

Stock Management Plan for the Owenriff System

2018

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Iascach Intíre Éireann
Inland Fisheries Ireland



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Introduction

In 2007, the then Western Regional Fisheries Board became aware of an introduction of pike into the lakes on the Owenriff River. While pike are found in Lough Corrib, they had never previously been found in the Owenriff. Pike have multiplied rapidly, and are now a serious threat to the salmonid stocks in the Owenriff, and therefore to the continued health of the stock in Lough Corrib. Inland Fisheries Ireland has prepared a stock management plan to protect and restore trout stocks in the system.

The Owenriff system consists of the Owenriff River and a series of five small lakes: Loughs Ateann (Leadmine), Agraffard, Adrehid (quiet man bridge), Bofin and Loch Aphreahrgan. The system also has two other small lakes on another adjoining stream, Loch Beg and Shannaghree Lough. There are some other smaller lakes and ponds on other tributaries which have not been investigated to date. Pike were not recorded during the most recent Water Framework Directive survey of Lettercraffroe, which is also a part of the system, due to an impassable waterfall on the tributary through which it drains into the main channel.

The stock management plan proposed is detailed below and should have a very significant impact on the numbers of pike in the system. However, it will not remove all pike and it should be understood that a stock management programme for the Owenriff system will need prioritisation in future years, but at a less intensive level to maintain the pike population at a density which will facilitate any recovery in the stocks of game species.

Owenriff System



Proposed Methodologies and Scheduling In order to remove pike from the system it is proposed to undertake extensive netting operations on the lakes using both gill and fyke nets early in the year to coincide with the pike spawning season. It is also proposed to electro fish these areas during the same period when weather conditions permit. However gill netting and electrofishing operations will continue throughout the year with the exception of the months of November and December. The main focus on netting operations will be during January and February to intercept spawning fish with an increased focus on electrofishing during the period May through August when smaller and juvenile pike will be targeted. Electrofishing of the main channel and its tributaries will also be carried out and the type of equipment to be employed will depend on the characteristics of the channels. Weather conditions and water levels will have a major impact on the proposed work programme and, with limited staff resources, it will only be possible to carry out netting operations on three of the lakes at a time. Assuming suitable weather and water levels, the proposed works and timings are detailed below:

Scheduling of Stock Management Operations

Jan – April, Spawning season

- Use of gill nets - concentrated in areas of the lakes used by pike for spawning
- Electro fishing – by boat in the same areas as the netting operations

May – August

- Use of gill nets, smaller mesh sizes along the lake shores
- Fyke nets in the deeper sections of lakes
- Electro Fishing – back pack along lake shore and feeder streams
- Electro Fishing – boat in the deeper sections of the river

Sept – Dec

- Electro Fishing – boat, main channel and along the margins of lakes
- Electro Fishing - back pack, lake margins and shallow streams

The results of each method will determine the most effective methodology and the locations where effort should be concentrated. IFI may alter the plan in accordance with the efficacy of the different techniques in an effort to maximise productivity. Throughout these operations IFI will be cognisant of the migratory game fish moving through the system and every effort will be made to minimise any impact on these species.

Having regard to the remoteness of some of the sites and the difficulties with access, it is proposed that appropriately trained personnel will euthanise pike immediately following capture. The carcasses will be disposed of through a licenced renderer. The significant logistical effort and cost of attempting to relocate the small number of pike likely to be encountered $\geq 85\text{cm}$ would not be cost effective. To date, including fish stock surveys of the system and the results of four pike angling competitions, no pike $\geq 85\text{cm}$ have been encountered largely because of the poor trophic status of this largely acidic system. However, if pike $\geq 85\text{cm}$ are encountered at sites where it will be feasible to relocate then every effort will be made to transfer these to a recognised pike fishery.

In addition to active stock removal by IFI, applications from the local angling club to host Section 59 authorised angling events aimed at removing pike will be considered and monitored by IFI personnel.

Access & Permissions Access to the lakes will be cleared with fishery owners and local land owners.

Biosecurity In accordance with IFI's biosecurity protocols, all equipment will be disinfected prior to, and following its use on the system to avoid introduction of invasive species such as Zebra Mussel or *Lagrosiphon major*.

Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* Electrofishing operations will be strictly confined to areas which do not support any pearl mussel populations. Personnel will have regard at all times for the presence of pearl mussel and great care will be taken not to interfere with or impact on these mussels.

Compliance with H&S Requirements All operations will be undertaken in strict accordance with IFI's electrofishing and gill netting Standard Operating Procedures and in compliance with the provisions of IFI's most recent Safety Statement.

Staffing Requirement The proposed stock management programme will require 269 man days. Two staff will be required for each crew deployed on netting operations. Three staff will be required for boat mounted electrofishing operations and additional staff will be essential where remote areas are being accessed.

Full details of the man power requirement based on the proposed works programme is detailed below:

Period	Gill/Fyke nets		Boat Electrofishing		Other methods (EF Back pack, rod & line, long lines & S59 events)
	Days	Man days	Days	Man days	Man days/days
Jan – Feb	20	40	10	30	-
Mar –Apr	10	20	4	12	-
May- Jun	10	20	10	30	8
Jul – Aug	5	10	8	24	20
Sept-Oct	5	10	5	15	20
Nov-Dec	-	-	-	-	10
Total	50	100	37	111	58

Estimated number of pike that should be removed The table below details the estimated numbers of pike that could be removed based on the above programme. However, these are *estimates* and have been set based on previous experience and may well be exceeded or alternatively not achieved.

Method	Gill / Fyke Nets	Electro Fishing & other methods
Projected no. pike removed	500	1300

Projected operational cost of full implementation of the above stock management programme

Item	Cost	Note
269 Man days	€ 45,730	(269 x €170.00)
Subsistence	€ 3,769	(269 x €14.01) 5hr rate
Boat/Equipment fuel costs	€ 500	estimate
Transport	€ 2,000	estimate
Total Estimated Cost	€ 51,999	

Reporting Reports on the implementation of the plan will be provided monthly to the WRBD Director.

**Inland Fisheries Ireland
3044 Lake Drive,
Citywest Business Campus,
Dublin 24,
Ireland.
D24 Y265**

**www.fisheriesireland.ie
info@fisheriesireland.ie**

+353 1 8842 600

