

SALMON WATCH IRELAND

Salmon Watch Ireland welcomes the recent publication in the Proceedings of the Royal Society (www.rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org Proc R Soc B 20122359) of a report (by Krkosek, Revie, Gargan, Skilbrei, Finstad and Todd) concerning the effect of sea lice on wild Atlantic salmon. It is the first time that a study has been published covering a wide spatial scale in the North Eastern Atlantic from Norway to Ireland. The study, therefore, provides definitive results linking the negative effect of sea lice emanating from salmon aquaculture on wild Atlantic salmon abundance.

The report definitively proves a causative link between decreased wild salmon abundance and aquaculture generated sea lice infestation of wild stocks causing increased mortality and a decrease of wild salmon abundance of up to 39%.

It is now appropriate that state agencies in Ireland and abroad take action to mitigate the effects of sea lice on wild stocks. Ireland is obligated under the Habitats Directive to protect wild Atlantic salmon and as a consequence of this report, current and future salmonid aquaculture facilities must be required to move to land based facilities thereby negating the infestation of wild stocks by sea lice from marine based facilities.

Salmon Watch Ireland in its submission to the government on recent BIM pronouncements regarding the proposed Galway Bay supersized salmon farm will demand that this new sea lice report form the basis of all future management of aquaculture facilities. The report is definitive and wide ranging and state agencies cannot be allowed to dictate policy in the field of aquaculture based on internal reports from within the Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries which are spatially too narrow and do not give enough weight to the impact of sea lice even though their own findings demonstrate that sea lice have a statistically negative effect on wild salmon abundance.

Atlantic salmon survival in the wild has diminished alarmingly over the past decades and any man made negative impact must be tackled effectively. BIM and other agencies must actively promote other technologies to promote aquaculture and also actively promote the natural marine environment for its natural function, sustainable fishing for Irish fishermen. There is no merit in the Galway Bay project and BIM should focus on its core responsibilities.

Salmon Watch Ireland
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