

Fish in Rivers Factsheet

WRBD

Lough Mask Catchment

Factsheet: 2025/03

Lough Mask and its associated rivers forms part of the Corrib Catchment, an area of approximately 4,000km² in the west of Ireland, spanning counties Galway and Mayo. The catchment also includes Lough Corrib and Lough Carra and all the rivers draining these lakes. Many other smaller lakes are also present within the catchment.

The Corrib catchment is characterised by a relatively flat limestone plain occupying the eastern two-thirds of the catchment, which terminates at Lough Corrib and Lough Mask, where it meets the granites of west Galway and the metamorphic uplands of southwest Mayo (EPA 2018). There are 25 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the catchment, including Lough Corrib SAC (000297), Lough Carra Mask Complex SAC (001774) and the Connemara Bog Complex (EPA, 2018). There are also three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the catchment (Lough Carra SPA, Lough Corrib SPA and Lough Mask SPA). The lakes and rivers support numerous protected habitats and species (including salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, white-clawed crayfish, sea lamprey and otter). Lough Corrib, Lough Mask and Lough Carra are three of the best brown trout fisheries in Ireland and Lough Corrib and its river are also renowned for salmon angling.

Lough Mask (8,000 ha) is the second largest lake in the Corrib catchment and the sixth largest lake in Ireland. Situated mainly in south Co. Mayo, a small area extends across the border into Co. Galway. The lake is approximately 14 km along and is on average 5 km in width. The lake reaches a depth of up to 58 metres.

The largest in flowing rivers into Lough Mask are the Aille/Cloon and Robe. Smaller rivers such as the

Owenbrin, Glensaul and Srah flow into the Western side of the lake. The main outflow is to Lough Corrib to the south, via the Cong Canal/River, an underground limestone aquifer. Carboniferous limestones dominate the eastern side of the lake, while the Western side of the catchment is predominantly siliceous, comprising of shale and sandstone. The Eastern side of the lake is dominated by pasture and scrub landscapes. On the Western side of Lough Mask the dominant land use include; Atlantic peat bogs, transition to scrub, rough pasture and some forestry (NPWS 2020).

Lough Mask Complex is a Special Protection Area (SPA) that supports a wide range of protected habitats and species in the lake and surrounding area. The lake is regarded as among the best brown trout fisheries in Ireland and its feeder streams are essential for maintaining trout populations within the lakes.

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 electro-fishing (CEN 2003) survey, carried out in the Lough Mask catchment in 2025. Twenty-seven sites in total were surveyed in the Lough Mask catchment between the 7th and 23rd of July 2025. Fifteen sites were surveyed in the South-Western Lough Mask catchment. Twelve sites were surveyed in the North-western Lough Mask Catchment.

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.

