



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**



DAERA Inland Fisheries 2024 Annual Report

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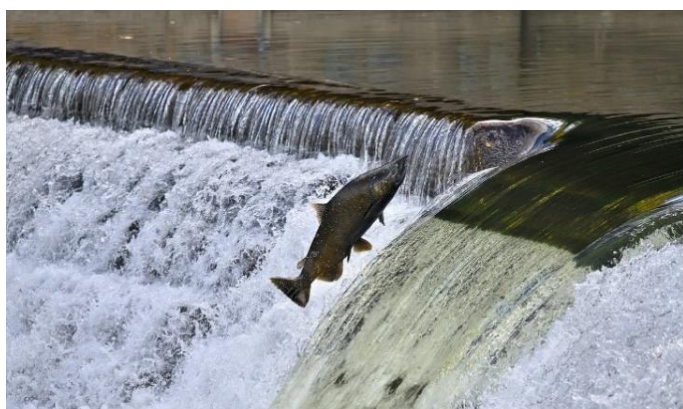
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Inland Fisheries Responsibilities

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible, under the provisions of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, for the salmon and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland. In accordance with the Fisheries Act, DAERA has powers for the supervision and protection of fisheries and for fostering the establishment and development of fisheries.

It provides advice and guidance on matters relating to the conservation, protection, development and promotion of salmon and inland fisheries (excluding the Loughs Agency areas of Foyle and Carlingford) to angling clubs, fishery owners, and a range of other water users and interested parties.



1.2 Public Angling Estate

DAERA also has the power under the Fisheries Act to acquire and improve facilities for angling for local and visiting anglers. The Inland Fisheries Branch within DAERA is responsible for the management and development of Northern Ireland's Public Angling Estate (PAE) which currently has a variety of lakes, rivers and game and coarse fisheries, where it owns or leases the fishing rights for those waters.

An annual programme of work is in place to maintain and develop facilities for anglers at these sites. There are some waters in the PAE where DAERA has management agreements in place with angling clubs or community groups to manage the fishery on their behalf.



1.3 Background

Inland Fisheries Branch is within Marine and Fisheries Division, which is part of DAERA's Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group (EMFG). The Division is responsible for managing the sustainable use of the marine environment and the promotion, protection, enhancement and sustainable use of all fish stocks, inland and at sea (including aquaculture and fish health).

The work of the Marine and Fisheries Division and the Inland Fisheries Branch contributes to the delivery of the Department's purpose *'Delivering a net zero nature positive future, supporting sustainable agriculture and thriving rural communities'*.

The eight priorities that shape the work of DAERA are provided here.

• Tackling and responding to Climate Change together in a fair and just way.

• Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.

• Strengthening environmental governance.

• Supporting sustainable, resilient and productive agri-food and fishing sectors.

• Safeguarding animal health and welfare plus plant health.

• Building strong, sustainable and diverse rural communities.

• Investing in our science and research and development capacity.

• Implementing the Windsor Framework.

2. LEGISLATION

2.1. Legislation

Under the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, DAERA is charged with the establishment, development, supervision and protection of fisheries within its jurisdiction (the Loughs Agency has regulatory authority in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments). Within DAERA, Inland Fisheries Branch is responsible for discharging those functions relating to inland fisheries. There are also several pieces of subordinate legislation which further regulate activity on such fisheries.

The principal sets are the Fisheries Regulations (N.I.) 2014, which regulate angling and commercial activity, and the Eel Fishing Regulations (N.I.) 2010, which set out requirements for commercial eel fishing (currently restricted to Lough Neagh). DAERA also manages (directly or in-directly) 89 publicly available fisheries which are governed through the Public Angling Estate (PAE) Regulations (N.I.) 2005.

Fishery Management Plans were formally adopted for Lough Neagh and Lough Erne in March 2022. These require some amendment of fisheries legislation to be fully applicable, for example, the increase in mesh sizes or changes to closed periods. An amendment of the current regulations is under development and will also include consequential updates of other regulations including change of use designations.

