

DECLARATION

THE FOYLE AREA (CONTROL OF OYSTER FISHING) REGULATIONS 2008

SUSPENSION OF OYSTER FISHING IN THE FOYLE AREA

I, Sharon McMahon, Designated Officer of 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:

- 3rd February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 6th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 9th February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 13th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 16th February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 20th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 23rd February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 27th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 2nd March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 6th March 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 9th March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 13th March 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 16th March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 20th March 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 23rd March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 27th March 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 30th March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 31st March 2023 at 18:00 hrs

The 2022/2023 Season will end after fishing closes at 18:00hrs on 29th March 2023.

Reasons for suspension of fishing in The Foyle Area

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 from the total Regulation days for the remainder of the 2022/2023 season to two days a week from the Regulation 5 days a week.

Fishing related stress levels in the oyster population in Lough Foyle are directly linked to the fishing effort. High fishing effort 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.

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 2023 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.

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:

- 3rd February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 6th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 9th February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 13th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 16th February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 20th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 23rd February 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 27th February 2023 at 18:00 hrs
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- 23rd March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 27th March 2023 at 18:00 hrs
- 30th March 2023 at 06:00 hrs to 31st March 2023 at 18:00 hrs

The 2022/2023 Season will end after fishing closes at 18:00hrs on 29th March 2023.

Signed: S. McMahon (Designated Officer)
Sharon McMahon

Dated: 18th January 2023