishing (TEF₁₀), and Area Delineated Electro-Fishing (ADEF handset). All TEF₁₀ fish count results were converted to minimum population estimates according to Matson *et al.* 2018.



Owenbeg River at Ahildotia (Site 3), Co. Cork.



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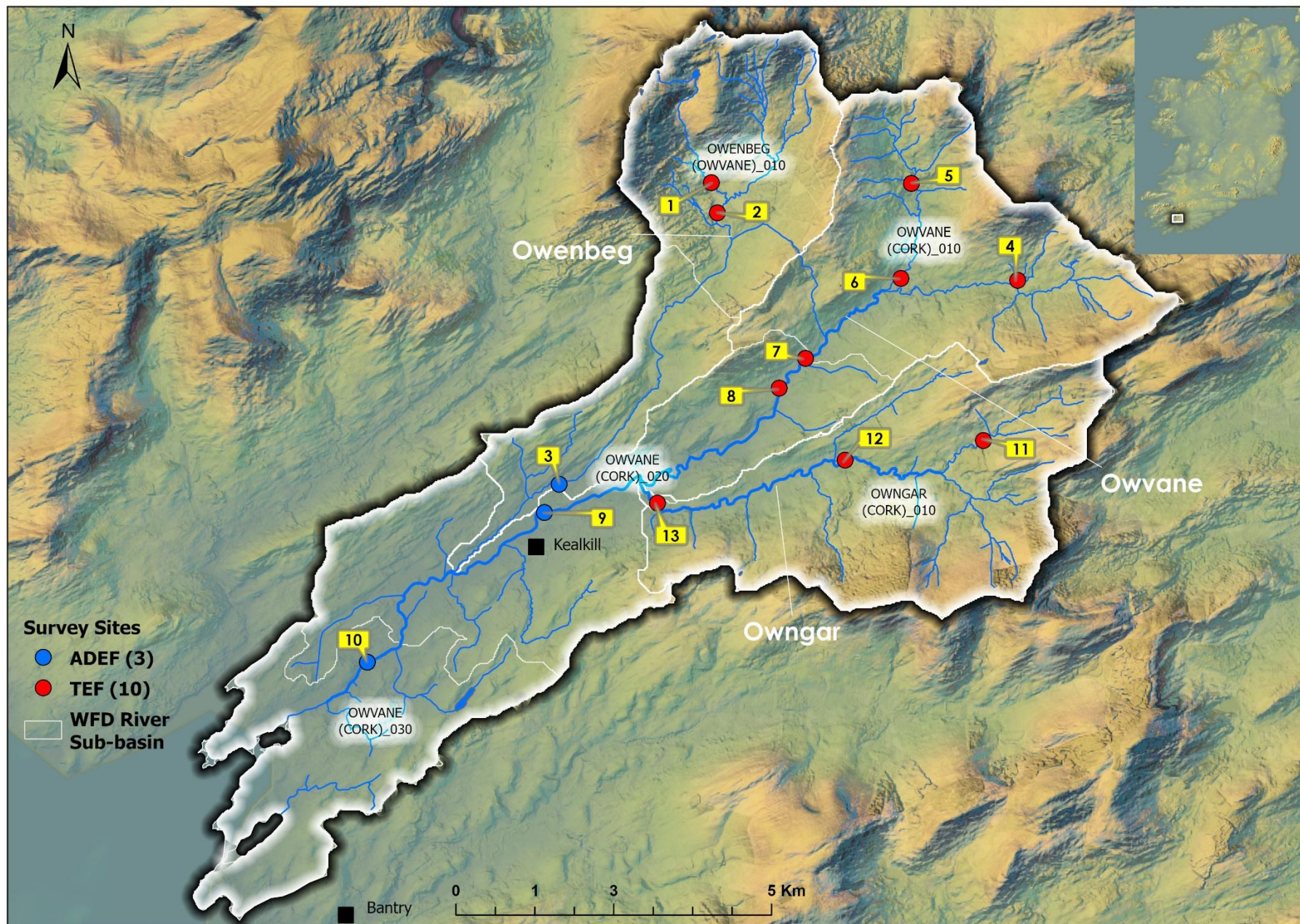


Figure 1. Location of electrofishing survey sites on the Owvane (Cork) River catchment, September 2024.