DAERA intends to introduce a Northern Ireland Fisheries Bill in the current mandate of the Northern Ireland Assembly. A Northern Ireland Fisheries Bill is needed to modernise and give effect to fisheries policies that are consistent with the post-EU exit fisheries management framework provided by the UK Fisheries Act 2020 and UK Joint Fisheries Statement. The UK Fisheries Act 2020 provides for eight fisheries objectives: sustainability, precautionary, ecosystem, scientific evidence, bycatch, equal access, national benefit and climate change. The UK Joint Fisheries Statement sets out high-level, strategic policies for achieving, or contributing to the achievement of, those eight fisheries objectives. DAERA is currently developing inland fisheries policies which the Northern Ireland Fisheries Bill will give effect to.

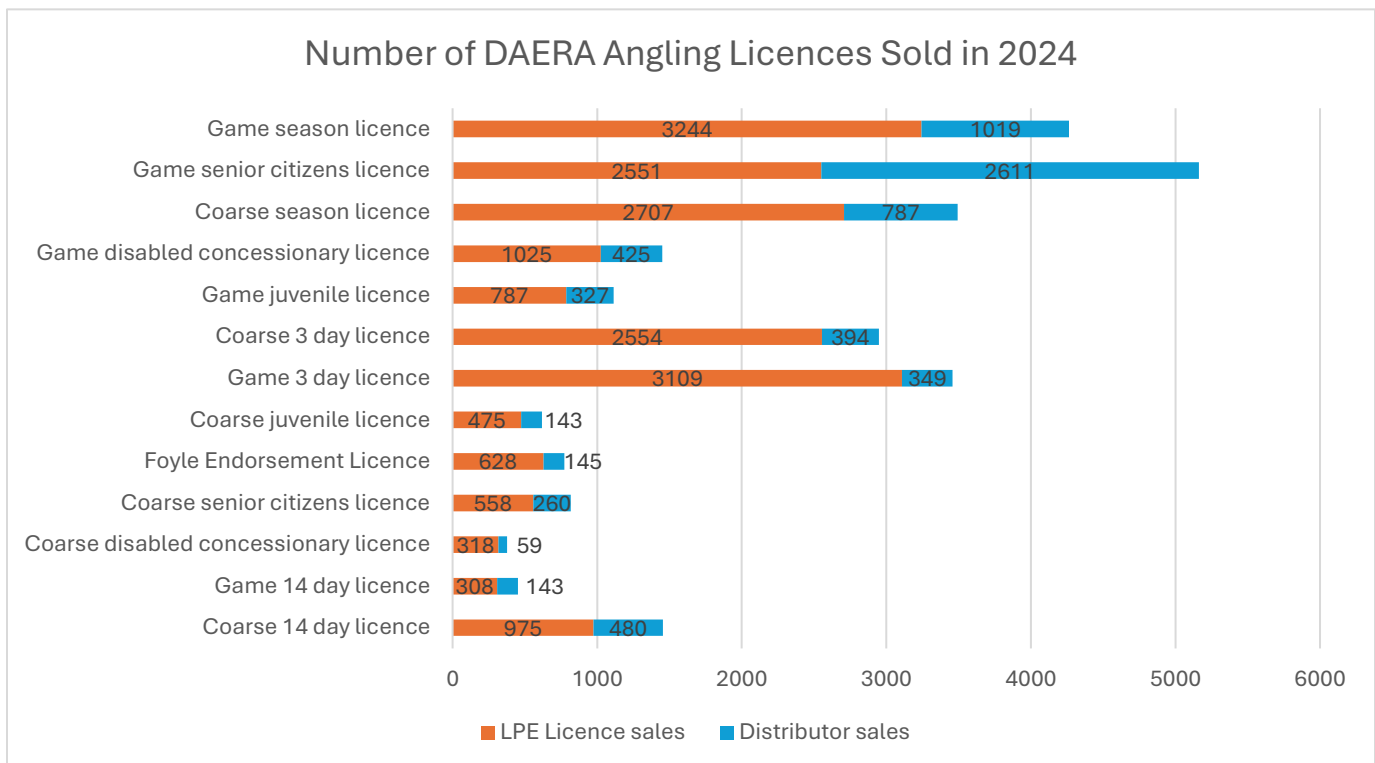
3. LICENCE & PERMITS

To fish legally in Northern Ireland you need (i) a rod licence and (ii) a permit or day ticket. The rod licence is for the fishing rod and the game or coarse fish you' ae allowed to catch. A permit or day ticket gives you the right to fish in a particular fishery.

