

**Local Government (Water Pollution)
Act 1977
(Water Quality Standards for
Phosphorus) Regulations, 1998**



**MONAGHAN COUNTY
COUNCIL**

4th Implementation Report

July 2006

Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977 (Water Quality Standards for Phosphorus) Regulations, 1998.

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Monaghan Co Council.

Introduction:

The Phosphorus Regulations (1998) require the Monaghan Co Council to protect satisfactory waters and to improve unsatisfactory waters. Water quality interim targets have been set for 2007. However Monaghan Co Council has applied for an extension to 2013. (In the 2004 EPA audit, an EPA officer advised against reliance on the 2013 deadline as the more stringent Water Framework Directive deadline of 2015 for both good chemical and biological status will also need to be complied with.)

The Phosphorus Regulations require Monaghan Co Council to submit a biennial implementation report to the Environment Protection Agency. The 4th Implementation Report is due for submission to the Agency on 31/7/2006.

Section 1. Water Quality in Co Monaghan

River Monitoring

Baseline Data

The baseline data for the County, established from the EPA's Biological Monitoring Programme (Q Ratings) since 1995 indicates that **30%** of river stations monitored were of satisfactory quality (Q rating ≥ 4) while **70%** of stations monitored were unsatisfactory (Q rating $\leq 3-4$). Table 1.1 refers.

Current Status Rivers

This 4th Implementation Report relates to the reporting period Jan 2004 to Dec 2005. Reference to physio-chemical data in this document relates to water quality monitoring carried out by Monaghan Co Council in the period Jan 2004 to Dec 2005.

Reference to river current Q ratings, relate to the Q rating assigned by the EPA. The 06 Hydrometric area was monitored in 2003 while the 03 and 36 Hydrometric areas were monitored in 2004. Table 1.1.refers

Current data indicates

- 33% (22 out of 66) of river stations monitored are classified as unpolluted (Q ratings > 4 - 2003/04 data). This figure is low by national standards.
- 24% (16No.) of river monitoring stations show an improvement in Q rating from baseline data

- 27% (18No.) of stations monitored show a decline in Q rating.
- 71% (55 out of 77) of stations with Q data and/or Median P values achieve standards set out in Section 3(2) of the Phosphorus Regulations. Section 3(2) allows compliance with the Phosphorus Regulation targets by achieving either the standards set for Q rating or MRP (Molybdate Reactive Phosphate) value.

Water Quality Trends: Rivers

Q Ratings

Since the 95-97 baseline period no significant improvement in overall biological water quality in the County is apparent. Although 24% of sites monitored in the 2003 and 2004 do show an improvement from baseline data, a further 27% of sites monitored show a decline in quality. Since the mid 90's there are no longer any pristine sites (Q 5) recorded in Co Monaghan. However the improvements in the Erne catchment noted in 2004 are promising.

Physio-chemical Data:

Water quality data does provide some information on water quality trends in the county. A decline in river phosphate levels has been noted in some rural areas. However, many other river stations do not show a similar decline as yet.

Noticeable water quality improvements have followed the upgrading of urban wastewater treatment plants and upgrading/removal of industrial treatment plant discharges. The Blackwater River below Monaghan Town and the Proules River below Carrickmacross have improved from baseline quality. However water quality in these river stretches – designated as “sensitive waters” under the Urban Waste Water Regulations, remains unsatisfactory (as defined by the EPA). Continued urban development is placing additional pressures on infrastructure and water quality downstream of urban areas. Discharges of untreated or partially treated urban waste waters via storm overflows or overloaded collection systems can have significant effects on water quality and these problems have been referred to Water Services for examination and appropriate remediation.

Since Jan. 2004 the frequency of river monitoring has been increased to 12 samples per annum every 2 years. Median P values are now available for almost all EPA Q rated sites. Results for Median P levels are shown in Table 1.1.

Lake Monitoring

Monaghan Co Council's lake monitoring programmes for 2004 and 2005 have been completed and results reported to the EPA. A total of 50 lakes have been monitored at sampling frequency of one lake sample per annum for the smaller lakes and two to four lake samples for the larger lakes. Lake sampling is resource intensive and Monaghan's sampling frequency has remained low. However the new Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme, due to commence in Dec 2006 requires a review of sampling frequency – final details have yet to be decided.

Currently lake sampling is carried out in the summer months with the assistance of Civil Defence staff (2 persons) and equipment (boat and pickup truck) and a summer student. The current sample collection takes 10 to 12 days approximately. Water samples are analysed by the EPA Laboratory in Monaghan Town.