Table 1. Site survey details, Owvane River (Cork) catchment, September 2024.

No.	WFD Sub-basin	River	Site	Method	WFD	Date
Owenbeg sub-catchment						
1	Owenbeg (Owvane)_010	Owenbeg	Clogherane	TEF (Handset)	No	23/09/2024
2	Owenbeg (Owvane)_010	Owenbeg	Cappaboy Beg	TEF (Handset)	No	23/09/2024
3	Owvane (Cork)_020	Owenbeg	Ahildotia	ADEF (Handset)	No	26/09/2024
Owvane sub-catchment						
4	Owvane (Cork)_010	Gortloughra	Inchinroe	TEF (Handset)	No	26/09/2024
5	Owvane (Cork)_010	Owvane	Curraglass Waterfall	TEF (Handset)	No	25/09/2024
6	Owvane (Cork)_010	Owvane	North of Cappabue School	TEF (Handset)	No	25/09/2024
7	Owvane (Cork)_020	Owvane	Cappabo Bridge	TEF (Handset)	No	25/09/2024
8	Owvane (Cork)_020	Owvane	Maulavanig	TEF (Handset)	No	26/09/2024
9	Owvane (Cork)_020	Owvane	Killkeel	ADEF (Handset)	No	24/09/2024
10	Owvane (Cork)_030	Owvane	Ardnacloghy	ADEF (Handset)	No	25/09/2024
Owngar sub-catchment						
11	Owngar (Cork)_010	Owngar	Ballynamought Bridge	TEF (Handset)	No	26/09/2024
12	Owngar (Cork)_010	Owngar	Leenanae Bridge	TEF (Handset)	No	24/09/2024
13	Owvane (Cork)_020	Owngar	Cahermoanteen Bridge	TEF (Handset)	No	24/09/2024

Table 2. Minimum density estimates of fish (no. fish/m²), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, September 2024.

Site no.	Owenbeg			Owvane			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
Brown trout	0.350	0.461	-	0.306	0.144	0.182	0.162
0+ brown trout	0.046	0.260	-	0.188	0.035	0.091	0.064
1+ & older brown trout	0.304	0.201	-	0.118	0.109	0.091	0.098
Salmon	-	-	0.057	-	0.196	0.077	0.043
0+ salmon	-	-	0.046	-	0.173	0.057	0.026
1+ & older salmon	-	-	0.011	-	0.023	0.019	0.017
European eel	-	-	-	-	-	0.014	-
Minnow	-	-	0.085	-	-	-	-
Roach	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Three-spined stickleback	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All fish	0.350	0.461	0.142	0.306	0.340	0.273	0.205
Site no.	Owvane			Owngar			
	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	
Brown trout	0.084	0.015	0.040	0.093	0.176	0.133	
0+ brown trout	0.018	0.004	-	0.025	0.088	0.104	
1+ & older brown trout	0.066	0.011	0.040	0.068	0.088	0.029	
Salmon	0.091	0.091	0.074	-	-	-	
0+ salmon	0.035	0.051	0.049	-	-	-	
1+ & older salmon	0.056	0.040	0.025	-	-	-	
European eel	-	0.028	0.018	-	-	-	
Minnow	-	0.155	0.006	-	-	0.082	
Roach	-	-	-	0.025	-	-	
Three-spined stickleback	-	-	0.003	-	-	-	
All fish	0.175	0.289	0.141	0.118	0.176	0.215	

Table 3. Brown trout % age class structure (where recorded), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, September 2024.

Site No.	% of catch			
	0+	1+	2+	3+
1	14	82	4	-
2	60	32	8	-
4	63	34	3	-
5	25	67	8	-
6	50	33	17	-
7	39	39	22	-
8	25	58	17	-
9	26	51	23	-
10	-	54	31	15
11	29	71	-	-
12	56	33	11	-
13	78	17	5	-

Table 4. Salmon % age class structure (where recorded), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, September 2024.