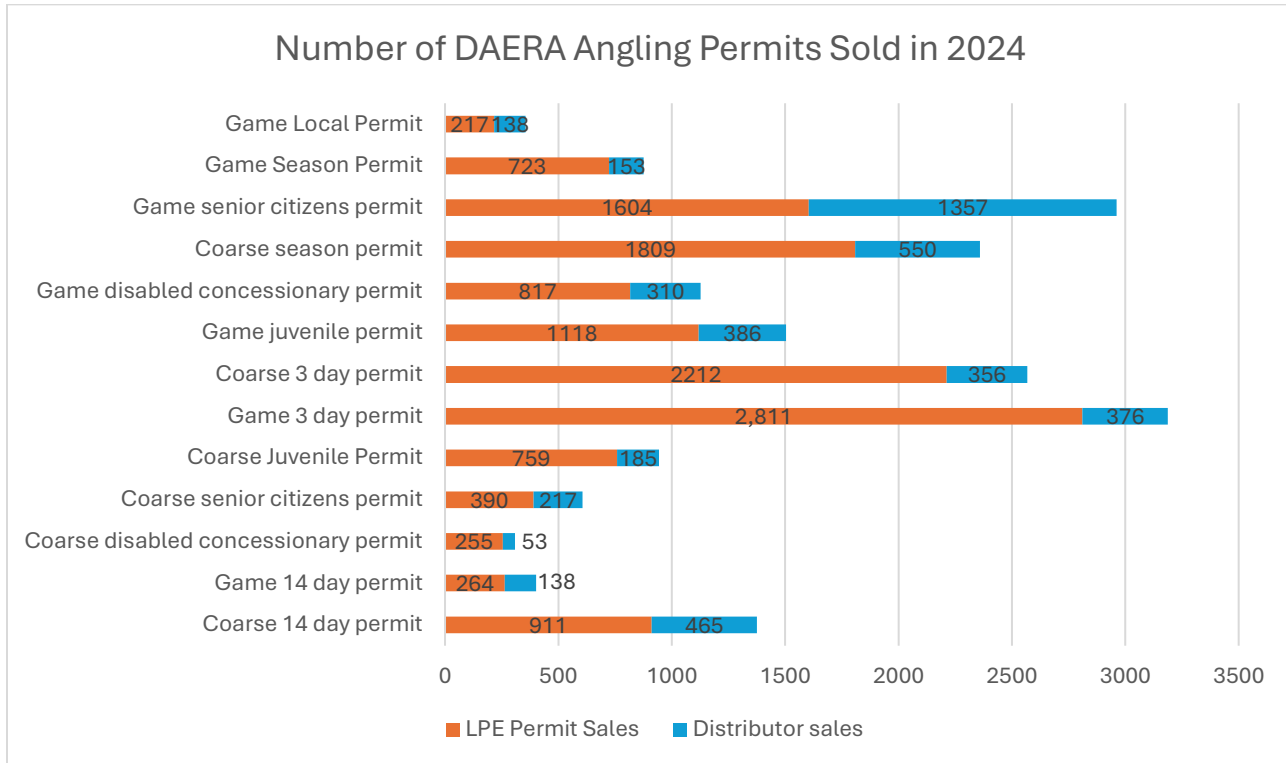
3.1 Number of DAERA angling licences and permits sold for 2021 to 2024.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Licences	27,752	26,298	26,871	26,381
Permits	20,019	19,751	19,757	18,574
Bush Tickets	857	899	1,102	997
Total	48,628	46,948	47,730	45,952