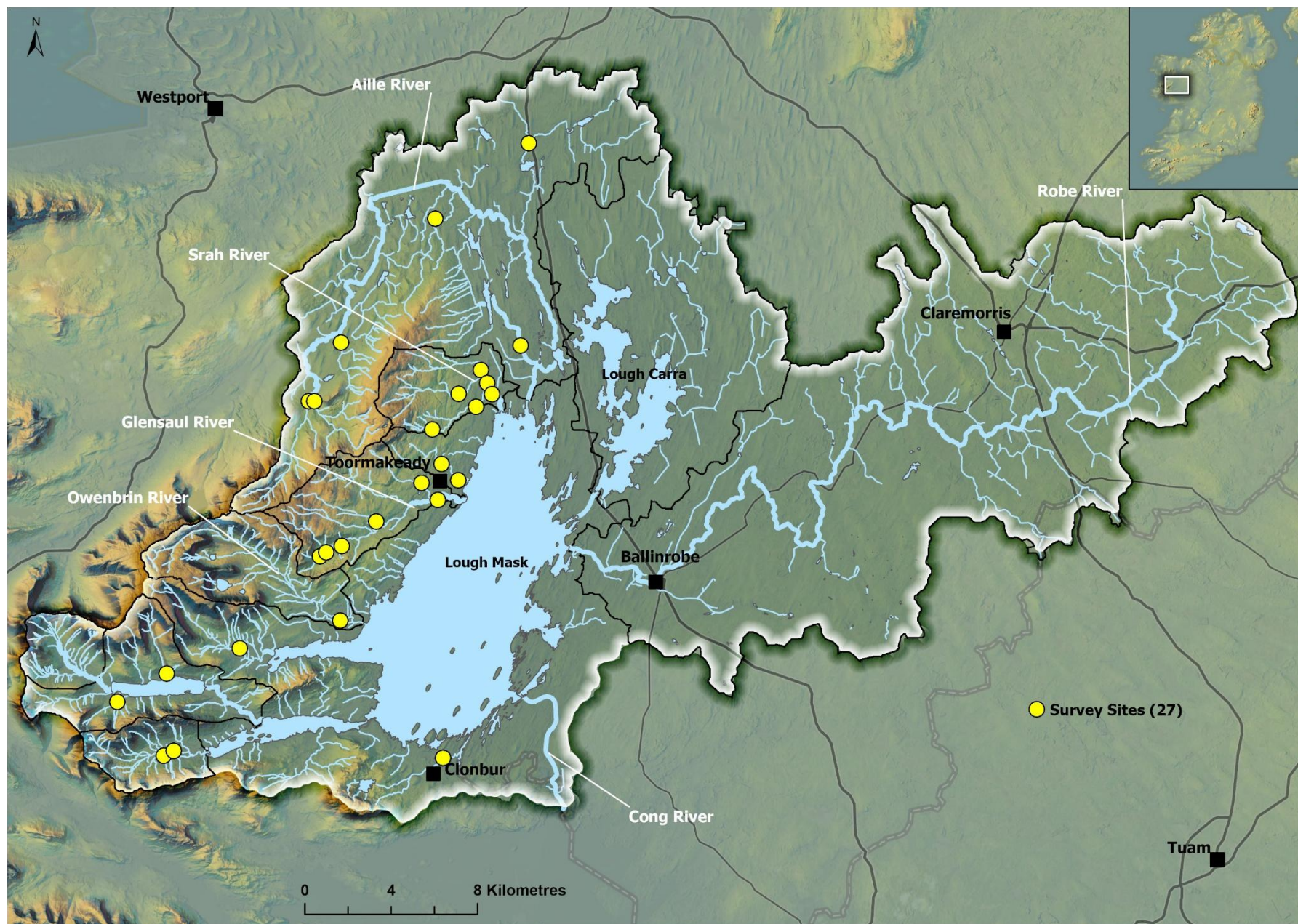


Figure 1. Location of electrofishing survey sites on Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

South-west Lough Mask Catchment

Fifteen sites were surveyed in the South-western Lough Mask Catchment in July 2025. One long-term Water Framework Directive (WFD) surveillance monitoring (SM) site was included on the Owenbrin River at the Bridge upstream of Lough Mask (Site 9) (Figure 2 and Table 1).

