



Welcome to the sixth year of the Barrow Catchment Management initiative and the twenty fifth anniversary of the Southern Regional Fisheries Board. This edition of the Barrow News particularly celebrates the beauty and features of the Barrow catchment using a variety of landscape photographs.

The Barrow steering group continued to meet on a quarterly basis over the past year and as usual these meetings provided a good forum for information exchange and stimulated interesting debates.

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*River Barrow at Tinnahinch Quay (Photograph courtesy of Lorcan Scott, NPWS)*

### ***Twaite Shad on the Barrow - Legend and Fact***

According to legend there is a reason why the majority of the salmon and shad respectively run up the Nore and Barrow rivers to spawn. St. Evin, it is said, controlled the fisheries on the Nore while St. Moling, or Mullins, had the rights over the Barrow fisheries in the seventh century and the two venerable gentlemen had various conflicts over what proportion of salmon should proceed up each river. They agreed to resolve the matter by arranging a conference of the two rivers where the assembled fish would be addressed, by the Saints, and cases stated. St. Moling who had set out very early for the appointment, fell asleep near the meeting place and so missed out on addressing the gathered shoals of fish. Thereafter, the legend goes, the majority of the salmon tribe head up the Nore while the 'chads', a meagre and tasteless fish who remained faithful to St. Moling, go up the Barrow.



Photograph of Twaite Shad (courtesy L Scott, NPWS)

The Twaite Shad is a declining species and together with the larger Allis Shad is listed in Annex 2 of the Habitats Directive. The habitat requirements for both fish are not fully known. A study is underway involving the National Parks and Wildlife Service and

the Central Fisheries Board to find out more about the life cycles and habitats of these fish. Shad are now rare throughout Europe as well as in Britain where they are known to spawn in a few rivers flowing into the Severn Estuary. Some thirty to forty years ago they were fished by anglers at Carrick-on-Suir but the run of fish into the Suir has declined considerably. The main impediments to Shad appear to be poor water quality and barriers such as weirs. Twaite Shad are known from the Slaney, Barrow, Nore and Suir but it is apparently only in the lower river Barrow that a large spawning population congregates each year in May which, if we were to believe folklore, is attributed to the patron saint of the area who gives his name to the village of St. Mullins. (Information courtesy of John Lucey, EPA)

### ***Tall Ships Waterford***

Early July saw the wonderful sight of the Tall Ships enter Waterford Estuary. It was a massive event for the region and indeed the entire country and attracted an estimated 380,000 visitors. Many members of the Barrow Steering group were heavily involved in organising this great event.



The 113 metre Russian tall ship off Ballyhack (Courtesy of D Mc Inerney SRFB)



**Water Framework Directive  
South Eastern River Basin District**

Last year, this newsletter introduced its readers to the Water Framework Directive and the South Eastern River Basin District project. The Project is the instrument for the delivery of the Directive’s objectives in the South East of Ireland encompassing the Barrow, Suir, Nore and Slaney catchments, along with smaller basins in the coastal areas of Wexford and Waterford. Now over five years since its coming into force, Ireland continues to make strides towards a ‘catchment’ approach to water quality management with the aim of achieving ‘good’ status by 2015 and preventing any deterioration of existing water status.

Ireland has so-far met the deadlines set by the Directive, firstly with the transposition of the directive into Irish law by December 2003 through the Water Policy Regulations (S.I. No. 722 of 2003), and more recently by the successful delivery of the Article 5 Characterisation Report to the European Commission in Brussels (March 2005). Ireland was one of only six Member States to meet the deadline for delivery of this report.

**Characterisation and Risk**

The Article 5 Characterisation Report summarises the outcome of a “risk assessment” exercise that was completed by December 2004. This exercise sought, through nationally agreed approaches, to provide a measure of the pressures on each water body. Pressure categories such as water abstraction and flow regulation, morphological alterations, point source pollution and diffuse source pollution were examined. Each pressure was quantified using nationally available datasets and assessed against thresholds. These thresholds were used as the cut-off differentiating between water bodies that might be ‘at risk’ or ‘not at risk’. Other assessments conducted examined known records of Alien Species pressures, fishing and aquaculture pressures and risks to bathing waters compliance. Impact data

were also examined to compare the predictive ‘threshold’ approach against data gathered by the EPA, Local Authority, Marine Institute and other monitoring on water quality. This is not a once-off task. It is iterative in nature and will be subject to review as new information becomes available. But what does ‘risk’ mean?

