



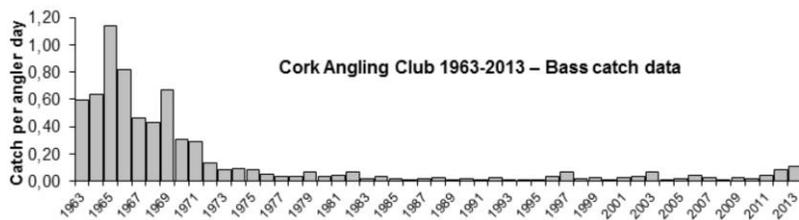
This presentation is a brief overview of current bass management in Ireland and some information on features of the recreational angling fishery

## Management milestones

**1990**  
Commercial fishery closed  
Recreational angling fishery only



1963  2017



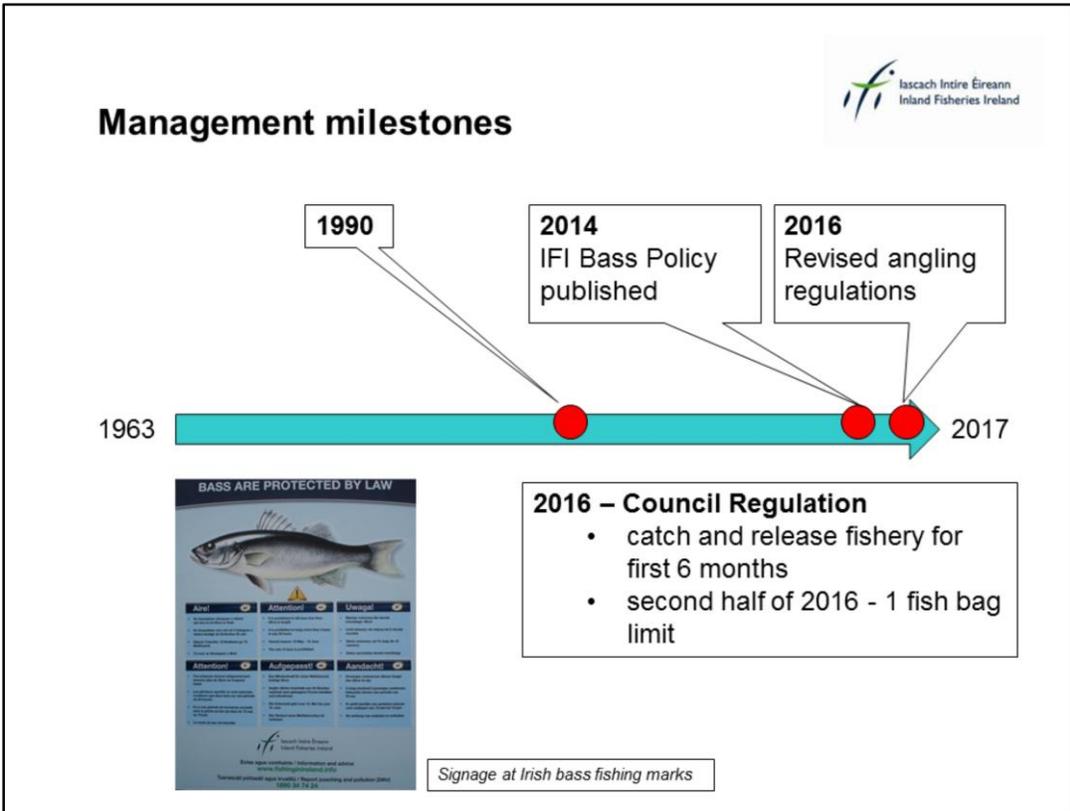
The steep decline in bass stocks in Ireland arising from overexploitation of this long-lived, slow-growing and late-maturing species, which first became evident in the mid-1970s, was evidenced by consistently low catches in the renowned Irish recreational bass fishery. The decline led to the cessation of the commercial fishery in 1990 to conserve stocks through the Bass (Conservation of Stocks) Order, 1990 and subsequently to a heavily regulated recreational angling fishery.

