



Our reference: **DAERA/23-283**

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

NIEA Water Management Unit
17 Antrim Road
Lisburn
Co Antrim
BT28 3AL

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

08 September 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Thank you for your request for information received by the Department on 17 August 2023 which sought the following information:

1. How many game angling rod licences were sold for the 2023 season?
2. How many water pollution incidents were caused by agricultural i.e. slurry/ silage effluent? (last 10 years)
3. When was the last water quality test done on Lough Neagh? And what were the findings, i.e. what was discovered in the water?
4. What actions have the department put in place to improve water quality in Lough Neagh? (last 10 years)
5. What actions has the department put in place to stop or improve slurry/ silage effluent getting into waterways, especially rivers? (last 10 years)

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

1) Game angling rod licences

The game angling season is from 1 March until the 31 October and as a result 2023 game angling licences can be purchased until 31 October 2023.

At the date the request was submitted (17 August 2023) the numbers of 2023 game licence sales are detailed in the table below. As the question did not specify a particular type of game licence the attached table provides a breakdown of all available game licences available to purchase.

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Game season	4770
Game over 60 concessionary	5376
Game Disabled concessionary	1579
Game Juvenile – anglers aged 12 to 18 years	981
Game 14 days	348
Game 3 days	2778
Game Endorsement - anglers with Loughs Agency Licence	819

2) Water Pollution Incidents

The Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report provides an annual update on a range of environmental indicators. It includes information on water pollution incidents and breaks them down by sector since the 2014 publication (including those related to farming activities).

[Northern Ireland environmental statistics report | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

In total 2747 water pollution incidents were caused by slurry and silage effluent in the period from 2012 to 2022.

	2012-2022			
Pollution severity	Low	Medium	High	Total
Silage and slurry combined	2006	673	68	2747

3) Last water quality test

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) undertakes wide scale monitoring of water quality in Lough Neagh to assign a status against the expected natural state, based on set chemical and ecological standards. Monitoring is carried out on a scheduled basis with chemistry samples collected monthly and biological sampling carried out over a rolling 3-year period. The most recent chemical samples were collected in August 2023 and biological monitoring is being carried out this year too and will be completed in Autumn 2023. The assessment of these results will not be available until 2024. The most recent assessment of water quality status published in 2021 showed that Lough Neagh is at 'Bad' Ecological status. Total Phosphorus and the other Biological Quality elements that respond to high levels of phosphorus were also assessed as being at less than 'Good' status. This assessment indicates that there is nutrient enrichment within the water body.

Further information on water body status is available on our map viewers:

[NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[NIEA Water Information Request Viewer \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

4) Actions to improve water quality

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The water environment is managed through 6-yearly cycles in Northern Ireland. For each cycle a river basin management plan (RBMP) is prepared that includes the Programme of Measures (i.e. actions). Subsequent RBMPs also include an update on the actions from previous RBMPs.

The first and second cycle RBMPs can be found at the following links:

- <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/north-eastern-river-basin-district>
- <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/north-western-river-basin-district>
- <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/neagh-bann-river-basin-district>

The link to the draft 3rd cycle RBMP can be found here:

- <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-3rd-cycle-river-basin-management-plan-2021-2027>

Please note that the Minister agreed the final RBMP in October 2022, but it cannot be published without Executive approval.

5) Actions to reduce slurry/ silage effluent entering waterways

Within the last ten years the Department has developed various Nitrates Action programmes (NAP) to improve water quality. The NAP aims to protect water from pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources for farmers claiming an area-based scheme, which has rules in relation to slurry and silage storage and spreading. Inspection of the rules are considered under Cross Compliance. Each programme superseded and added in additional requirements on agriculture. Rules in relation to phosphorus were introduced in 2015 and were brought into cross compliance in 2019.

The Nitrates Action Programme 2011 -2014 details can be found at

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/about-nitrates-action-programme-nap-2011-2014-and-phosphorus-regulations> .

The Nitrates Action Programme 2015 – 2018 details can be found at

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2015-2018-nitrates-action-programme-and-phosphorus-regulations-and-associated-documents> .

The Nutrient Action Programme 2019-22 also brought phosphorus rules into the programme. See <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/node/38112> for guidance on the current rules.

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.

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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, Jubilee 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,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

Integrated Catchment Planning

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