Site No.	% of catch	
	0+	1+
3	81	19
5	88	12
6	75	25
7	60	40
8	38	62
9	55	45
10	67	33

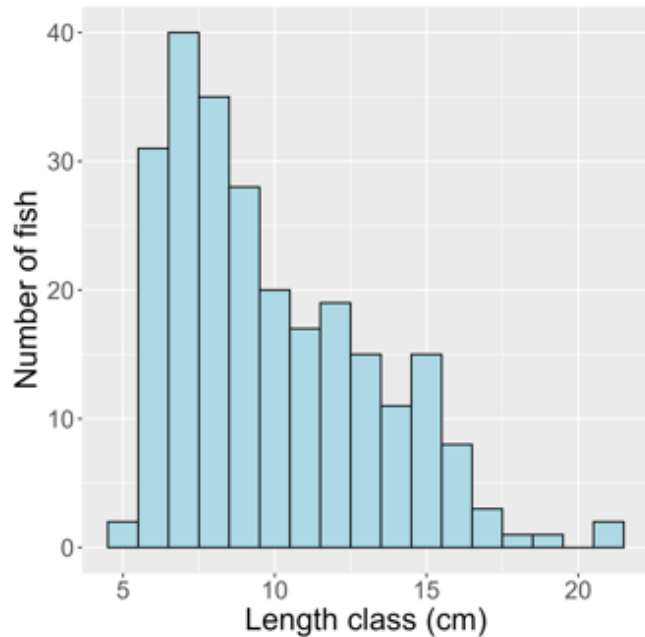


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution for brown trout (n = 248), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, 2024 (No. sites = 12)

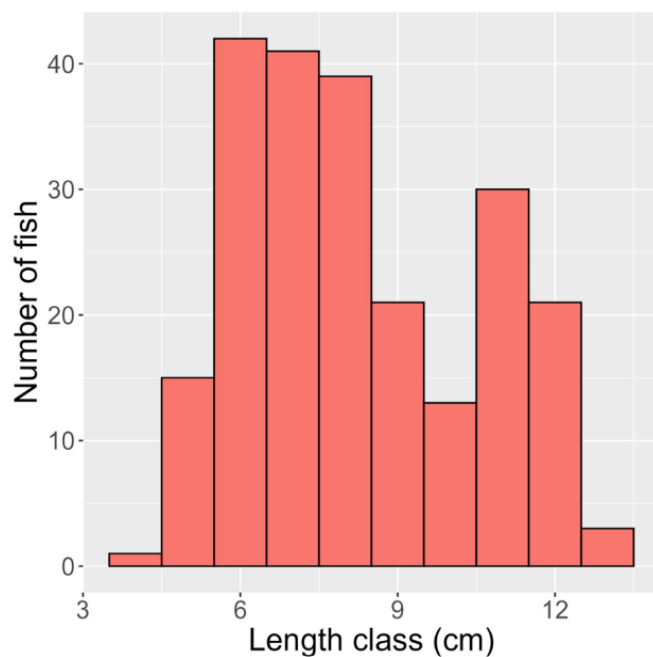


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution for salmon (n = 226), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, 2024 (No. sites = 7).



Owvane River at Killkeel, Co. Cork (Site 9).

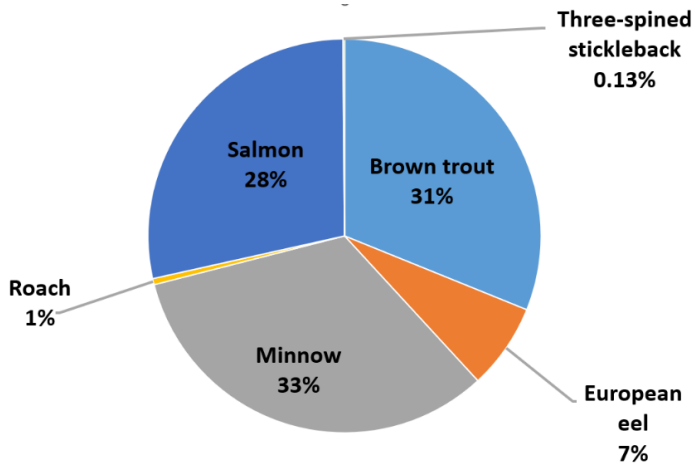


Figure 4. Fish species composition (%), Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, 2024.

