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Inland Fisheries Ireland**



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“Water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such”
(EU Water Framework Directive)

What is the Water Framework Directive (WFD)?

- The WFD came into force in the EU in December 2000, establishing a new framework for the protection and management of all water resources from “source to sea” (groundwaters, rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) throughout the EU.
- The WFD was incorporated into Irish law by regulations in December 2003.

What are the main objectives of the WFD?

- Protect and maintain “high and good ecological status” of all waters where it exists.
- Prevent any deterioration in the existing ecological status of waters.
- Restore all waters that are impaired so that they achieve at least “good ecological status”.

What is the information used for?

- Water bodies are assigned an ecological status class based on the fish communities present.
- These status classes are used in conjunction with other WFD monitoring to aid in the development of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).
- Ongoing monitoring will be used to evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of the programmes of measures in the RBMPs.
- Invaluable new information on fish species distribution and abundance throughout the country is also available to angling clubs, fishery owners and the interested public.

Who is responsible for monitoring fish for the WFD?

- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has been assigned the task of monitoring fish stocks for the WFD.
- A team of IFI scientists are involved in conducting fish monitoring surveys on lakes, rivers and estuaries throughout Ireland.

Where are fish surveyed for the WFD?

- Over 300 sites encompassing rivers, lakes and estuaries are surveyed on a three year rolling programme.
- Sites include a broad range of habitats and ecological status classes (high, good, moderate, poor and bad).

How are fish monitored for the WFD?

- Electric fishing and many forms of netting (gill netting, fyke netting, seine netting and beam trawling) are the principal survey methods being used to monitor fish for the WFD.
- All methods comply with European standards.
- All fish species are targeted.
- Every effort is made to release fish unharmed.
- A sub-sample of fish is removed for laboratory analysis.
- Surveys are conducted between June and October.



How is the WFD managed in Ireland?

- The WFD is being managed at a local level through River Basin Districts (RBDs).
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the main organisation involved in co-ordinating WFD activities in Ireland among River Basin Districts, Local Authorities and State Agencies.
- Objectives of the WFD are achieved through the development of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).
- RBMPs contain “Programmes of Measures” (e.g. policies, monitoring programmes, rehabilitation) designed to protect and restore water bodies to at least “good ecological status”.

What is monitored for the WFD?

- WFD requires monitoring of insects, fish, plants and phytoplankton, along with supporting general physical, chemical and hydromorphological quality elements.
- These surveys are required by Irish and European law.
- Fish are an indicator of water quality. Healthy fish stocks indicate good water quality.
- All EU countries are required to examine species composition, abundance and age structure of all fish species present in a water body.