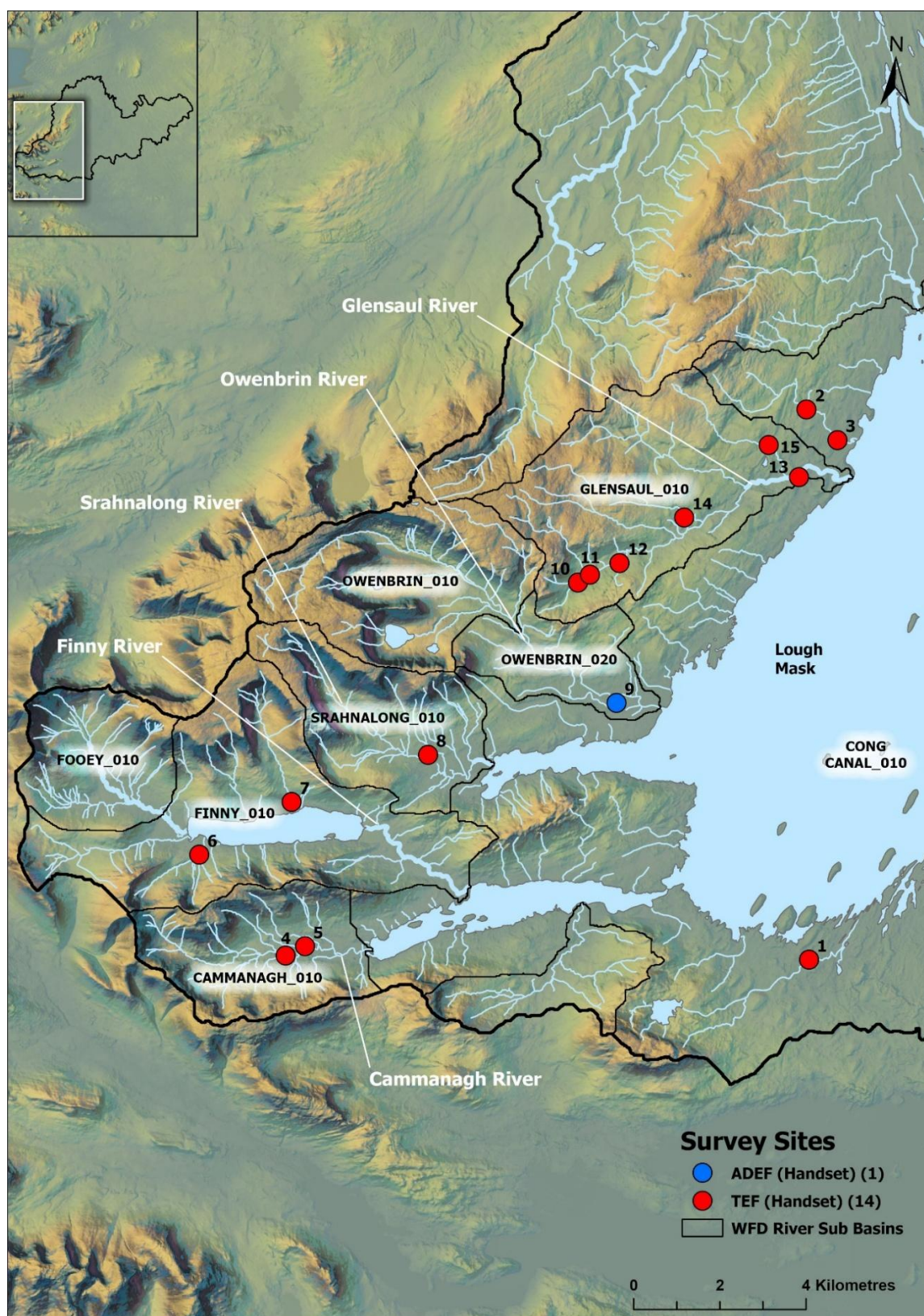


Figure 2. Location of electrofishing survey sites: South-western Lough Mask Catchment. Lough Mask tributaries (sites 1-3), Cammanagh (sites 4-5), Finny (sites 6-7), Srahnalong (Site 8), Owenbrin (Site 9) and Glensaul (sites 10-15) sub-catchments, 2025. Sub-catchments and WFD sub-basins are also highlighted.

Table 1. Site survey details, Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

No.	WFD Sub-basin	River	Site	Method	WFD	Date
Cong Canal						
1	CONG CANAL_010	Corrib (Clonbur) River	Clonbur North	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
2	CONG CANAL_010	Corrib (An Trian Lair) River	Carheen	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
3	CONG CANAL_010	Corrib (An Trian Lair) River	Gorteenmore North	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
Cammenagh sub-catchment						
4	CAMMANAGH_010	Corrib (Cammenagh) River	Barrevagh	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
5	CAMMANAGH_010	Corrib (Cammenagh) River	Lecarrow South	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
Finny sub-catchment						
6	FINNY_010	Corrib (Currarevagh) River	Farm Stream	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
7	FINNY_010	Corrib (Dooletter) River	Dooletter South	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
Srahnalong sub-catchment						
8	SRAHNALONG_010	Corrib (Srahnalong) River	Srahnalong West	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
Owenbrin sub-catchment						
9	OWENBRIN_020	Owenbrin River	Bridge u/s L. Mask	ADEF (Handset)	YES	07/07/2025
Glensaul sub-catchment						
10	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul River	Tonaglanna East	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
11	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul (Sruffaunnagreeve) River	Sruffaunnagreeve Lower	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
12	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul River	Greenaun	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
13	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul River	Tourmakeady Forest	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
14	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul (Derryveeney) River	Derryveeney	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
15	GLENSAUL_010	Glensaul (Ballybanaun) River	Gortfree	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025



Glensaul River, Tourmakeady Forest (Site 13), Co. Mayo.

Table 2. Minimum density estimates of fish (no. fish/m²), for the Cong Canal, Cammanagh, Finny, Srahnalong, Owenbrin and Glensaul sub-catchments, July 2025 (previous results are shown where applicable).