Table 5. Fish ecological status, Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, September 2024.

Site No.	WFD Sub-basin	2024
Owenbeg sub-catchment		
1	Owenbeg (Owvane)_010	M
2	Owenbeg (Owvane)_010	M
3	Owvane (Cork)_020	P
Owvane sub-catchment		
4	Owvane (Cork)_010	M
5	Owvane (Cork)_010	G
6	Owvane (Cork)_010	G
7	Owvane (Cork)_020	M
8	Owvane (Cork)_020	M
9	Owvane (Cork)_020	M
10	Owvane (Cork)_030	M
Owngar sub-catchment		
11	Owngar (Cork)_010	G
12	Owngar (Cork)_010	G
13	Owvane (Cork)_020	G



Owngar River at Cahermoanteen Bridge (Site 13), Co. Cork.

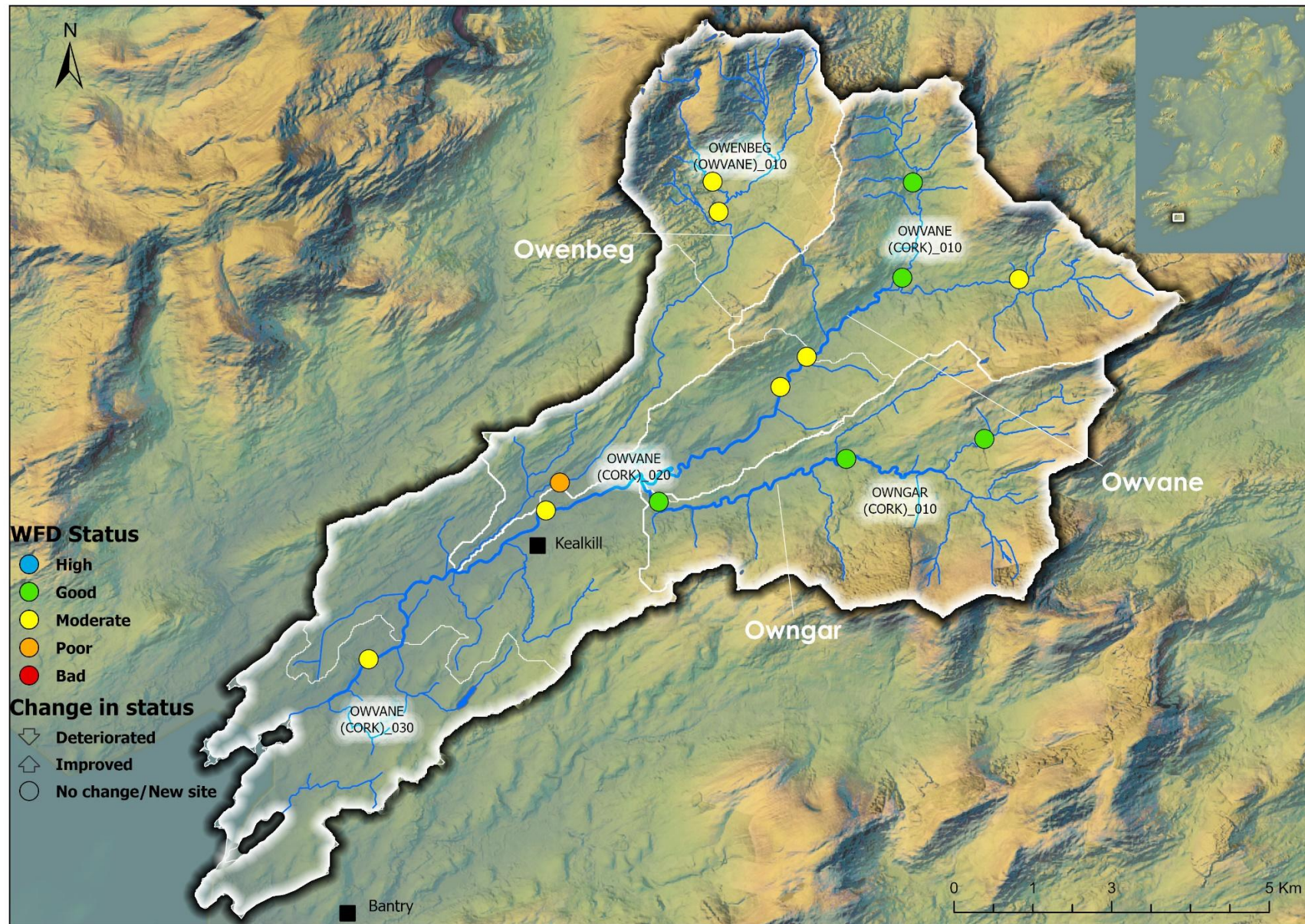


Figure 5. Fish ecological status in the Owvane (Cork) River Catchment, 2024.

Summary

Six fish species were recorded at thirteen sites surveyed on the Owvane (Cork) River Catchment in 2024.

Brown trout was the most common species present (12 sites, 92%), followed by salmon (7 sites, 54%), minnow (4 sites, 30%) and roach and three-spined stickleback (1 site each, 7%).

Brown trout was the most abundant species present, followed by salmon, European eel, minnow, roach and three-spined stickleback (Table 2).

Brown trout captured ranged in length from 5.6 to 21.5cm. Four age classes of brown trout were present (0+, 1+, 2+ and 3+), with 1+ being the most abundant cohort. The highest density of brown trout (all ages combined) (0.350 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 1 (Clogherane) on the Owenbeg River. The highest density of 0+ brown trout (0.188 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 4 (Inchinroe) on the Gortloughra River. The highest density of 1+ and older brown trout (0.304 fish/m²) was also recorded at Site 1 (Clogherane) on the Owenbeg river.

Salmon ranged in length from 4.9 to 13.2cm. Two age classes of salmon were present (0+, 1+) with 0+ being the most abundant cohort. The highest density of salmon (all ages combined) (0.196 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 5 (Curraglass Waterfall) on the Owvane River. The highest density of 0+ salmon (0.173 fish/m²) was also recorded at Site 5. The highest density of 1+ and older salmon (0.056 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 8 (Maulavanig) on the Owvane River.

