STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2025 No. 141

FISHERIES

The Eel Fishing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

Made - - - -	*18th August 2025*
Coming into operation	*01st January 2026*

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs(**a**), in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 15(1) and 19(1) of the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966(**b**), makes the following Regulations.

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Eel Fishing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and come into operation on 1st January 2026.

Amendment of the Eel Fishing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

2.—(1) The Eel Fishing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010(**c**) are amended in accordance with paragraphs (2) to (5).

(2) In regulation 2 (Interpretation) insert the following definitions in the appropriate order-

""annual catch limit for eels" means the total weight of eels which may be fished for or taken in the open fishing season each year by licensed eel fishers combined, as determined by the Department on an annual basis;

"maximum landing size for eels" means eels of a specific length to be determined by the Department each year, measured from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail;".

(3) After regulation 6 insert—

"**Maximum landing size for eels**

6A.—(1) A person shall not wilfully fish for, take, retain or kill eels in excess of the maximum landing size for eels.

(2) Subject to paragraph (3), a person shall not land or have in their possession or control eels in excess of the maximum landing size for eels.

(3) Paragraph (1) does not apply to a licensed eel fisher who lands or has in his possession or control eels in excess of the maximum landing size for eels for the purpose of

(**a**) Formerly the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland; see S.I. 1999/283 (N.I.1), Art 3(4); and 2016 c. 5 (N.I.)
(**b**) 1966 c. 17 (N.I.), as amended by S.I. 2007/915 (N.I. 9) and 2009 c. 2 (N.I.)
(**c**) S.R. 2010 No. 166, as amended by SR 2011 No.235

grading, provided the eels are graded immediately on landing and eels in excess of the maximum landing size for eels are immediately returned to the waters from which they were taken without any avoidable injury.

(4) The maximum landing size for eels will be published on the Department's website(**a**) by 1 April each year.".

(4) For regulation 7 substitute —

"**Annual close seasons for eels**

7.—(1) The annual close season for eels by means of fishing engines which are erected or hung in fishing weirs or are fixed engines (other than long lines) shall be the period from the 16th December in any year to 14th August in the following year.

(2) The annual close season for eels by any means other than a fishing engine to which paragraph (1) applies (except by rod and line), shall be the period from the 1st September in any year to 30th April in the following year.

(3) The annual close seasons for eels in paragraphs (1) and (2) are subject to the annual catch limit for eels.".

(5) After regulation 7 insert —

"**Annual catch limits for eels**

7A.—(1) A person shall not wilfully fish for, take, retain or kill eels in excess of the annual catch limit.

(2) Each year the Department will determine annual catch limits for eels that can be caught by means of—:

(a) fishing engines which are erected or hung in fishing weirs or are fixed engines; and

(b) long lines or draft nets.

(3) The annual catch limits for eels for that year will be published on the Department's website by 1 April.".

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 18th August 2025.

(L.S.)

Owen Lyttle
A Senior Officer of the
Department of Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations amend the Eel Fishing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

The Regulations amend the annual close season for fishing for eels depending on the method of fishing.

The Regulations also insert new regulations to provide for annual catch limits and maximum sizes for landing eels.

(**a**) https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/

© Crown copyright 2025

Printed and published in the UK by The Stationery Office Limited under the authority and superintendence of Saul Nassé, Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office being the Government Printer for Northern Ireland and the Officer appointed to print Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

£5.78

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/nisr/2025/141

ISBN 978-0-33-802520-3