Cong Canal							
Site no.	1		2			3	
Species	2020	2025	2016	2019	2025	2019	2025
Brown trout	0.359	0.398	-	0.120	0.119	2.418	0.864
0+ brown trout	0.136	0.234	-	0.010	0.096	1.101	0.482
1+ & older brown trout	0.223	0.164	-	0.109	0.024	1.318	0.382
Minnow	-	0.147	-	-	-	0.082	0.281
Pike	0.010	0.009	-	-	-	-	-
Stone loach	0.019	-	-	-	-	-	0.040
All fish	0.388	0.554	no fish	0.120	0.119	2.500	1.185
Cammanagh sub-catchment					Finny sub-catchment		
Site no.	4		5		6		7
Species	2019	2025	2019	2019	2019	2025	2019
Brown trout	0.230	0.215	0.200	0.627	0.291	0.023	0.422
0+ brown trout	0.195	0.095	0.058	0.470	0.161	-	0.038
1+ & older brown trout	0.034	0.120	0.142	0.157	0.130	0.023	0.384
European eel	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.019
Minnow	-	-	0.013	0.046	-	-	-
Perch	-	-	0.004	-	-	-	-
All fish	0.230	0.215	0.217	0.673	0.291	0.023	0.441
Finny sub-catchment		Srahnalong		Owenbrin sub-catchment			Glensaul
Site no.	7	8		9			10
Species	2020	2019	2025	2019	2022	2025	2019
Brown trout	0.304	0.249	0.033	0.113	0.204	0.019	1.059
0+ brown trout	0.063	0.145	0.033	0.100	0.164	0.015	0.763
1+ & older brown trout	0.241	0.104	-	0.014	0.040	0.004	0.296
Minnow	0.115	-	-	0.134	0.308	0.142	-
Stone loach	-	-	-	0.009	0.056	0.011	-
All fish	0.419	0.249	0.033	0.256	0.568	0.172	1.059
Glensaul sub-catchment							
Site no.	10	11		12			13
Species	2025	2019	2025	2016	2019	2025	2016
Brown trout	0.821	0.853	0.310	-	0.414	0.203	0.035
0+ brown trout	0.761	0.527	0.287	-	0.367	0.143	0.035
1+ & older brown trout	0.060	0.326	0.023	-	0.047	0.060	-
Minnow	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.008
All fish	0.821	0.853	0.310	no fish	0.414	0.203	0.043
Glensaul sub-catchment							
Site no.	13	14			15		
Species	2025	2019		2025	2019	2025	
Brown trout	0.160	0.266		0.149	-	-	
0+ brown trout	0.089	0.197		0.099	-	-	
1+ & older brown trout	0.071	0.069		0.050	-	-	
European eel	-	0.026		-	-	-	
Minnow	0.011	-		-	-	-	
All fish	0.171	0.292		0.149	no fish	no fish	

Table 3. Brown trout % age class (where recorded), Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

Site No.	% of catch			
	0+	1+	2+	3+
Cong Canal				
1	65	31	4	-
2	83	-	17	-
3	62	21	17	-
Cammanagh sub-catchment				
4	50	44	6	-
5	79	18	3	-
Finny sub-catchment				
6	-	100	-	-
7	26	60	7	7
Srahnalong sub-catchment				
8	100	-	-	-
Owenbrin sub-catchment				
9	80	20	-	-
Glensaul sub-catchment				
10	94	6	-	-
11	94	6	-	-
12	75	25	-	-
13	63	37	-	-
14	71	29	-	-

Table 4. Fish ecological status, Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

Site No.	2016	2019	2020	2022	2025
Cong Canal					
1	-		G	-	G
2	B	M	-	-	M
3	-	H	-	-	H
Cammanagh sub-catchment					
4	-	G	-	-	G
5	-	G	-	-	H
Finny sub-catchment					
6	-	G	-	-	P
7	-	G	-	-	G
Srahnalong sub-catchment					
8	-	G	-	-	P
Owenbrin sub-catchment					
9	M	G	-	G	M
Glensaul sub-catchment					
10	-	H	-	-	G
11	-	H	-	-	G
12	B	G	-	-	G
13	P	G	-	-	G
14	M	G	-	-	M
15	-	N/A	-	-	N/A

