

Fish in Rivers Factsheet

SERBD

Owenavorrhagh River Catchment

Factsheet: 2025/11

The Owenavorrhagh River Catchment is located within the South-East River Basin District and covers an area of 395km² in County Wexford. The Owenavorrhagh River is approximately 29 km in length and flows in a north-easterly direction from the Oulart Village, flowing through the Ballycanew Village before reaching the Irish Sea at Courtown. Several tributaries join the Owenavorrhagh River, including the Ballyedmond, Bracken, Ballinclare and Ballaghboy rivers. The Banoge River joins the Owenavorrhagh River after its flows south through Gorey Town.

The catchment's geology is varied, mainly comprising of metasedimentary and volcanic rocks, along with localised pockets of igneous rock (EPA 2021).

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 Owenavorrhagh River Catchment in 2025. Eight sites were surveyed by electro-fishing (CEN, 2003) on the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment between the 10th- 11th of September 2025.

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).



Ballinclare River at Bridge North of Ballinamona (Site 6) (WFD Surveillance Monitoring site), Co. Wexford.



Figure 1. Location of electrofishing survey sites on the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, September 2025.

Table 1. Site survey details, Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, September 2025.

No.	WFD Sub-basin	River	Site	Method	WFD	Date
Owenavorrhagh River sub-catchment						
1	OWENAVORRAGH_020	Owenavorrhagh River	Boira South	TEF (Handset)	NO	11/09/2025
2	OWENAVORRAGH_030	Owenavorrhagh River	Killenagh	TEF (Handset)	NO	10/09/2025
3	OWENAVORRAGH_040	Owenavorrhagh River	Coolock Beg	TEF (Handset)	NO	10/09/2025
4	OWENAVORRAGH_050	Owenavorrhagh River	Ballycanew Bridge	TEF (Handset)	NO	10/09/2025
5	OWENAVORRAGH_040	Owenavorrhagh River	Bridge North of Ballinamona	ADEF (Handset)	YES	10/09/2025
6	OWENAVORRAGH_050	Owenavorrhagh (Ballinclare)	Tomagaddy Bridge	TEF (Handset)	NO	11/09/2025
Banoge River sub-catchment						
7	BANOGE_030	Banoge River	Downstream of N11 Bridge	TEF (Handset)	NO	10/09/2025
8	BANOGE_030	Banoge River	Bridge u/s Owenavorrhagh R confluence	ADEF (Handset)	YES	10/09/2025

Table 2. Minimum density estimates of fish (no. fish/m²), on the Owenavorrhagh and Banoge River sub-catchments, Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, September 2025 (previous results are shown where applicable).

Owenavorrhagh River sub-catchment							
Site no.	1		2		3		4
Species	2025		2016	2025	2016	2025	2025
Brown trout	0.278		0.010	0.062	0.093	0.085	0.136
0+ brown trout	0.044		-	-	0.012	-	0.044
1+ & older brown trout	0.234		0.010	0.062	0.081	0.085	0.092
Salmon	-		-	-	-	0.049	-
0+ salmon	-		-	-	-	0.049	-
1+ & older salmon	-		-	-	-	-	-
European eel	-		0.014	-	0.019	-	-
Lamprey sp.	-		-	-	0.012	-	0.024
Minnow	0.102		0.019	0.050	0.330	1.033	0.020
Sea trout	-		-	-	-	-	-
Stone loach	-		0.029	0.090	0.069	0.024	0.028
Three-spined stickleback	0.066		0.043	0.034	0.019	0.281	0.076
All fish	0.446		0.115	0.235	0.542	1.472	0.285
	Owenavorrhagh River sub-catchment				Banoge sub-catchment		
Site no.	5		6	7		8	
Species	2011	2025	2025	2013	2025	2008	2025
Brown trout	0.018	0.068	0.268	-	0.348	0.027	0.038
0+ brown trout	0.001	0.010	0.253	-	0.056	0.006	0.003
1+ & older brown trout	0.017	0.057	0.016	-	0.293	0.021	0.035
Salmon	0.006	0.010	-	0.004	-	0.015	0.003
0+ salmon	0.002	-	-	-	-	0.003	-
1+ & older salmon	0.004	0.010	-	0.004	-	0.012	0.003
European eel	-	-	-	0.009	-	0.092	0.016
Lamprey sp.	0.001	0.005	-	0.009	0.007	-	0.009
Minnow	0.129	0.600	-	-	-	-	0.016
Sea trout	0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stone loach	0.003	0.026	0.016	-	0.014	0.030	0.003
Three-spined stickleback	0.002	0.073	-	0.440	0.195	0.003	-
All fish	0.161	0.782	0.284	0.462	0.564	0.166	0.085

