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**Sampling Fish  
For The  
Water  
Framework  
Directive**

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 **Iascach Intire Éireann  
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.

