

Scientific Eel Fishery:

Why set up a scientific fishery?

Joe McHugh Minister with responsibility for Natural Resources announced a research initiative where IFI in collaboration with a number of former eel fishermen would undertake a scientific fishery to increase data and knowledge ahead of a further review to the EU in 2018.

What is a scientific fishery?

A scientific fishery involves engaging with fishermen to fish for eels in a well-designed and scientifically valid programme. The objectives are to gather the data required to carry out stock assessments. For example a lake will be fished by the fishermen using fyke nets the eels will be brought to shore where IFI research staff will take measurements of the eels before releasing the eels back into the lake. A proportion of the catch will be taken back to the laboratory for further analysis (age and growth data, parasite prevalence and determining the sex ratio of the catch).

This type of cooperative research will result in a better understanding among participants (scientists and fishermen). It will build on the experience and knowledge the fishermen have to provide supplemental information on the operation such as habitat use, any changes to trends in the size of eels etc.

Why were these locations chosen?

IFI are focusing eel research on Eel Index Catchments following the advice from the ICES working group (WKESDCF). The aim is to have at least one index catchment per river basin district as Ireland report to the EU at this level. By directing resources in this manner it will ensure that every river basin district will have survey data upon which management decisions can be made.

What is an Eel Index Catchment?

Eel Index catchments are intensively monitored systems that employ a variety of sampling methods (e.g. traps; electrofishing surveys; tagging programmes) to produce census and other biological data for the different life stages (glass, elver, yellow, silver). This information is needed to investigate and track whole life cycle processes, e.g. survival between life stages, and develop understanding of the complex relationships between recruitment and spawning stock production, to assess 'exploitation' rates by fisheries and other anthropogenic factors, and to ground-truth model-based estimates of production and escapement.

Why was the Shannon and Erne catchments left out?

IFI and the ESB already have a number of operations within the Shannon and Erne catchments delivering information on eels. IFI decided to focus limited resources on the catchments that required further monitoring such as the Eastern RBD, South East RBD and South West RBD.

What information will be gathered?

- Scientific surveys of the stock (by method):
 - abundance of recruitment (glass eel and elvers),
 - abundance of yellow eel standing stock,
 - abundance of silver eel,
- Catch composition by length,
- Other sampling to inform biological characteristics, e.g. length, weight, age and growth, parasites

What is an EMU?

In Ireland, the eel stock is managed and reported to the EU at the River Basin District (RBDs) level or Eel Management Unit. Ireland is divided into 6 RBDs, Eastern EMU, SouthEast RBD, SouthWest RBD, Shannon International RBD, Western RBD and the transboundary NorthWest International RBD. For the Eastern River Basin district and the Neagh Bann River Basin District, an Eastern Eel Management Unit (EEMU) was created for reporting purposes to the EU due to the cross border element of the NeaghBann RBD.

Who will use the data?

The data gathered will be used by IFI to review the management measures outlined in Ireland's National Eel Management Report. IFI will report to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) in 2018 when the next review of eel plans is due by the EU. The data will be made available to the Joint EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM Working Group on Eels that meet annually to report on the status of the European eel stocks and provide advice to support development and implementation of EC Regulation No. 1100/2007 for eel stock recovery.

Do I need insurance?

IFI require the successful applicants to get insurance however it is not necessary to have the insurance in place when applying. Once the fisheries are awarded to the successful fishermen, contracts will be signed and an undertaking by the applicant to take out insurance and provide IFI with a letter of indemnity from their insurer for personal and public liability.

What about the Bye-Law prohibiting fishing for eel?

The research fishery will be authorised with the successful application of a certificate of authorisation under section 14 of the fisheries (consolidation) act, 1959 as substituted by section 4 of the fisheries (amendment) act, 1962. IFI will apply for a Section 14 authorisation for each of the fisheries and individuals with an outline of the duration and type of work involved this will ensure that the operation is legal. The Section 14 authorisation will have terms and conditions outlined that must be adhered to, failure to adhere to these terms will result in the revocation of the authorisation. IFI is not responsible for honouring contracts if the section 14 authorisation is revoked.

Do I need to be VAT registered?

No you do not need to be VAT registered but a tax clearance certificate may be required.

A condition of obtaining a public sector contract of a value of €10,000 or more, (inclusive of VAT), within any 12 months period, is that the contractor is required to produce a TCC or demonstrate a satisfactory level of tax compliance. Some contracts may fall below this threshold figure.

How will I be paid?

IFI as a public sector body no longer send or receive cheques all transfers are made by Electronic payments and card transactions.