A Water Framework Directive fish classification tool (FCS2) was developed for Irish rivers in 2011 (SNIFFER 2011). The tool works by comparing various fish community metric values within a site to those

predicted for a site under un-impacted conditions. In general, a site will achieve High status if all indicator species (e.g. both salmonid cohorts 0+ and 1+ and older) are present and in expected numbers. Status will decline if such cohorts are missing, are in poor abundance, or if more tolerant species proliferate.

Fish ecological status was assigned to thirteen sites surveyed in the Owvane (Cork) River catchment in 2024. Five sites were assigned Good status, with seven sites Moderate and one site Poor. None of the sites surveyed on this catchment were previously assigned fish ecological status.

The reasons for the failures (i.e. moderate status) in fish ecological status were due to lower-than-expected abundance of type specific indicator species (e.g. salmon and trout), absence of certain age cohorts indicating recruitment failures. Failures and deteriorations in fish ecological status can be caused by pressures such as nutrient enrichment, habitat modification and fish passage issues.

References

- CEN (2003) Water Quality Sampling of Fish with Electricity. CEN EN 14011:2000. Brussels. European Committee for Standardization.
- Matson, R., Delanty, K., Shephard, S., Coghlan, B. and Kelly, F. (2018). *Moving from multiple pass depletion to single pass timed electrofishing for fish community assessment in wadeable streams*. Fisheries Research, 198, 99-108.
- SNIFFER (2011) River Fish Classification Tool: Science Work. WFD68c, Phase 2. Final Report. Version 6. Edinburgh. Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research.
- EPA (2016) <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/WaterCatchments.ie> – Catchments.ie Accessed in March/April 2025.

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