



Salmonid Good Handling

Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out good practice for handling and release of salmonids (Atlantic salmon [*Salmo salar*] or sea trout [*Salmo trutta*]) to minimise the risk of damage or stress to the fish and maximise the post-capture survival rate. When fishing in the Southern IFC District, please observe the following points in the event that you catch a salmonid in a net.

Handling

The following points should be observed when removing the fish from the net:

- All handling should be kept to an absolute minimum and should be avoided where possible
- Keep the entire fish underwater for as long as possible and minimise the time that the fish is exposed to the air
- If handling is necessary, always handle the fish with wet hands to avoid removing the protective mucous
- Where possible, try to remove the fish from the net in the direction that the scales lie to minimise scale removal
- If the fish is enmeshed, the net mesh should be cut to reduce the need for handling and to allow the removal of the fish without increasing the risk of injury
- Do not lift the fish by the tail as this can damage tendons in the tail of the fish and, during spawning season, can cause reproductive sacs to rupture
- Avoid touching the gill or eye area
- Avoid placing the fish onto a hard or rough surface as this could damage the scales or remove protective mucous increasing the risk of fungal infection

Release

The following points should be observed when releasing the fish back into the water:

- Support the belly of the fish at all times, keeping it in an upright/horizontal position
- If possible, support the fish in the water, facing into the current to allow oxygen uptake by the fish's gills. This is best achieved in a location where the water is slack to enable the fisher to safely keep the fish in the water
- If possible, release the fish into deeper water where there is more oxygen present
- Hold the fish gently until it is capable of swimming away strongly, you will feel the fish start to pulse and kick when it is ready. You can move the fish gently from left to right to assist the fish
- Do not drag the fish back through the water in an attempt to pass water through the gills.
- If you release the fish and it turns belly up, quickly re-capture the fish and support it again to allow for more oxygen to be absorbed

Survival rate is greater at lower temperatures so be aware of the need to more quickly employ these steps during the summer period

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This Code of Practice (CoP) sets out good practice for handling and release of salmonids to minimise the risk of damage or stress to the fish and maximise the post-capture survival rate. These measures apply to all net fishers in the Southern IFC District.

The removal of salmonids by nets in the Southern IFC District is prohibited, except under an Environment Agency Net Limitation Order (NLO). Currently all such NLOs in the District operate catch and release practice only. The likelihood of salmonid capture in nets fishing for sea fisheries resources in the District is generally low, however unintentional interactions may occur. By following the measures set out in this Code of Practice the risk of damage or stress salmonids may be reduced, increasing the chance of post-capture survival and migratory or spawning success.

This Code of Practice was developed as part of the Southern IFCA Netting Review and has been introduced alongside statutory measures that are designed to reduce the likelihood of salmonid interactions by nets within harbour and estuarine environments. This CoP will be reviewed annually as part of the Southern IFCA Net Fishing Byelaw Monitoring and Control Plan.