A water body identified as being ‘at risk’ is one that, following an examination of the pressures by known impact, is deemed to be ‘at risk’ of not achieving the target of ‘good’ status’ set by the Directive, or ‘at risk’ of undergoing a deterioration in status. A four-class risk classification scheme was applied using the following terminology:

<b>2b</b>	<b>2a</b>	<b>1b</b>	<b>1a</b>
<b>Not at risk</b>	<b>Probably not at risk</b>	<b>Probably at risk</b>	<b>At risk</b>

Every water body in the country, across river, lake, transitional, coastal, and groundwater categories is now assessed according to this risk scheme. In the SERBD 71.5% of ground water bodies, 83.3% river water bodies, 58.3% of lake water bodies, 85.7% of transitional and 66.7% of coastal water bodies were found to be in the 1a and 1b categories. Summary figures and maps were compiled for each RBD and submitted to Europe in the form of the Article 5 Characterisation Report. Nationally, the dominant influences placing river water bodies at risk were impact data, point and diffuse pollution pressures and morphological pressures. Hydrological pressures resulted in the identification of only a small number of river water bodies at risk. In the SERBD, 83.3% of the number of river water bodies covering over 80% of the area of river water bodies in the district were identified as being in the either at risk or probably at risk categories. Diffuse pressures were the dominant influence on the overall numbers of water bodies at risk (1a).

Due to the creation of new water bodies and the physical alterations to existing water bodies in the past (e.g. construction of canals, ports, flood protection structures, navigation channels, etc.) seven provisional Artificial Water Bodies (pAWB) and four provisional Heavily Modified Water Bodies (pHMWB) have been identified as part of the risk assessment. Further investigation will be required to validate if these provisional designations are warranted or indeed justified within the rules of the Directive. Where this is the case, appropriate environmental quality objectives will be developed for these water bodies in keeping with their current physical nature.



Bagenalstown Lock (Courtesy L Scott, NPWS)

Other risk assessments in the SERBD have included: the detection of eight aquatic invasive alien faunal and floral species, the identification of several significant commercial fisheries activities and breaches of bathing water compliances at two designated beaches. All of these will require further investigation.

### **What comes next?**

The results of the Characterisation exercise provide the SERBD project, Local Authorities and stakeholders with information on where further investigations and measures should be focussed next. This phase of more detailed study is known as 'Further Characterisation' and its objective is to confirm with confidence whether or not a water body is truly at risk. Where risk is confirmed, it will be addressed by measures that will be responsive to the specific pressures acting on it.

### **Public Participation**

Public participation remains a key element of the implementation of the Directive through all phases of the SERBD Project's work. The SERBD Project has been proactive since 2002 in encouraging public participation culminating in the establishment of a sectoral interest group Network which currently liaises with the project River Basin Management Group. Public participation in river basin management will be given a more solid basis with the establishment of statutory River Basin District Advisory Councils in all national River Basin Districts by the end of 2005. As the work of the SERBD project proceeds towards the development and implementation of a Programme of Measures, public participation will become more active.

The Article 5 characterisation report is available at [www.wfdireland.ie](http://www.wfdireland.ie) and an SERBD summary report specific to the region will be available on [www.serbd.com](http://www.serbd.com) in the coming months.