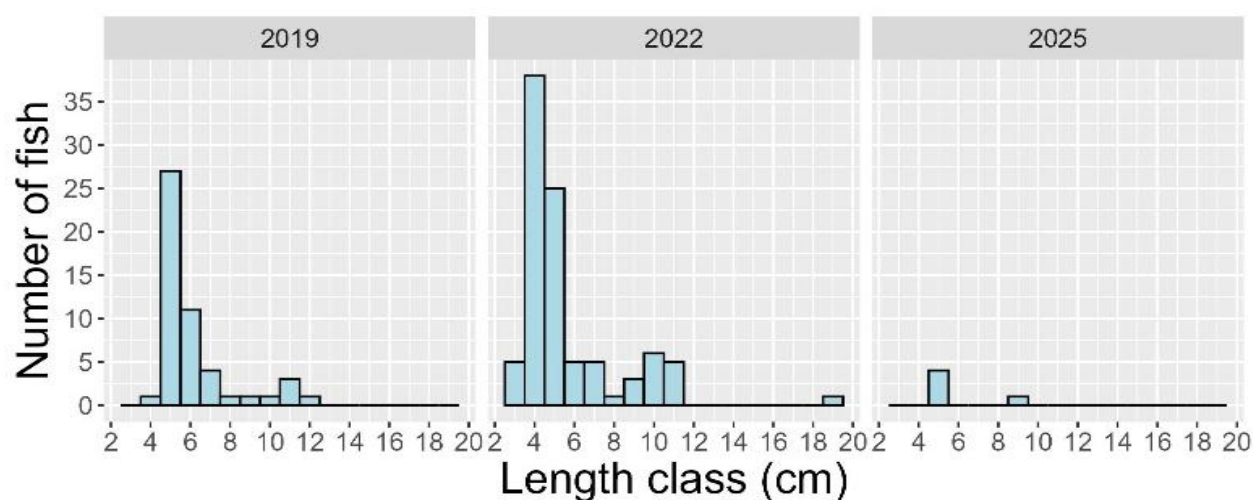


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of brown trout (2019 n=50, 2022 n=95, 2025 n=5) from the WFD surveillance monitoring site at Bridge upstream of Lough Mask (Site 9) in the Owenbrin River sub-catchment.

North-west Lough Mask Catchment

Twelve sites were surveyed in the North-western Lough Mask Catchment area in July 2025. Six sites were surveyed in the Srah and six sites in the Aille/Cloon River, sub-catchments.

