



Our reference: **DAERA/22-116**

██████████ via email:
██████████

Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Tonagh
Lisburn
BT28 3AL

Email: WMU.FOI@daera-ni.gov.uk

Date: 3 May 2022

Dear ██████████,

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 31 March that sought the following information:

'Details of slurry spills, their locations, and numbers of fish killed as a result over the last 5 years.'

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds the information you requested.

A copy of the information is presented below and attached as Annex A.

Q1. *Are slurry spills/pollution incidents documented in Northern Ireland?*

A. Yes, when the Northern Ireland Environment Agency discovers or has reported to it any incidence of pollution to a waterway, this is recorded.

Q2. *How many have there been for each calendar year for the past five years?*

A. The numbers held in relation to slurry incidents are set out in Table 1 below. Where incidents have been assessed as being of mixed agricultural source, these have also been included as it is estimated that slurry has comprised at least part of the discharge.

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	Total
2017	10	24	10	8	4	18	45	24	37	180
2018	10	7	19	14	8	40	45	19	16	178
2019	11	22	13	9	3	31	48	25	22	184
2020	7	21	15	10	4	28	41	17	16	159
2021	10	11	9	12	5	22	32	25	14	140

Table 1. Number of Slurry related Pollution incidents by Pollution Control Area (PCA), 2017-21

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Q3. *Where have these incidents happened?*

A. Northern Ireland is divided into 9 pollution control or management areas for water pollution response and the attached map (Annex A) illustrates the geographical extent of each of these control areas.

Q4. *If such figures are documented, how many fish have been killed (estimate) as a result of these types of incidents?*

A. The number of incidents that resulted in a fish kill related to slurry in each Pollution Control Area (PCA) are set out in Table 2 below. The figures in Table 3 represent the estimated total mortalities for incidents which may have been caused by slurry pollution and have been supplied by professional colleagues in DAERA Inland Fisheries, NIEA and other sections/agencies who work alongside NIEA or lead on incidents involving fish mortalities. Please note some data is currently not held regarding two incidents in 2017. The actual extent of an individual fish kill incident and the accuracy of the assessment is subject to a range of variable factors, including weather conditions, visibility through the water column and the impact of subsequent predation. Accounting for these factors in combination results in an estimate of the impact on fish stocks, which is routinely greater than the number of physical fish carcasses discovered. In addition, numbers alone can be misleading. It would be inappropriate to equate a single Minnow of 3cm length against a 25cm Trout, given the perceived value of each fish species, their reproductive status and sensitivity to environmental conditions. Table 3 does not however offer differentiation in numbers presented based on species, size or age class.

PCA Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Incidents	1	2	4	3	1	0	1	2	7

Table 2. Incidents by Pollution Control Area 2017-21.

Year/Extent	Major kill	Moderate kill	Slight kill	Total Mortalities
2017	0	2*	2	45*
2018	3	0	0	1,421
2019	0	1	0	50
2020	5	2	0	6,009
2021	3	3	0	3,619
Total Mortalities	10,366	763*	15	11,144*

Table 3. Fish Kill incidents by Severity and Numbers 2017-21

*Denotes outstanding information.

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If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Ballykelly House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,


South and East Catchment Manager

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