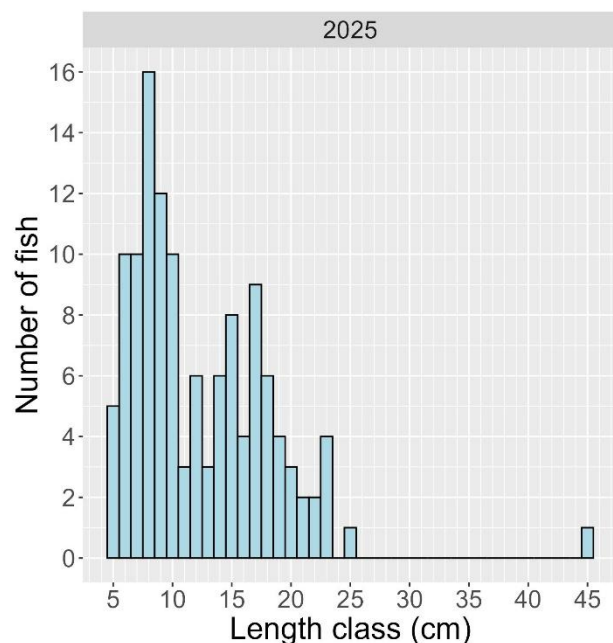


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution for brown trout (n = 125), Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, 2025 (No. sites = 8).

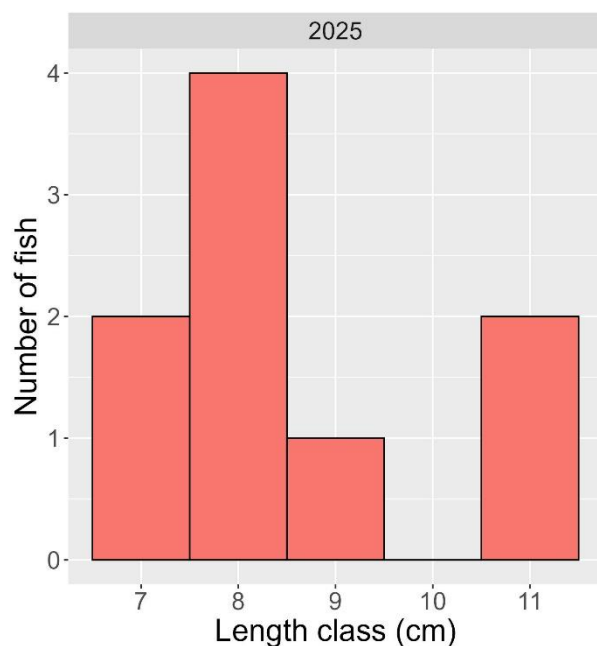


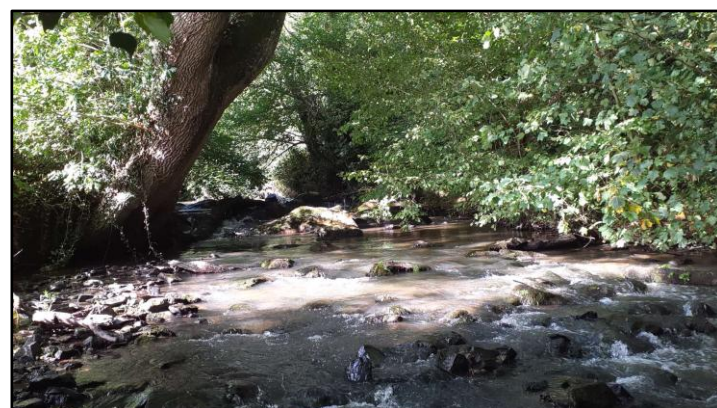
Figure 3. Length frequency distribution for salmon (n = 9), Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, 2025 (No. sites = 3).