3.2 Type of DAERA angling licences sold 2024.



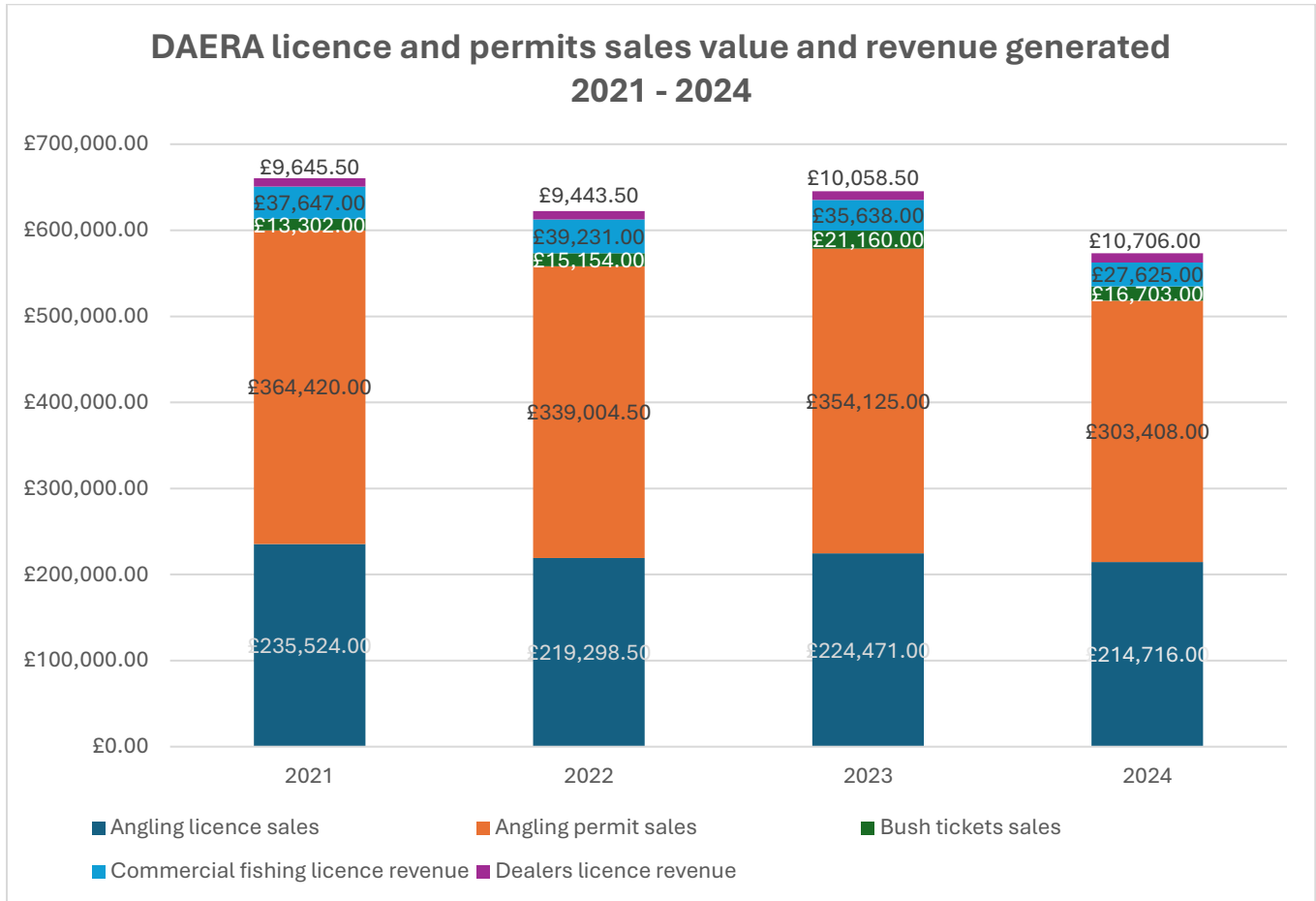
3.3 Type of DAERA angling permits sold 2024.



3.4 Total DAERA licence and permits for 2024.

	Licence	Permit	Day Ticket	Total
Game Juvenile	1,114	1,504	-	2,618
Game Season	4,263	876	-	5,139
Game Senior Citizen	5,162	2,961	-	8,123
Game Disabled	1,450	1,127	-	2,577
Game 3 day	3,458	3,187	-	6,645
Game 14 day	451	402	-	853
Sub Total	15,898	10,057	-	25,955
Coarse Juvenile	618	944	-	1,562
Coarse Season	3,494	2,359	-	5,853
Coarse Senior Citizen	818	607	-	1,425
Coarse Disabled	377	308	-	685
Coarse 3 day	2,948	2,568	-	5,516
Coarse 14 day	1,455	1,376	-	2,831
Sub Total	9,710	8,162	-	17,872
Bush Tickets	-	-	997	997
Local Area Permit	-	355	-	355
Endorsements	773	-	-	773
Total	26,381	18,574	997	45,952