## 1990 - Bass legislation

- Commercial fishing for bass prohibited
- Angling fishery only
  - *Angling - Bag limit of 2 fish per day*
  - *Minimum overall size limit of 40cm*
  - *15th May - 15th June closed season*
- No sale of bass (other than imported bass)
- Managed as an angling species & only marine fish species in Irish waters managed for angling



Ireland is located at north-western extremity of bass distribution in Europe and the recreational bass angling fishery is mainly conducted along the south west, south and eastern coastline. Since 1990 Ireland has adopted a conservative management approach where a heavily restricted recreational angling fishery is the only legal method to exploit the stock. Management has concentrated on measures to conserve the stock. Bass are now considered solely as a recreational angling species. Internationally this management strategy has been referenced as a good model.



IFI published a bass policy discussion document in 2014. In 2015 the EU introduced the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) of 42 cm which was implemented unilaterally in Ireland in 2016. The 2016 EU catch limit measures (catch and releases and 1 fish bag limit) were implemented in Ireland in 2016.

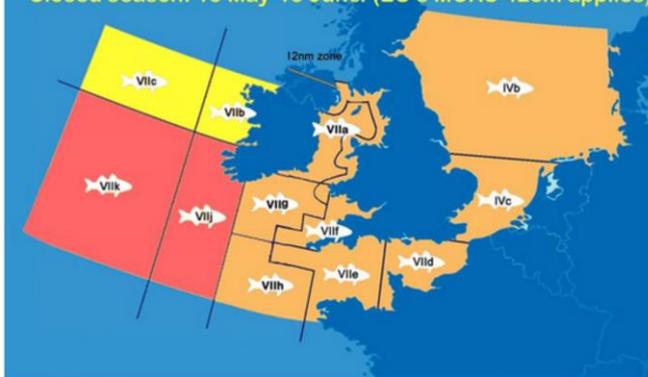
## Recreational bass fisheries 2016

**All year:**  
**Art 10(6b): One bass bag limit in areas VIIj and VIIk**

**1st half 2016:**  
**Art 10(5): Catch-and-release in orange area.**

**2nd half 2016:**  
**Art 10(6a): One bass bag limit in orange area**

**Areas VIIb and VIIc:** Recr. fishing regulated by Ireland:  
 At present, a bag limit of 2 bass per recreational fisher/day.  
 Closed season: 15 May-15 June. (EU's MCRS 42cm applies)

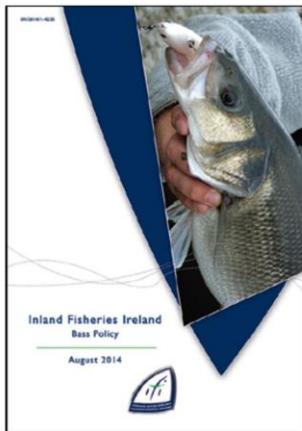


Prepared by the EAA



In Ireland in 2016 three different bass regulation measures were applied depending on recreational fishery location. The 42 cm Minimum Landing Size was applied unilaterally.

## 2014 – IFI Bass Policy Recommendations



- *Aim: to conserve and protect bass and their aquatic habitat and facilitate long term sustainable economic and social benefit for Ireland*
- *Develop recommendations to contribute to development of national policy advice*
- *Four policy areas:*
  - *Management/Legislation*
    - **Increased Minimum Landing Size**
    - **Reduced Daily Bag Limit**
    - **Review Bass Closed Season**
    - **No-kill zones**
  - *Fisheries Protection/Conservation*
  - *Stock Assessment*
  - *Education/Awareness*

<http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/policies/453-inland-fisheries-ireland-bass-policy>

### **IFI's Bass Policy developed recommendations to contribute to the development of national policy advice. Four policy areas:**

**Management goal** – *to manage sustainably to maximise potential contribution of bass to the Irish economy* - lack of data for sustainable management justifies **precautionary approach** and the requirement to continue with management *status quo* for Irish bass stocks. A management target is to restore levels of abundance to those observed in the 1960s. Amendments to legislation recommended: increased MLS from 40 to 50 cm to allow all bass to spawn at least once; reduced daily bag limit from 2 to 1 fish; review of current bass close season and investigation of potential no-kill zones for bass. Assessing the socio-economic value of bass to the Irish economy identified as an important.