For further Information please contact -

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*Catchment Management Related Work by the Steering Group Partners  
on the Barrow*

**Laois County Council - Agricultural Awareness Campaign**

The Environment Section of Laois County Council in conjunction with its partners in the Phosphorous measures committee published a series of themed articles in the local papers entitled 'Cleaner Waterways Through Good Farming Practice'. The Phosphorous measures committee contains representatives from various sectors which interact with the water environment and therefore who play a role in achieving the targets of the Phosphorous Regulations. The agricultural community was targeted as the most important public sector in protecting water quality in County Laois. Each of the committee's members published an article. The following

members each published an article; the Southern Regional Fisheries Board, Teagasc, the EPA, the IFA and Laois County Council.

**Irish Sugar Carlow Sugar Factory Closure**

Irish Sugar Carlow finished its final beet campaign early in 2005. The Factory closure is being blamed on sugar reform policies and international competition and will be a significant loss to the local community. The Sugar factory was intimately associated with Carlow and the surrounding counties and was one of the few heavy industries in the Barrow catchment. The Irish Sugar Factory in Carlow was represented on the Barrow



An aerial photograph of the River Barrow at Dunrally Bridge (Photo courtesy of Martin O Grady, CFB)

Steering Group since its inception by Mr. John O' Donovan. Mr. O Donovan was an active member of the Steering Group and made a very positive contribution to the group.

The **Southern Regional Fisheries Board** continued to provide a significant protection force on our many rivers, streams, estuaries and at sea. Many of the staff were also involved in stock assessment work in conjunction with the **Central Fisheries Board**. The biggest stock assessment survey this summer is focused on the main channel of the river Suir and is using special large scale electrofishing equipment. A special survey of Bream is currently being undertaken in the River Barrow. This survey is using acoustic tracking equipment to establish patterns of movement. A significant Lamprey stock assessment in the Barrow catchment was undertaken last year by the Central and Southern Fisheries Board on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The results of these assessments should make interesting reading.

An interesting project assessing the viability of the river Owenass for spawning salmon above an artificial impoundment was undertaken by Mr. PJ Doran (SRFB officer and recent graduate of the Fisheries Management course in Sligo IT). The project concluded that there would be limited benefit from providing fish passage above the artificial impoundment as there is limited suitable salmon spawning grounds above the impoundment and the bedrock itself creates natural barriers to fish movement. The bedrock forms many beautiful waterfalls which add to the aesthetic beauty of this valuable river. It was concluded that the impoundment benefits the river in acting as a sediment trap and also helps sustain a unique Trout population above the impoundment.



Waterfall in the upper River Owenass (Courtesy of PJ Doran, SRFB)

### ***The Barrow / Nore rivers SAC (002162) - NPWS Site Synopsis:***

The Barrow/Nore River catchments consist of these main rivers and approximately 15 tributaries. The site is 195 km in length. The rivers flow through the counties of Laois, Kilkenny, Waterford, Carlow and Wexford before entering Waterford Harbour. The area is significant for a number of reasons. It contains small though very important examples of two priority habitats, Alluvial Forest and Floating River Vegetation. Otter, Salmon, Brook Lamprey and Freshwater Pearl Mussel are all listed species in the directive present on the site. The population of mussel is thought to be nationally important, and this is one of only three spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad. The EU Habitats Directive Annex II plant species, Killarney Fern, also occurs within the site.

The site is of ornithological importance for a number of EU Birds Directive Annex I species including Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Whooper Swan, Bewick Swan, Peregrine and Kingfisher. Nationally important numbers of Golden

## WORKING TOWARDS A FISH FRIENDLY SUSTAINABLE BARROW CATCHMENT ECOSYSTEM

Plover are found during the winter.

Borris Demesne contains a very good example of a semi-natural broad-leaved woodland in very good condition. There is quite a high degree of natural regeneration of Oak and Ash through the woodland. At the northern end of the estate Oak species predominate. Drummond Wood, also on the Barrow, consists of three blocks of deciduous woods situated on steep slopes above the river. The deciduous trees are mostly Oak species. The woods have a well established understorey of Holly, and the herb layer is varied, with Brambles abundant. Whitebeam has also been recorded.