Table 3. Brown trout % age class structure (where recorded), Owenavorrhagh River Catchment (Sites 1-8), September 2025.

Site No.	% of catch					
	0+	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+
Owenavorrhagh River sub-catchment						
1	17	78	5	-	-	-
2	-	60	-	20	20	-
3	-	10	70	20	-	-
4	35	18	47	-	-	-
5	12	53	29	-	-	6
6	95	5	-	-	-	-
Banoge River sub-catchment						
7	17	17	58	8	-	-
8	7	40	53	-	-	-

Table 4. Salmon % age class structure (where recorded), Owenavorrhagh River Catchment (Sites 1-8), September 2025.

Site No.	% of catch	
	0+	1+
Owenavorrhagh River sub-catchment		
3	100	-
5	-	100
Banoge River sub-catchment		
8	-	100



Banoge River at Bridge upstream of Owenavorrhagh River confluence (Site 7, WFD Surveillance Monitoring Site), Co. Wexford.

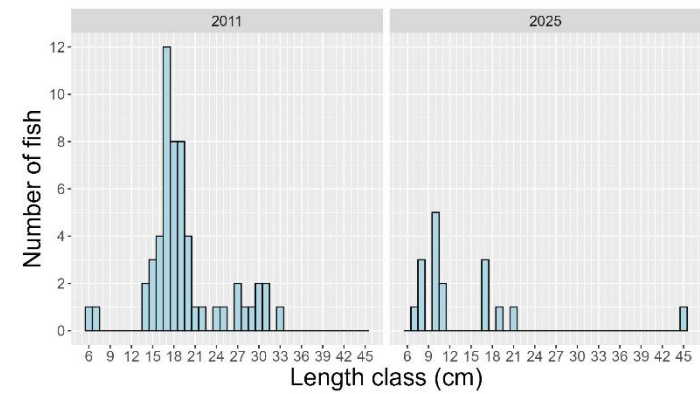


Figure 4. Length frequency distribution of brown trout (2011 n=56, 2025 n=17) at Bridge North of Ballinmona (Site 5), a WFD surveillance monitoring site, on the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment.

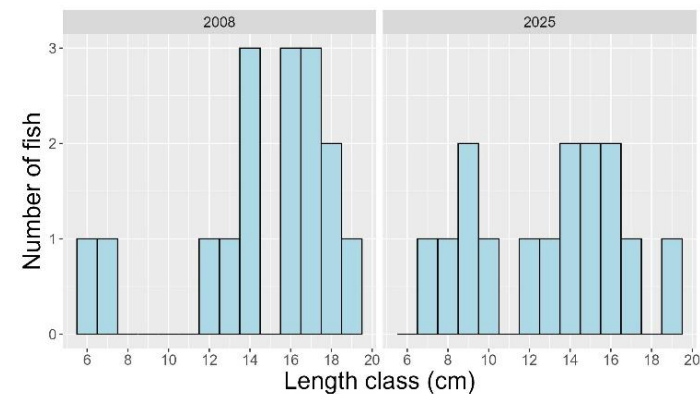


Figure 5. Length frequency distribution of brown trout (2008 n=16, 2025 n=15) at Bridge upstream Owenavorrhagh River Confluence (Site 8), a WFD surveillance monitoring site, on the Banoge River sub-catchment.

