

# Eel Management (1)

- The international scientific evidence in relation to the eel populations is very clear:
- The Eel stock is outside safe biological limits
- Recruitment is still at extremely low levels
- Elver numbers returning to the coast are at very low levels
- The incidence of parasite infestations continues to spread

# Eel Management (2)

- Truck and transport has assisted with the escapement of silver eels and has increased in the Shannon – from 6.4% of pristine to 32.6% - the Target is 40%
- The long term scenario has not changed – the production continues to decline

# Eel Management (3)

- Eels in Ireland are from the one European stock the fish do not return to their river of their parents.
- In the European context the country is small and probably should be viewed as a single entity.
- Overall the national Eel stock escapement remains below the 40% target required by the EU.

# Eel Management (4)

- The trend in production each of the River basin districts is negative – the stocks remain in catastrophic decline.
- In just over 5 years there will be a significant fall in migration to the sea as the stocks of eels in the lakes and rivers reaches critically low levels. Some catchments are already declining.
- Recovery is unlikely unless some of the factors affecting eel survival change.
- Recruitment of young eels is a limiting factor

# Eel Management (5)

- The eel management plan has not changed – the extensive scientific research over the past three years has reaffirmed the position from 2008 that recruitment is at an all time low, the eel stock is in a critical state and urgent action is required to try and arrest this decline.

# Eel Management (6)

- The figures presented in the science are the best possible estimates (e.g. estimates were not possible for saline waters) but management advice must also note the requirement to apply the precautionary principle where a stock is so endangered.



# Eel Management (7)

- Given the implications of the scientific advice, the consideration of practical management implications and the need to conserve and recover the stock in the shortest possible timeframe (contingent upon equivalent actions across Europe), the precautionary approach must again be adopted in accordance with the science and the management report on the status of eel stocks in Ireland 2009 – 2011.

# Eel Management (8)

- The eel fisheries in tidal and transitional waters are also managed under the Inland Fisheries legislation and management structures and given the absence of appropriate methods for estimating eel stock densities and silver eel escapement in transitional waters, and the lack of adequate information on the movements of these eels in and out of transitional and freshwater the precautionary approach also needs to be adopted in this fishery.





# Eel Management (9)

Precautionary principle:

Agenda 21: “Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation”



# Eel Management (10)

- One of the management options for the eel stocks for the next few years is therefore as follows:
- (1) Renew both existing bye-laws prohibiting the exploitation of any eels in the Republic of Ireland either by commercial exploitation or recreational anglers for the next three / four years.

# Eel Management (11)

- (2) Introduce a further measure of a traceability system for any eels that may be transported through the Republic with origin either in Northern Ireland or elsewhere and put in place a system of monitoring all eel movements. In so far as possible this should reflect a similar measure introduced in the UK and Northern Ireland.

# Eel Management (12)

- (3) Ensure that the truck and transport system of moving silver eels past Hydroelectric stations is maintained at least at the level of intensity achieved in the years 2009 – 2011.
- (4) Maintain vigilance on the fishery to ensure the level of illegal fishing is minimised.

# Eel Management (13)

A second option - permitting of some limited fishing:

This will result in the following:

- Significant additional need for security measures to prevent illegal fishery in the permitted fishery and elsewhere;
- Difficulty in policing the fishery due to lack of staff and resources;
- Problems with legal traders navigating through the country with potential for illegal pick-ups.
- Requirement to implement the data collection framework.



# Eel Management (14)

May be seen in Europe as a retrograde step in terms of protecting this valuable species – given the responsible precautionary approach taken in 2009.

Permitted against a background of scientific advice that indicates a complete collapse is likely and is only several years away.

This is a European stock our management decisions affects everyone else as well.

# Eel Management (15)

## Other issues

- Undertake stocking of selected waters with eels from other European sources – subject to availability and appropriate disease clearance – This must be considered against the background that elvers cost over €500 per Kg currently. Who would fund this – from where?
- This might be possible through the restructured EFF (European Fisheries Fund)