3.5 DAERA licence and permits sales value and revenue generated.

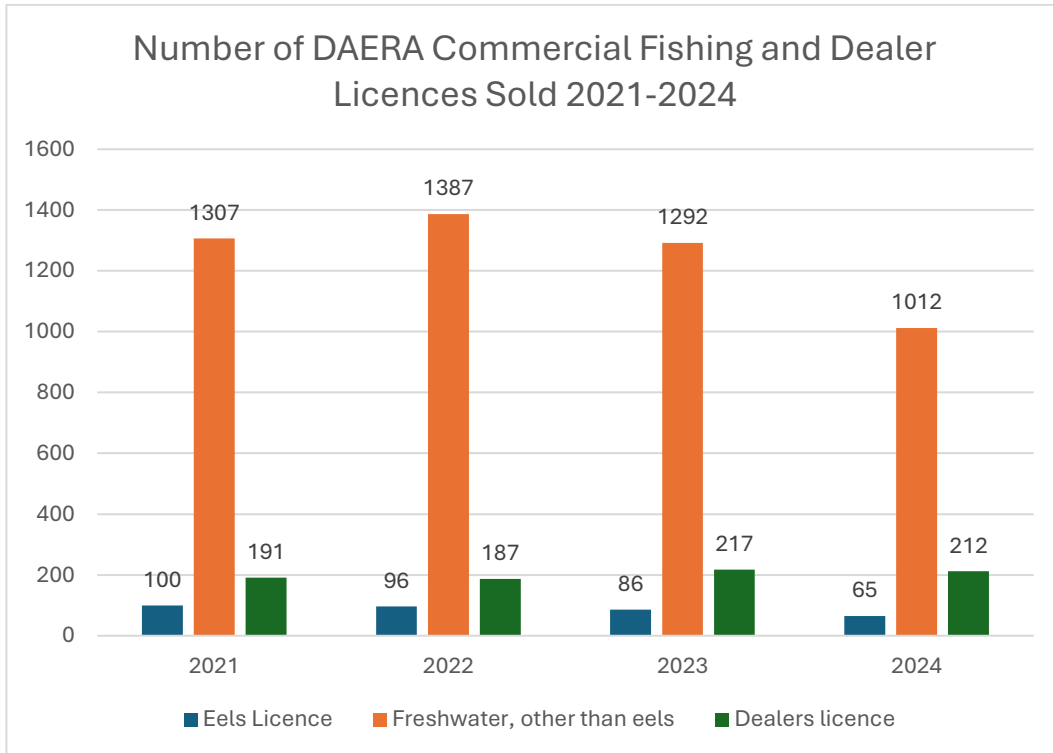


Year	2021	2022	2023	2024
Angling licence sales	£235,524.00	£219,298.50	£224,471.00	£214,716.00
Angling permit sales	£364,420.00	£339,004.50	£354,125.00	£303,408.00
Bush tickets sales	£13,302.00	£15,154.00	£21,160.00	£16,703.00
Angling Sales Total	£613,246.00	£573,457.00	£599,756.00	£534,827.00
Minus 20% VAT on permits and Bush tickets	£75,544.40	£70,831.70	£75,057.00	£64,022.20
Angling Revenue Total	£537,701.60	£502,625.30	£524,699.00	£470,804.80
Commercial fishing licence revenue	£37,647.00	£39,231.00	£35,638.00	£27,625.00
Dealers licence revenue	£9,645.50	£9,443.50	£10,058.50	£10,706.00
Commercial Total	£47,292.50	£48,674.50	£45,696.50	£38,331.00
Grand Total	£584,994.10	£551,299.80	£570,395.50	£509,135.80

3.6. Commercial fishing and dealer licences.

DAERA issues commercial fishing licences for eel, salmon and other freshwater species fishing:

- To assist conservation efforts, legislation was introduced in 2014 that prohibits commercial netting of salmon. There have been no licences issued for coastal salmon nets since 2013.
- The number of eel licences issued in 2024 is 65.
- The number of freshwater commercial licences issued in 2024 is 1,012.
- Dealer licences, needed to sell freshwater fish and wild salmon to the public, are issued by DAERA in the DAERA jurisdiction. A dealer licence covers all vendors from fish vans to large supermarkets. In 2024, 212 dealer licences were issued.



