

# Advice and Regulations

Loughs Agency has a range of statutory functions which it carries out in accordance with [primary legislation](#). The key legislative provisions for the Foyle and Carlingford areas are the Foyle Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1952 and the Foyle Fisheries Act, 1952. These set out Loughs Agency's enforcement powers.

Under the Foyle Fisheries Acts, Loughs Agency also has the authority to make [secondary legislation](#). This wide-ranging power is used to enhance and conserve the Foyle and Carlingford fisheries.

## Conditions of Issue – Game Licence

1. Licence holders are required by law to tag all wild salmon caught and of retainable length (25.4cm and over), immediately on landing the fish. Licence holders are required by law to tag all sea trout over 40cm in length caught and retained, immediately on landing the fish. All salmon over 25.4cm and all sea trout over 40cm in length which are retained shall be tagged with an appropriate gill tag (blue gill tags during the period 1st March to 31st May, both dates inclusive, black gill tags from 1st June to the end of the season). No salmon, sea trout, or brown trout of less than 25.4cm (10 inches) may be retained.
2. A maximum bag limit of 4 brown trout, or sea trout of 40cm or less in length, or a combination of both on any one day during the period 1st March to 31st October, both dates inclusive. These limits apply to all waters in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments, and may be subject to amendment during the season. (See below for river specific season dates).
3. It is prohibited to kill eels and coarse fish (except pike to which a bag limit applies).
4. Possession of a licence confers no right of fishing in any place whatsoever which the holder does not enjoy in law. Loughs Agency reserves the right to suspend, by regulation, fishing for any period necessary for the conservation of stocks. Anglers should ascertain whether any suspension is in force before fishing any particular river.
5. Prawn, shrimp and live fish are prohibited bait in the Foyle and Carlingford areas.
6. The law requires that you shall furnish a return of catches of salmon and sea trout to Loughs Agency within 21 days of the end of the period to which your licence relates, along with all unused tags issued to this licence. Catch returns should be made online using the online logbook. If no fish are caught a nil return should be made.
7. The law requires that you produce proof of your licence on demand to any Fishery Officer, member of the police or Private River Watcher.
8. A permit may be required along with your licence to fish in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. Anglers should establish if a permit is required prior to fishing.

## Conditions of Issue – Coarse Licence

1. A coarse licence is issued by Loughs Agency Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission as an authority to fish. Possession confers no right of fishing in any place whatsoever which the holder does not enjoy in law. The holder must ensure they have the necessary permission to fish in any particular waters.
2. Any salmon, sea trout brown trout or rainbow trout inadvertently caught must be returned immediately to the waters from which they were taken.
3. It is prohibited to kill eels and coarse fish (except pike). Eels and all coarse fish (except pike) caught must be carefully handled and returned alive and unharmed to the water. Anglers are requested to follow Loughs Agency's catch and release guidance.
4. Pike: A bag limit of 2 pike, each weighing less than 4kgs, on any one day. \*All pike weighing 4kgs or more and any pike caught in excess of the bag limit must be returned immediately to the water without avoidable injury.
5. Exception for specimen pike. A bag limit of 1 specimen pike in any one day may be retained. A specimen pike in a river is 9kgs or more and in a lake 13.6kgs or more. Note that this provision allows one specimen pike to be retained in addition to the daily bag limit for the pike of 4kgs or less.
6. The law requires that you produce proof of your licence on demand to any Fishery Officer, member of the police or Private River Watcher.
7. A permit may be required along with your licence to fish in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. Anglers should establish if a permit is required prior to fishing.



# Angling Season

1. The River Foyle, Lough Foyle, the River Finn its lakes and tributaries; the 1st day of March to 15th day of September, both days inclusive.
2. All remaining rivers in the Foyle area the 1st day April to 20th day of October, both days inclusive.
3. All remaining lakes or loughs in the Foyle area except Binevenagh; the 1st day of March to the 20th day of October, both days inclusive. Binevenagh: 1st day of February to the 31st day of December, both days inclusive. Note: excludes private fisheries open all year round.
4. Angling Clubs and Associations who have leased the fishing rights of rivers within the Foyle area and Carlingford area may impose an opening date for angling later than 1st.
5. The game angling season in the Carlingford area runs from the 1st day of March to the 31st day of October (both days inclusive). This applies to Carlingford Lough, most rivers in the catchment and some lakes such as Loughbrickland and McCourts Lake. The Whitewater River opens 1st June and closes 31st October. Donaghaguy Lake and Drumlough are designated Rainbow Trout fisheries and remain open all year round. Other still water fisheries such as Camlough lake, Bessbrook Pond and Newry Canal remain open all year round for coarse angling.