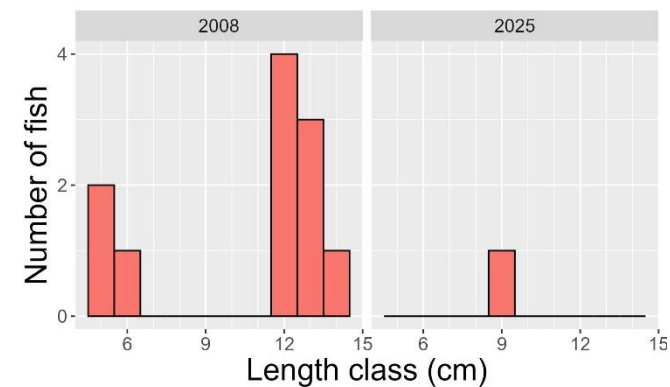


Figure 6. Length frequency distribution of salmon (2008 n=11, 2025 n=1) at Bridge upstream Owenavorrhagh River Confluence (Site 8), a WFD surveillance monitoring site, on the Banoge River sub-catchment.

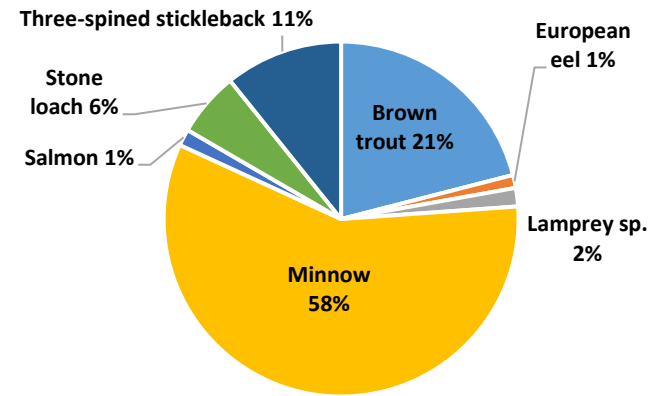


Figure 7. Fish species composition (%), Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, 2025.

Table 5. Fish ecological status, Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, September 2025.

Site No.	2008	2011	2013	2016	2020	2022	2025
Owenavorrhagh sub-catchment							
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
2	-	-	-	P	-	-	M
3	-	-	-	M	-	-	M
4	-	-	-	M	M	-	M
5	M	M	-	-	M	M	M
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	M
Banoge sub-catchment							
7	-	-	M	-	-	-	M
8	M	M	M	-	M	M	P



Owenavorrhagh River at Killenagh (Site 2), Co. Wexford.