4. ENFORCEMENT

4. Protection and enforcement

Since 2022 enforcement data is now collected on a calendar year to coincide with licence and permit sales.

4.1 Enforcement

Table 4.1. Enforcement activity on DAERA and private waters 2020/21 to 2024

	2020/21	2021/22	2022	2023	2024
DAERA PAE waters					
Rod Licences checked	2,170	2,410	2,297	2,116	747
DAERA permits checked	2,138	2,404	2,291	2,097	726
Detections of illegal activity	127	122	118	77	114
Private waters					
Rod licences checked	1,172	1,028	1,285	999	551
Detections of illegal activity	89	59	46	25	33
All waters					
Boat patrols	200	261	228	125	159
Coastal shore patrols	37	52	80	50	52
Illegal fishing nets seized	78	13	2	1	10

- Enforcement activity is both proactive and reactive; regular patrols are conducted to monitor commercial fishermen and anglers to ensure compliance with the 1966 Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulations.
- DAERA enforcement officers work on both DAERA PAE waters and private waters in the DAERA jurisdiction.
- In 2024, there were 747 rod licences checked in DAERA PAE waters, and 551 licences checked on private waters.

4.2 Inspections

Table 4.2. Number of inspections 2020/21 to 2024

	2020/21	2021/22	2022	2023	2024
Number of inspections					
Commercial fish dealers' inspections	36	37	38	24	24
Water abstraction site inspections	130	147	89	91	94
Total	166	184	127	115	118

- Regular inspections are carried out at commercial dealers to ensure that all freshwater fish being sold have been caught legally.

4.3 Prosecutions and enforcement action 2020/21 to 2024

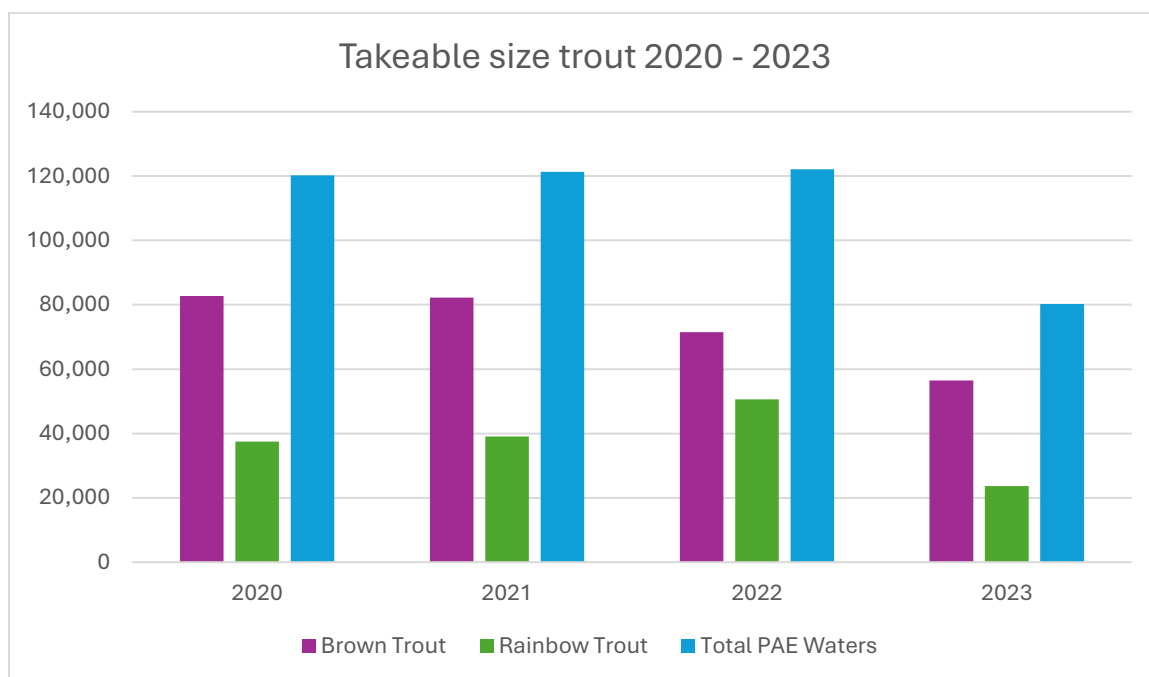
	2020/21	2021/22	2022	2023	2024
Convictions	17	4	17	3	4
Warning letters issued	19	12	39	17	85
Advice letter given	168	117	163	48	32

- Where appropriate, DAERA prepares cases for prosecution for consideration by the Public Prosecution Service NI.
- DAERA may deal with less serious breaches of legislation by means of (i) advisement and (ii) warning letters.