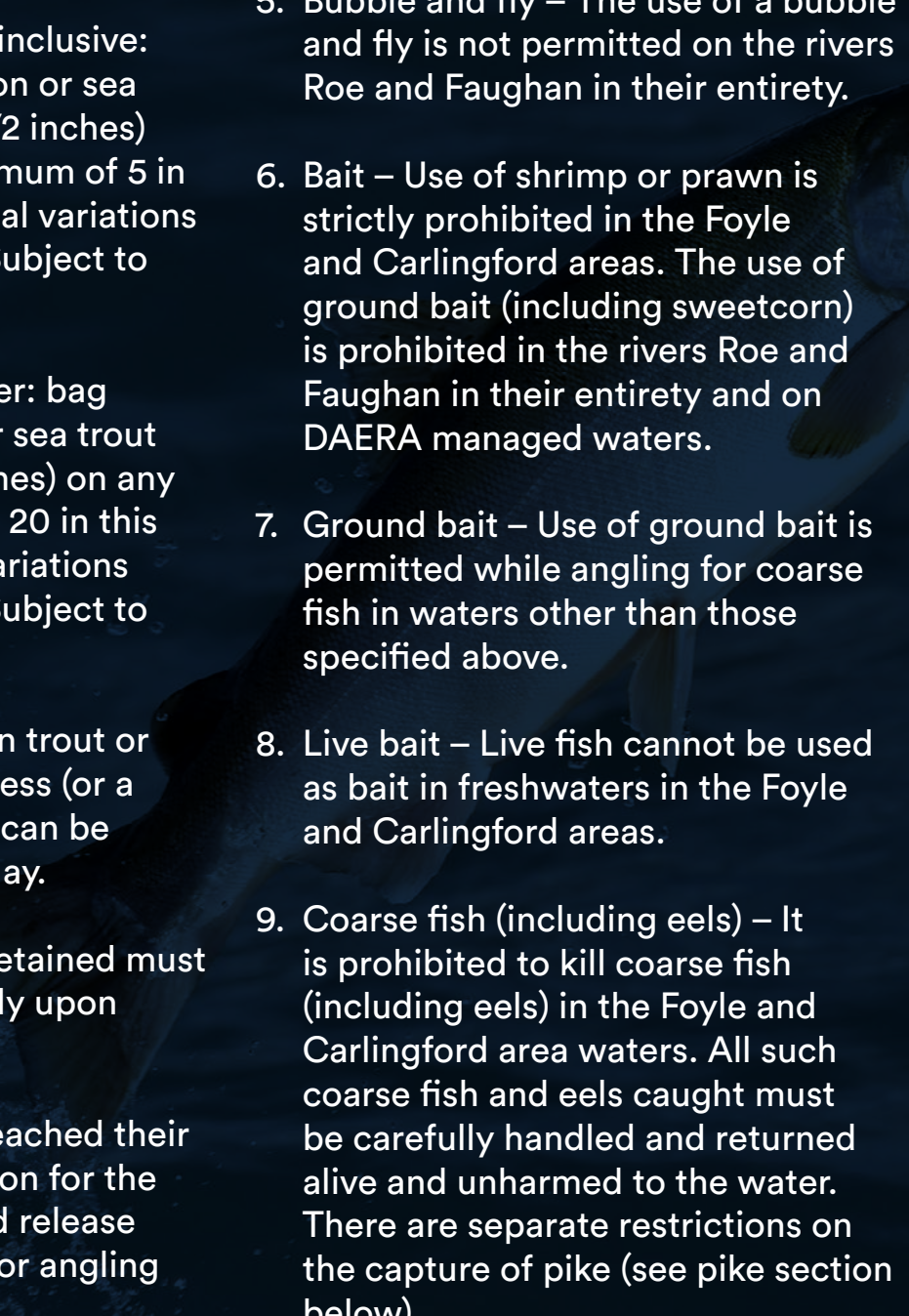
*NOTE: Angling may be suspended by regulation during the season. Loughs Agency may need to share a minimal amount of information with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Inland Fisheries Ireland for the purpose of licence validation when purchasing an endorsement.*

## Catch and Release Advice

Where an angler takes any salmon, sea trout or brown trout of less than the minimum length, or in excess of the maximum numbers specified by regulation such fish shall be returned to the water without avoidable injury. An angler should make every effort to return the fish alive to the water. If this is unsuccessful, the fish must be tagged and Loughs Agency informed immediately. As soon as practicable, the fish must be surrendered to Loughs Agency, whereupon a replacement tag will be issued. If an angler has no tags available and is unsuccessful in releasing a fish, the fish must be returned to the waters from which it was caught immediately. It must not be retained by the angler. Anglers are requested to release fish without handling or removing them from water. Where an angler retains the daily bag limit, period bag limit, or annual bag limit, angling is permitted only with a single barbless hook with a gape of 12mm or less. In this situation the use of earthworms as bait, is prohibited.