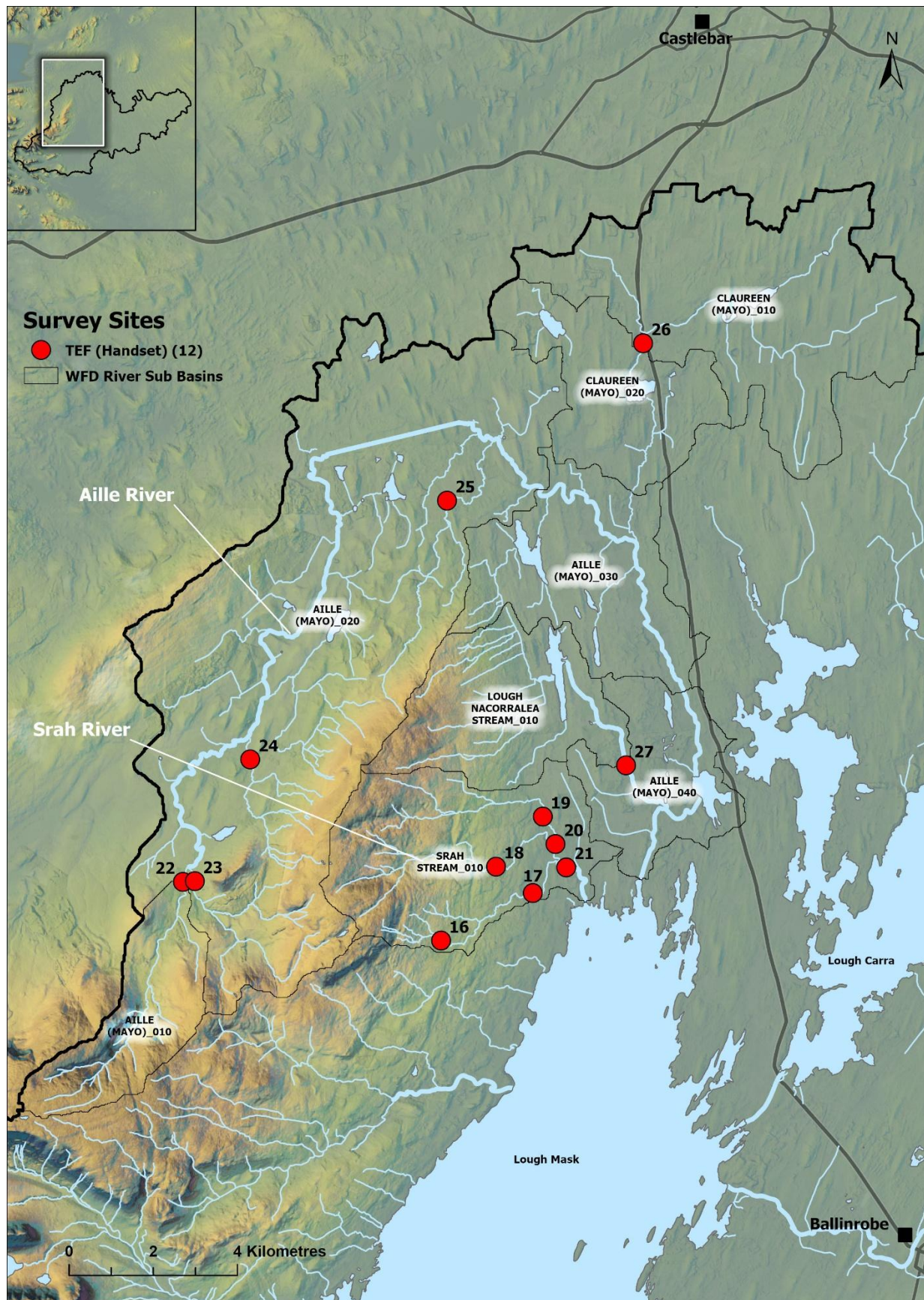


Figure 4. Location of electrofishing survey sites: Srah (sites 16-21) and Aille/Cloon (sites 22-27) sub-catchments, 2025. Sub-catchments and WFD sub-basins are also highlighted.

Table 5. Site survey details, North-western Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

No.	WFD Sub-basin	River	Site	Method	WFD	Date
Srah sub-catchment						
16	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	u/s Treatment Plant	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
17	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	Tawnagh Hill	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
18	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	Gortbunacullin	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
19	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	Shangort	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
20	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	Srah East	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
21	SRAH STREAM_010	Srah River	Srah Bridge	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
Aille/Cloon sub-catchment						
22	AILLE (MAYO)_010	Aille River	Croaghribbeg	TEF (Handset)	NO	23/07/2025
23	AILLE (MAYO)_020	Aille (Gleannagashleeny) River	Croaghribcarra	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
24	SRAH STREAM_010	Aille (Partry) River	Sraheen East	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
25	AILLE (MAYO)_020	Aille (Camoge) River	Devleash North	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
26	CLAUREEN (MAYO)_010	Aille (Claureen) River	Ballyhean Park	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025
27	LOUGH NACORRALEA STREAM_010	Corrib (Nadorralea), River	Cloonee	TEF (Handset)	NO	22/07/2025

Table 6. Minimum density estimates of fish (no. fish/m²), on the Srah and Aille sub-catchment, in the Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025 (previous results are shown where applicable).

Srah sub-catchment								
Site no.	16			17		18		
Species	2016	2019	2025	2016	2025	2016	2019	2025
Brown trout	0.124	0.012	0.058	0.805	0.880	-	-	-
0+ brown trout	0.124	-	0.058	0.641	0.646	-	-	-
1+ & older brown trout	-	0.012	-	0.165	0.234	-	-	-
Stone loach	-	-	-	-	0.145	-	-	-
All fish	0.124	0.012	0.058	0.805	1.025	no fish	no fish	no fish
Srah sub-catchment								
Site no.	19		20			21		
Species	2016	2025	2016	2019	2025	2016	2019	2025
Brown trout	0.133	0.348	0.699	1.088	0.538	0.122	0.091	0.190
0+ brown trout	0.120	0.270	0.637	1.035	0.438	0.083	0.054	0.124
1+ & older brown trout	0.013	0.078	0.062	0.053	0.100	0.039	0.037	0.066
All fish	0.133	0.348	0.699	1.088	0.538	0.122	0.091	0.190
Aille/Cloon sub-catchment								
Site no.	22		23		24		25	
Species	2019	2025	2019	2025	2019	2025	2019	2025
Brown trout	0.096	0.011	0.200	0.158	0.289	0.093	0.886	
0+ brown trout	-	-	0.093	0.068	0.241	0.036	0.618	
1+ & older brown trout	0.096	0.011	0.106	0.089	0.048	0.057	0.268	
Three-spined stickleback	0.011	-	-	-	-	-	-	
All fish	0.107	0.011	0.200	0.158	0.289	0.093	0.886	
Aille/Cloon sub-catchment								
Site no.	25		26		27			
Species	2025		2019	2025	2019	2025		
Brown trout	0.874		0.491	0.166	0.259	0.402		
0+ brown trout	0.620		0.379	0.166	0.199	0.299		
1+ & older brown trout	0.254		0.111	-	0.060	0.102		
Minnow	-		-	-	-	0.024		
Roach	-		-	-	0.010	-		
All fish	0.874		0.491	0.166	0.259	0.402		

Table 7. Brown trout % age class (where recorded), Lough Mask Catchment, July 2025.