5. DAERA FISH FARMS AND HATCHERY

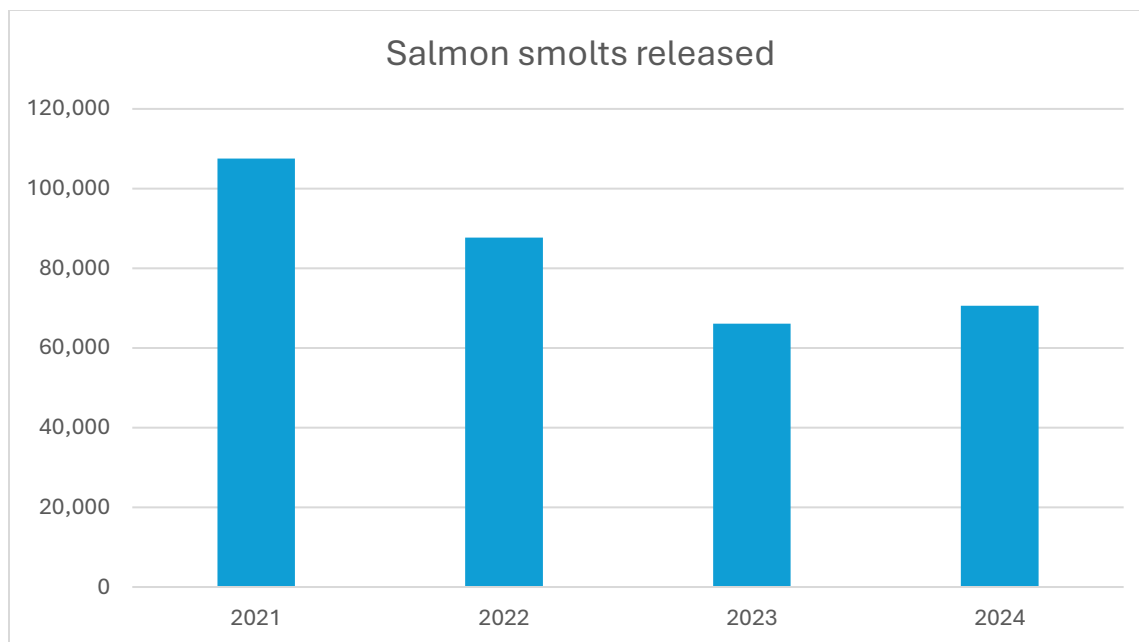
5.1 Number of takeable sized trout stocked from Movanager Fish Farm 2020 – 2024

Zebra mussels were discovered at the Department’s Movanager fish farm in June 2023. Consequently, the Department took a precautionary approach and suspended movements of live fish from Movanager Fish Farm for stocking to other fisheries for the remainder of 2023 and no takeable size fish stocked out in 2024. This was to ensure compliance with the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. It is important to note that purchasing a permit does not guarantee any level of stocking within the PAE; it only provides the anglers with permission to fish in those waters. The Department continues to consider scientific advice and treatment options to inform the way forward.



Takeable sized Trout	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Brown Trout	82,750	82,250	71,500	56,500	0
Rainbow Trout	37,500	39,100	50,600	23,700	0
Total (PAE Waters)	120,250	121,350	122,100	80,200	0

5.2 Number of salmon smolts released from Bushmills Hatchery 2021 to 2024



Year	2021	2022	2023	2024
Salmon smolts released	107,505	87,701	66,104	70,579

- The Bushmills Hatchery also releases reared salmon smolts into the River Bush as part of the long-term salmon monitoring programme.
- The number of salmon smolts released in the River Bush in 2024 was 70,579.