# General Guidance

1. Bag limits – Please be aware that the following bag limits are subject to tagging restrictions. Loughs Agency will periodically review the number of tags issued to anglers and all anglers should ensure compliance with tagging provisions. If Loughs Agency have reduced the number of tags for a season to below the bag limit level then anglers must ensure that no more fish than those that can be tagged are retained.
    - 1st March – 31st May inclusive: bag limit of one salmon or sea trout over 40cm (15 1/2 inches) on any one day; maximum of 5 in this period. Note: local variations to the season apply. Subject to tagging restrictions.
    - 1st June – 31st October: bag limit of two salmon or sea trout over 40cm (15 1/2 inches) on any one day; maximum of 20 in this period. Note: local variations to the season apply. Subject to tagging restrictions.
    - No more than 4 brown trout or sea trout of 40cm or less (or a combination of both) can be retained on any one day.
    - All fish which are to be retained must be tagged immediately upon capture.
    - Once an angler has reached their maximum tag allocation for the season only catch and release angling is permitted for angling activity after this.
  2. Sale of rod caught fish – A person shall not sell or offer for sale salmon or sea trout caught by rod and line.
  3. Anglers are requested to return gently to the water any gravid hen salmon or sea trout they catch.
  4. Float – No use of a float with bait is permitted for game fishing on any waters in the Foyle area, other than in conjunction with a single artificial fly (see entry on bubble and fly below).
  5. Bubble and fly – The use of a bubble and fly is not permitted on the rivers Roe and Faughan in their entirety.
  6. Bait – Use of shrimp or prawn is strictly prohibited in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. The use of ground bait (including sweetcorn) is prohibited in the rivers Roe and Faughan in their entirety and on DAERA managed waters.
  7. Ground bait – Use of ground bait is permitted while angling for coarse fish in waters other than those specified above.
  8. Live bait – Live fish cannot be used as bait in freshwaters in the Foyle and Carlingford areas.
  9. Coarse fish (including eels) – It is prohibited to kill coarse fish (including eels) in the Foyle and Carlingford area waters. All such coarse fish and eels caught must be carefully handled and returned alive and unharmed to the water. There are separate restrictions on the capture of pike (see pike section below).
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10. Char – It is prohibited to kill char in the Foyle and Carlingford area waters.
11. Smelt, shad and lamprey – In the interests of conservation, anglers are urged to return fish of these species to the water unharmed.
12. Pike – There is a bag limit of 2 pike weighing 4kg or less, on any one day. Pike of 4kg or more must be returned unharmed to the water. There is an exception for specimen pike with a bag limit of 1 specimen pike in any one day (a specimen pike in a river is 9kg or more; a specimen pike in a lake is 13.6kg or more). However, anglers are encouraged to return pike to the water unharmed. These regulations may change imminently – check situation.
13. Bass – Loughs Agency plans to introduce a regulation that will make bass catch and release only.
14. Tope – Loughs Agency plans to introduce a regulation to prohibit the killing of tope.
15. Weirs – There is a general prohibition of angling within 5 metres of any weir in the Foyle and Carlingford areas. This distance may be extended locally. For instance, at Sion Mills, Omagh and elsewhere – check locally.
16. Rivers Foyle & Finn – For conservation reasons, the rivers Finn and Foyle have been declared catch and release – single barbless hooks must be used and all fish (trout, sea trout and salmon) must be returned to the water unharmed.

# Tagging Requirements

Size	Salmon	Sea Trout	Brown Trout	Rainbow Trout	All coarse fish species*
Less than 25.4cm	Cannot retain this size of fish	Cannot retain this size of fish	Cannot retain this size of fish	Can retain without tag	May not retain
25.4cm to 40cm	Tag required	Can retain without tag	Can retain without tag	Can retain without tag	May not retain
More than 40cm	Tag required	Tag required	Can retain without tag	Can retain without tag	May not retain