**Protection/Conservation goal** *Bass and its habitat will be protected and conserved, under the existing and any revised legislative framework, in a manner which maximises sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits to all stakeholders.*

**Stock assessment goal** *Sustainable bass management will be underpinned by a regular bass stock assessment programme which will include monitoring and research (stock definition, stock size and ecology in Irish waters), identification of priority habitat and a Bass Angler Catch Census Scheme (Voluntary).*

**Education/Promotion/Communication goal** *The economic, environmental and social benefits of sustainable bass stocks will be effectively communicated.* Best value to the economy will be achieved by recreational bass angling tourism. Stakeholders and the wider public should be informed of the economic, health and social benefits of the existing bass recreational angling fishery and the potential which could be derived from an abundant bass stock supporting a well-managed recreational fishery. Education and enforcement programs should focus on encouraging positive changes in public attitudes towards developing a stronger

conservation ethos. Encourage/support development of local bass information networks -  
stewardship

## Recreational Angling Fishery



Year of study	No bass retained per annum	% of total catch released	
2011	2 (median)	77%	Limited DCF pilot study
2016	3.28 (mean)	86%	On-line survey

- *High levels of catch and release*
- *Very low harvest*

Catch & catch and release (C&R) data have been collected by Inland Fisheries Ireland from limited surveys carried out in 2011 and 2016. The available data and show a level of consistency. Retention of bass is low, at approximately 3 fish per angler per annum, with about 80% of fish being released.

## Bass: Socio-economic assessment

- **Recreational fishery** – iconic species with high social value; high value of rod-caught bass; value of ‘specimen’ bass
- **Reared bass** – graded ‘pan-sized’ fish exported within Europe; available year round; popular with consumers

Estimated value of bass fishery per annum	Irish anglers	Overseas anglers
No. participants	13,000	22,500
Gross spend	€31 million	€21 million
Combined gross spend	€52 million	
Total spend (inc multipliers)	€71 million	



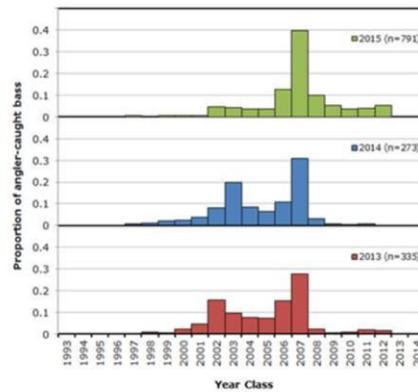
<http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/socio-economics/531-the-economic-contribution-of-bass-and-sea-angling-in-ireland>

Sea angling, in general, can provide an important and sustainable source of income for both the catering and accommodation service providers in rural and urban coastal communities. Recreational angling has the ability to attract anglers at times outside of the main tourist seasons; the shoulder periods of March through May and again from mid-August through to October provide some of the best angling in Ireland and, as a consequence of this, they are the most popular angling months. These shoulder periods can help to extend the traditional tourist season for both accommodation and service providers with the potential to also provide increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within these communities. Bass contributes approximately 9% of total annual recreational angling revenue to Ireland.

## Scientific assessment to support management - National Bass Conservation Research Programme



- Characterise bass populations in Irish waters & assess status
- Stock assessment (juvenile, pre-adult and adult), ecological investigations, stock identification (genetic study) and migration studies
- Establish repeatable sampling programmes targeting key life stages providing time-series data for stock assessments



IFI's Bass Conservation Research Programme is being undertaken to provide scientific advice to support the conservation and protection of bass and their aquatic habitat whilst also facilitating long-term sustainable social and economic value for all stakeholders. The programme has been developed to determine the status of bass stocks and to improve understanding of their ecology and biology in Ireland for the long-term sustainability of this valuable species. This research programme is supported by bass anglers using a Citizen Science approach to provide catch data and samples (scale samples, fish size data and catch return data). These data are important to IFI's national programme which aims to provide information for the required advice refinements identified by ICES (2015) including management plan development, reduced fishing mortality and data on catch and release survival. Ireland has had a restrictive management policy in place since the 1990s and recent policy change recommendations made by IFI are designed to minimise recreational fishing mortality further.