Photograph showing snorkelers undertaking Margatifera survey (Courtesy of L Scott NPWS)

Floating River Vegetation is well represented in the Barrow and in the many tributaries of the site. In the Barrow the species found include Water Starworts, Canadian Pondweed, Broad-leaved Pondweed and Crowfoots. Dry Heath at the site occurs in pockets along the steep valley sides of the rivers especially in the Barrow Valley and along

the Barrow tributaries where they occur in the foothills of the Blackstairs Mountains. The dry heath vegetation along the slopes of the river bank consists of Bracken and Gorse species with patches of acidic grassland vegetation.



Photograph of Swan with Signets (Courtesy of L Scott, NPWS)

Other habitats at the site include wet grassland, marsh, reed swamp, improved grassland, coniferous plantations, deciduous woodland, scrub, ponds, tidal river, shingle shore and mudflats.

The water quality of the site remains vulnerable. Good quality water is necessary to maintain the populations of the Annex II species listed above. Good quality is dependent on controlling fertilisation of the grasslands. It also requires that sewage be properly treated before discharge. Drainage activities in the catchment can lead to flash floods which can damage the many Annex II species present. Land reclamation also poses a threat to the salt meadows and the populations of legally protected species therein. (Article courtesy of L Scott, National Parks and Wildlife Service)

## *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Southern Regional Fisheries Board*



Staff of the Southern Regional Fisheries Board celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central and Regional Fisheries Boards in Cavan (Photo courtesy of S Campion, SRFB)

Seven Regional Fisheries Boards and the Central Fisheries Board were established following the enactment of the Fisheries Act 1980. The Regional Fisheries Boards replaced the 17 Board of Conservators and in the case of the Southern Region incorporated the former Waterford and Lismore Fisheries Districts. Whereas the Waterford and Lismore Boards of Conservators concentrated primarily on fisheries protection, water pollution control and the operation of salmon hatcheries at Mallow and Inistioge, since 1980 there has been a broader approach with particular emphasis on habitat development and protection and a proactive approach taken in dealing with the many new pressures on the fisheries environment, e.g. housing development and inadequate sewage treatment infrastructure, new road projects, forestry developments, etc.

In the 25 years since the formation of the Central and Regional Board's there have been many significant changes. The Board's are now equipped with modern rigid inflatable patrol vessels, with solid hull boats capable of extended patrolling at sea, and with a range of smaller boats and equipment suitable for use on inland waters. Assistance with patrolling is

provided by the Naval Service, Aer Corp and Gardai. New and improved electro-fishing equipment means the Boards are now able to undertake fish stock assessments in a wide range of waters, and there is significant emphasis on staff training and development. Availing of grant assistance under various EC and Government funded initiatives, the Boards have undertaken extensive in-stream fisheries rehabilitation works throughout the country. There continues to be priority attention given to protection of atlantic salmon stocks, and using a combination of management tools including a system of tags and quotas, the Boards are to the forefront in attempts to protect this species of international importance which is under severe pressure from many quarters.

### **Membership**

The Barrow Steering Group includes representatives of the following organisations:

- € An Taisce (National Trust for Ireland)
- € Barrow Catchment Management Committee, representing angling clubs and Snapnet Fishermens' Association
- € Barrow Drainage Board
- € Barrow Nore Suir Rural Developments
- € Bord na Móna
- € Carlow County Council
- € Carlow Institute of Technology
- € Carlow LEADER
- € EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
- € Inland Waterways Association, Barrow Branch
- € Irish Farmers Association (IFA)
- € Irish Sugar PLC
- € Kildare County Council
- € Kilkenny County Council
- € Laois County Council
- € National Salmon Commission
- € Offaly County Council
- € South East Regional Tourism (SERTA)
- € South East Regional Authority
- € Southern Regional Fisheries Board
- € Teagasc
- € Waterways Ireland
- € Wexford County Council

BARROW NEWS is published by the Southern Regional Fisheries Board on behalf of the Barrow Steering Group. You can contact us in Clonmel at Phone: 052-80055 or Fax: 052-23971 or [www.srfb.ie](http://www.srfb.ie) Email: [barrowcatchment@srfb.ie](mailto:barrowcatchment@srfb.ie)