Due to low frequency of lake sampling only the Chlorophyll level can be used for classification purposes and compliance checking. If the Total Phosphorus (TP) parameter were to be included a minimum of 10 samples per annum would be required.

Lake Water Supply Sources

Work is currently ongoing to integrate the protection of the 23 lakes used as water supply sources into development planning and control. Maps of surface water sources are included in the current Draft Co Development Plan for Co Monaghan.

Current Status - Lakes

Lake Trophic Status (2004/2005)

The lake trophic status shown in Table 1.2 is derived from the maximum Chlorophyll level measured in the period 2004 to 2005. Current data indicates 46% of lakes comply with requirements of the Phosphorus Regulations based on chlorophyll levels only. Table 1:2 refers

Note:

Lake chlorophyll levels can fluctuate significantly throughout the year. Chlorophyll levels do not always indicate the same degree of eutrophication as do the available Total Phosphorus levels. Total Phosphorus levels in some lakes in Co Monaghan are extremely high.

Water Quality Trends: Lakes

The 2004/2005 lake data indicates an increased number of lakes in the satisfactory category (i.e oligotrophic and mesotrophic). However the high number of lakes (over 80%) with elevated Total Phosphorus levels is a cause for concern.

Tables A and B below show a comparison of current lake trophic status with baseline status and Lake Total Phosphorus (TP) levels for the 2001 to 2005 period..

Table A: Comparison of Lake Data 1995-2003

Annual Max Chlorophyll level ppb	Trophic Status	Baseline data 95-2001 (no. of lakes)	Current Trophic (2004/2005) Classification (no. of lakes)
<8	Oligotrophic		6
≥8 <25	Mesotrophic	11	9
≥25<75	Eutrophic	19	24
≥75	Hypertrophic	16	11

Table B: Lake Total Phosphorus Levels –Average Value of 2001 to 2005 data

Total Phosphorus Average Conc (ppb) 2001-2005 (MCC data)	No. of Lakes in each category
<30	8
30-59	16
60-99	17
>100	10

Water Framework Directive lakes:

Lakes proposed for additional monitoring under the Proposed WFD Monitoring Programme and their current trophic status includes:

Lake	Current Status
Avaghon lake	Mesotrophic (– but algal blooms noted in recent years)
Drumlona	Eutrophic
Emy	Mesotrophic
Egish	Eutrophic.
Inner	Hypertrophic
Naglack	Hypertrophic
Monalty	Hypertrophic
Muckno	Hypertrophic
White	Eutrophic
Dromore	Status unknown

Groundwater Quality

The Phosphorus Regulations 1998 deal with surface waters and although ground water quality may impact on surface waters sufficient data is not available in relation to this aspect. The situation regarding groundwater quality will be addressed as the Water Framework Directive is rolled out. A Groundwater Protection Scheme for Co Monaghan has been produced by the GSI. Work is currently ongoing to integrate the Groundwater Protection Scheme into planning decision making and maps of groundwater sources and resources are included in the current Draft Co Development Plan.

Section 2. Implementation of Measures

Monaghan Co Council's Measures Report in 1999 identified a need for additional resources to implement proposals to protect and improve water quality. Although additional staff were recruited following completion of negotiations under BLG (Better Local Government) in 2001, the Phosphorus Team has since lost 2 experienced Environmental Officers. One Environmental Officer (temp) is now in training.

Use of Consultants

In 2005 additional resources were allocated to employ consultants (*RPS Consultant Engineers*) to carry out farm surveys and to highlight farms that will require follow up action by the Council staff. However, without experienced field staff in-house catchment survey work and the necessary follow up of problem premises is currently suspended with a review of the situation due in October 2006.

Monaghan Co Council continue to use the services of Conservation Services to carry out detailed Biological Surveys of rivers. This work highlights "hot spots" and a number of such "hot spots" are awaiting follow-up surveys.

In the 2004-2005 period the Phosphorus Team has been involved in a number of specific work areas as follows:

- Catchment surveys - initially work has been concentrated moderately polluted river stretches and unsatisfactory lakes. Work has progressed well but extensive areas of the County are as yet not surveyed. See Map in Appendix 1 outlining Progress.
- Database management and updating GIS programme
- Review and updating of water quality monitoring programmes and the introduction of additional Biological Monitoring using a private consultant.
- A survey and report of Urban Wastewater Treatment plants and collection systems.
- Continued enforcement of Water Pollution Acts and Waste Management Act.
- Awareness raising to achieve sectoral involvement in protection and improvement of water quality.

The Phosphorus Team also tries to work closely with Planning control staff, other Environment Section staff and Water Services Section although more integration in this area is deemed necessary.