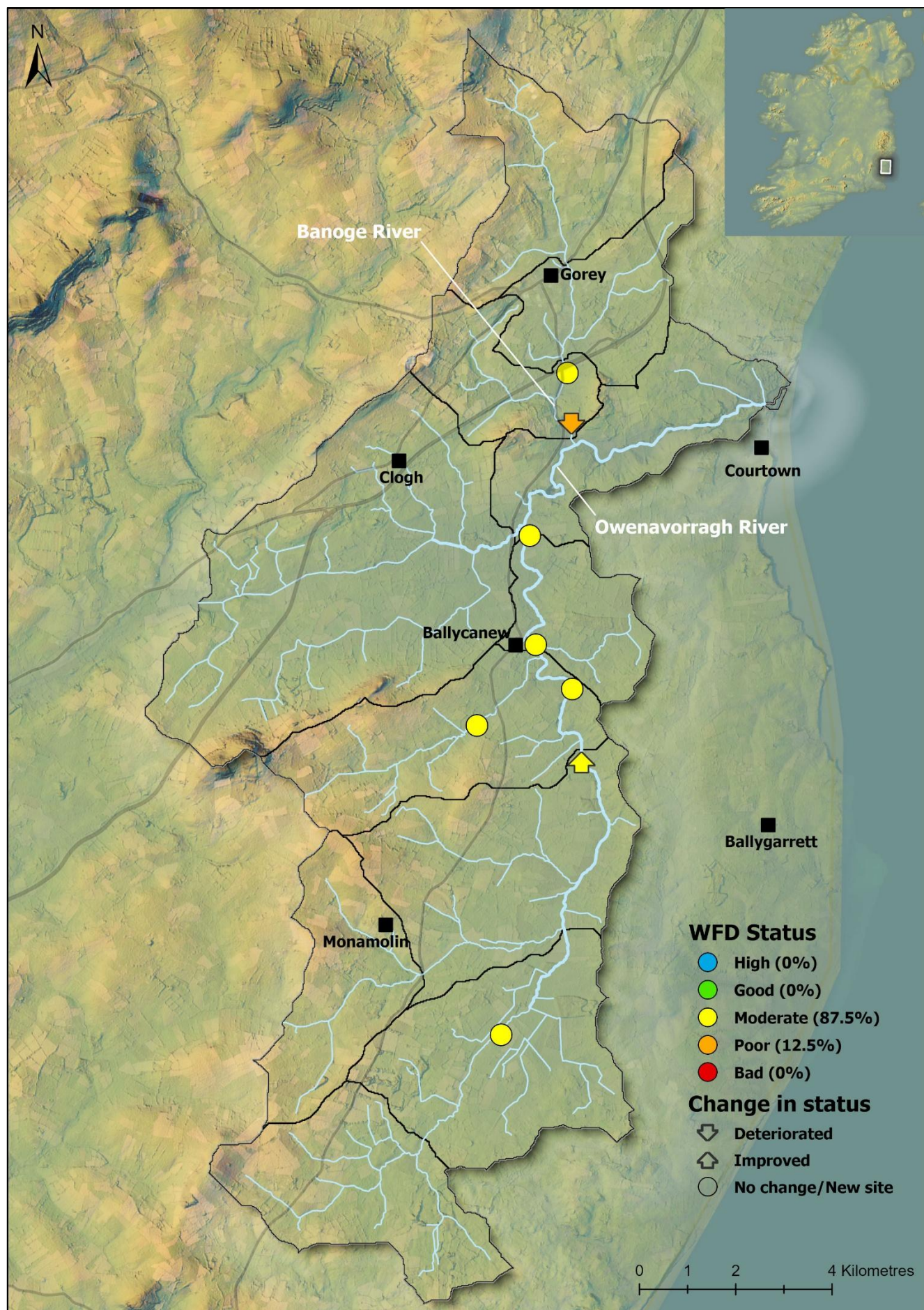


Figure 8. Fish ecological status in the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment, 2025. Arrows indicate a change in status since previous surveys (where applicable).

Summary

Seven fish species were recorded at eight sites electro-fished on the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment in 2025.

Brown trout was the most common species present (8 sites, 100%), followed by stone loach (7 sites, 88%), three-spined stickleback and minnow (6 sites each, 75%), lamprey sp. (4 sites, 50%), salmon (3 sites, 38%) and European eel (1 site, 13%).

Minnow were the most abundant species recorded, followed by brown trout, three-spined stickleback, stone loach, lamprey sp., salmon and European eel (Figure 7).

Brown trout ranged in length from 5.5 to 45.7cm (Figure 2). Six age classes of brown trout were present (0+, 1+, 2+, 3+, 4+ and 5+), with 2+ being the most abundant cohort. The highest density of brown trout (all ages combined) (0.348 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 7 (downstream of N11 Bridge) on the Banoge River. The highest density of 0+ brown trout (0.253 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 6 (Tomagaddy Bridge) on the Ballinclare River. The highest density of 1+ and older brown trout (0.293 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 7 (downstream of N11 Bridge).

Salmon were present at three sites and ranged in length from 7.7 to 11.8cm (Figure 3). Two age classes of salmon were present (0+ and 1+) with 0+ being the most abundant cohort. The highest density of salmon (all ages combined) (0.049 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 3 (Coolock Beg) on the Owenavorrhagh River. The highest density of 0+ salmon (0.049 fish/m²) was also recorded at Site 3 (Coolock Beg). The highest density of 1+ and older salmon (0.010 fish/m²) was recorded at Site 5 (Bridge North of Ballinamona) on the Owenavorrhagh 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 eight sites surveyed in the Owenavorrhagh River Catchment during 2025 (Table 5 and Figure 8). A total of seven sites were assigned Moderate status and one site was assigned Poor status. Six sites were surveyed previously on this catchment and assigned fish ecological status. One site improved in status (Site 2), one site (Site 8) decreased in status and the remaining sites 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.
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