Site No.	% of catch		
	0+	1+	2+
Srah sub-catchment			
16	100	-	-
17	78	20	2
19	83	17	-
20	85	15	-
21	71	29	-
Aille/Cloon sub-catchment			
22	-	-	100
23	47	33	20
24	43	43	14
25	76	24	-
26	100	-	-
27	79	14	7

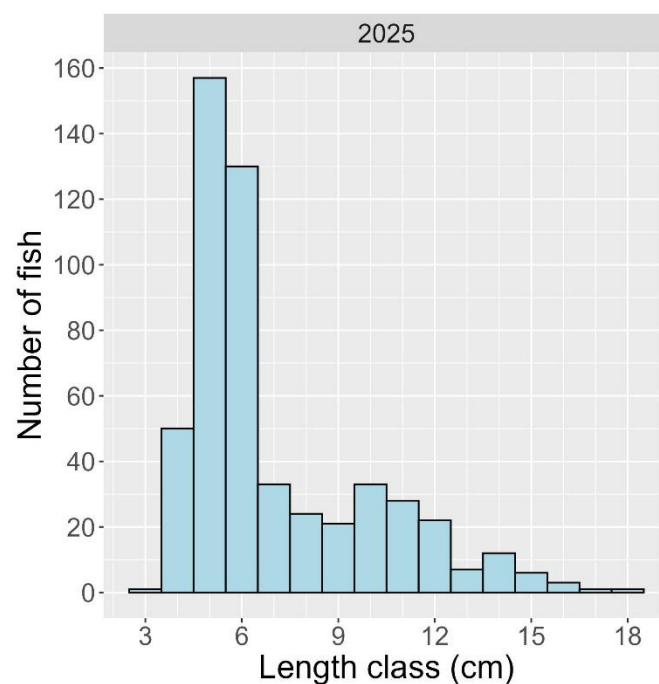


Figure 5. Length frequency distribution for brown trout (n=529), Lough Mask Catchment, 2025 (No. sites =25).

Table 8. Fish ecological status, Srah and Aille sub-catchments, July 2025.

Site No.	2016	2019	2025
Srah sub-catchment			
16	G	M	M
17	H	H	H
18	B	N/A	N/A
19	M	-	G
20	G	H	H
21	M	M	G
Aille/Cloon sub-catchment			
22	-	P	P
23	-	G	G
24	-	G	M
25	-	H	H
26	-	H	M
27	-	G	G

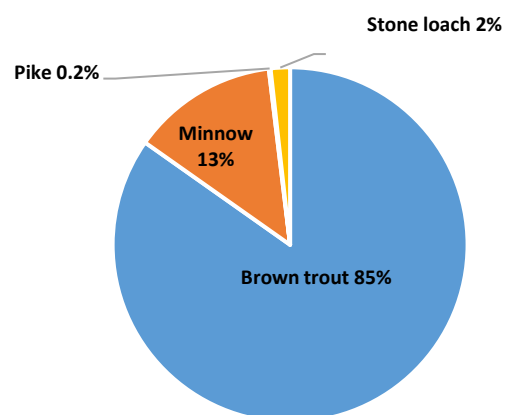


Figure 6. Fish species composition (%), Lough Mask Catchment, 2025.

