



DECLARATION

THE FOYLE AREA (CONTROL OF OYSTER FISHING) REGULATIONS 2008

SUSPENSION OF OYSTER FISHING IN THE FOYLE AREA

I, Sharon McMahon, Designated Officer of the Loughs Agency, Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, hereby certify that The Commission is satisfied that it is necessary and expedient for the conservation and protection of native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) to declare fishing for such oysters suspended in the entirety of The Foyle Area, as defined by The Foyle Area (Control of Oyster Fishing) Regulations 2008 as amended 2010, for the periods listed below.

“the defined mouth” in relation to the River Foyle, means the mouth of that river as defined by instrument dated 8th February 1864 made under section 17 of the Salmon Fishery (Ireland) Act 1863;

“Lough Foyle” means those waters in the Foyle Area bounded on the north or seaward side by an imaginary straight line drawn between Greencastle Fort in the County of Donegal and the Martello Tower at Magilligan Point in the County of Londonderry and bounded on the south by the defined mouth of the River Foyle;

“the River Foyle” means all of the River Foyle upstream of the defined mouth of the River Foyle;

“seaward of Lough Foyle” means those waters in the Foyle Area which lie seawards of an imaginary straight line drawn between Greencastle Fort in the County of Donegal and the Martello Tower at Magilligan Point in the County of Londonderry.

Dates of suspension of fishing in The Foyle Area

Fishing for native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) is suspended in the entirety of The Foyle Area, as defined by The Foyle Area (Control of Oyster Fishing) Regulations 2008 as amended 2010, for the periods listed below;

- 19th September 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 8th October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 10th October 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 15th October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 17th October 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 22nd October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 25th October 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 29th October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 1st November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 5th November 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 8th November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 12th November 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 15th November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 19th November 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 22nd November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 26th November 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 29th November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 3rd December 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 6th December 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 10th December 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 13th December 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 31st January 2019 at 18:00 hrs

Reasons for suspension of fishing in The Foyle Area

Suspension of Opening

Poor recruitment of juveniles into the population in the summers of 2015 and 2016 resulted in reduced spawning potential for the subsequent seasons. The protection and retention of juvenile oysters is necessary in order to maintain future stocks.

The Foyle oyster population has generally ceased spawning late August however on occasion, spawning is still occurring up to the end of September. The period immediately post spawning is a sensitive time when oysters are reconditioning and may still be susceptible to mortality if disturbed.

Weekly monitoring of gonad maturation, brooding, density of larvae and water temperatures in 2018 has indicated that conditions are such that oysters may still be spawning and settling in early September. Therefore, the 2018/19 fishery opening has been suspended until 06:00 hours on 9th October 2018 in order to protect juvenile stages, until such times as they are robust enough to withstand fishery related stress.

Reduction of Days per Week

In order to reduce the amount of stress being put upon the Native Oyster population in Lough Foyle, and in order to retain an acceptable biomass of spawning stock in the population, fishing effort will be reduced for the 2018 season. Fishing related stress levels in the oyster population in the Lough are directly linked to the fishing effort. Fishing related stress has been found to be highest during the first 8 weeks of the season. This correlates with the landings data submitted to Loughs Agency by licence holders which shows that, for the period 2012-17 around 80% of the total landings removed within the first 8 weeks of the fishery. The high fishing effort at the beginning of the season is likely to have an impact on the health of the oyster stocks particularly those individuals which are undersized and which are being caught and released.

The Foyle oysters are infected with a blood parasite called *Bonamia ostreae* which causes a disease called Bonamiosis. This disease spreads when the cells of infected oyster rupture and infect nearby oysters which ingest the parasite. It is thought that infection rates are increased during periods of high stress. Therefore a reduction in fishing effort may go some way to reducing the spread of Bonamiosis in the Native Oyster population in the Lough.

Closure January 2019

Removal of 100% of the stock above the minimum landing size is not sustainable. It is advisable to retain a proportion of the spawning stock above 80mm in the fishery in order to allow for stock replenishment and the achievement of effective spawning for the 2019 spawning season.

Removal of large proportion of stock over 80mm from the fishery, this season, could have a significant negative impact on broodstock and could potentially have a highly detrimental effect on future recruitment to the population.

The fishery will be closed in January 2019 (in accordance with the dates listed in this Declaration) in order to allow a survey and review of the Native Oyster population remaining in the Lough after the fishing period.

NOW THEREFORE

In pursuance of the said Regulations

I HEREBY SUSPEND OYSTER FISHING IN THE FOYLE AREA AS DEFINED BY THE FOYLE AREA (CONTROL OF OYSTER FISHING) REGULATIONS 2008 AS AMENDED 2010.

From:

- 19th September 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 8th October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 10th October 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 15th October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 17th October 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 22nd October 2018 at 18:00 hrs
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- 29th November 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 3rd December 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 6th December 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 10th December 2018 at 18:00 hrs
- 13th December 2018 at 06:00 hrs to 31st January 2019 at 18:00 hrs

Signed: S. McMahon (Designated Officer)

Sharon McMahon

Dated: 29th August 2018