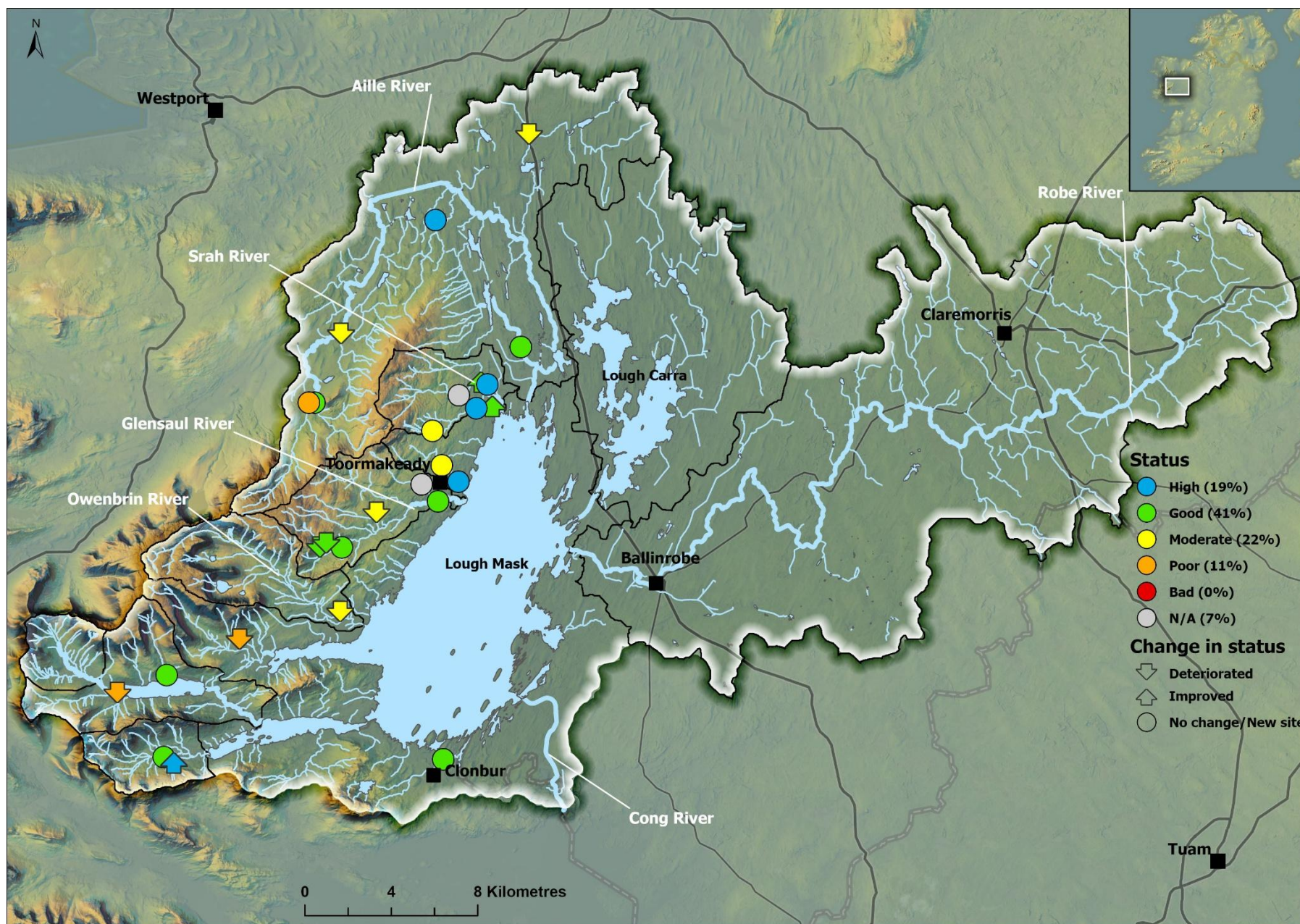


Figure 7. Fish ecological status on the Lough Mask Catchment, 2025. Arrows indicate a change in status since previous surveys (where applicable).

Summary

Four fish species were recorded at twenty-seven sites surveyed in the Lough Mask Catchment in 2025.

Brown trout were the most common species present (25 sites, 93%), followed by minnow (7 sites, 26%) stone loach (3 sites each, 11%) and pike (1 site, 4%). Brown trout were the most abundant species present, followed by minnow, stone loach and pike (Figure 6).

Brown trout ranged in length from 3.8 to 18.9cm (Figure 5). Four age classes of brown trout (0+, 1+, 2+ and 3+) were present, with 0+ being the most abundant cohort. The highest density of brown trout (all ages combined) (0.880 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 17 (Tawnagh Hill) on the Srah River (Srah sub-catchment). The highest density of 0+ brown trout (0.763 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 10 (Tonaglanna East) on the Glensaul River (Glensaul sub-catchment). The highest density of 1+ and older brown trout (0.382 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 3 (Gorteenmore North) on the An Trian Lair River (Lough Mask tributary).

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 twenty-five sites surveyed in the Lough Mask Catchment during 2025 (Table 8 and Figure 7). Two sites were not assigned status. Five sites were assigned High status, with 11 sites Good, six Moderate and three Poor. All 25 sites assigned fish ecological status in 2025, had previously

been surveyed and assigned status. When compared with their most recent previous surveys, eight sites deteriorated, three sites improved, and the remainder were left unchanged.

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.
- NPWS (2020) *Site Synopsis – Lough Mask SPA (Site Code: 004062)*. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Ireland
- SNIFFER (2011) River Fish Classification Tool: Science Work. WFD68c, Phase 2. Final Report. Version 6. Edinburgh. Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research.

Inland Fisheries Ireland: 3044 Lake Drive, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin, D24 Y265, Ireland

CITATION: Gordon, P., Corcoran, W., Flynn, E., McCarthy, E., Piaskowy, J., O' Brien, M., Robson, S., Fildes, D., Chamberlain, C. and Kelly, F.L., (2026) Sampling Fish in Rivers 2025 – Lough Mask Catchment, Factsheet No. 03. National Research Survey Programme. Inland Fisheries Ireland.

*The report includes Tailte Éireann data reproduced
under Tailte Éireann Copyright Permit: CYAL50512825
© Tailte Éireann.*