Future Developments in the area of Water Management

During 2004 a number of Projects relating to water quality issues in Co Monaghan have been initiated. These include:

- North South SHARE Project on River Basin Management Planning.
- Blackwater Regional Partnership TRACE Project on the Definition and Mitigation of Excessive Multi-source Nutrient Loss to Water, lead by University of Ulster and Queens University, Belfast.
- Churchill Oram Source Protection Pilot Scheme led by the National Federation of Group Water Schemes and the Freshwater Studies Unit at DKIT.
- Blackwater Vital Signs Schools project .

- Monaghan Co Council has participated in the Erne Blackwater Surface Waters Working Group.
- The County Development Board has included the Improvement of Water Quality in Co Monaghan as an Action in the CDB Strategy for Co Monaghan.

Monaghan Co Council will provide available water quality data for the Project leaders and is involved as Steering Group members and/or in an advisory role. The benefits of such projects are expected to be increased knowledge of water quality issues, improved water quality management, improved public and sectoral participation, and increased awareness.

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Section 3.

Progress to Date

There is evidence that the biological quality of rivers continues to decline in Co Monaghan. Of particular concern is the recent loss of pristine and high quality sites in upland areas. It is expected that resource intensive catchment survey work, additional monitoring, enforcement and in some cases changes in land use or other measures will be required to bring about water quality improvements. It is expected that the turn-around period between intensive catchment survey work, enterprise improvements and water quality improvements could be a minimum of 2-3 years depending on catchment characteristics.

Improvements in Hydrometric Area 36 (Erne Catchment)

Promising results were evident in the 2004 EPA Biological Monitoring of Hydrometric Area 36 (Erne Catchment).

Although Monaghan Co Council have completed catchment survey work in sub-catchments of the Erne River (Bunroe and Maghery Rivers have been surveyed in 2002 and 2003) improvements are also noted in other sub-catchments. It is suspected that the intensive surveillance and enforcement work carried out by the Northern Regional Fisheries Board (NRFB) for several years has contributed significantly to improvements in water quality in this area. Discussions with the Eastern and Northern Regional Fisheries Boards have revealed that additional resources have been dedicated to surveillance and enforcement work in the NRFB area for a number of years.

Progress has been made in pursuing measures set out to tackle water pollution in Co Monaghan. Improvement in the chemical data at some river stations is evident, upgrading of industrial treatment plants continues and investment in Water Services is ongoing. Progress in various work areas is detailed below and in Table 3,4, and 5 attached in Appendix 2. However additional resources are considered necessary to successfully identify and follow up on pollution sources in the county.

Catchment Surveys

Catchment surveys commenced in May 2002 with a focus on small rural catchments where water quality was classified as moderately polluted. All agricultural, industrial and commercial premises were surveyed in each catchment. Communal septic tanks and village areas were also surveyed. The aim of catchment surveys was to identify and eliminate point sources of pollution and identify potential diffuse sources of pollution for further attention.

Over the period Jan 2004 to Dec 2005, a total of 352 premises (mainly agricultural) were surveyed. 110 advisory letters were issued, 21 Section 12 Notices were issued. A total of 450 reinspections of silage making facilities (including facilities surveyed pre 2004) and 158 reinspections of medium and high-risk wintering facilities were reinspected in the summer and winter periods respectively.

Current Status of Catchment Survey Work Table (refer to Map of progress Appendix 1)

Table C

Catchment /River	Survey By	Comments
Emy Lough catchment	2003, MCC Staff	Limited follow up of due
Mountain Water Tributary	2004/05 -TRACE Project	Pollution mitigation measures due to be installed in 2006
Scotstown River	2004, MCC Staff	Follow up inspections due
Blackwater (upper reaches)	2004, MCC Staff	Follow up inspections due
Maghery, Kilcoran and Magherarney Lakes	2002 MCC	Limited follow up due
Lough Oony	2003 MCC	Follow up on 1 farm due
Conawary River	2005/06 MCC	Follow up inspections due
Ballagh lake	2006 MCC	Follow up inspections due
Clontibret Stream	2003/04 MCC	Follow up inspections due
Bunroe River and Annamakerrig Lake	2003 MCC	Limited follow up due
Drum lake	2003 MCC	Limited follow up due
Avaghon lake Stream, Mullanary and Corkeeran Lakes	2002 MCC	Limited follow up due
Namachree Lake	2002 MCC	Follow up on 1 septic tank due
Milltown lake Catchment	2005/06 Dundalk Inst. Of Tech.	Extensive monitoring completed – Farm and septic tank survey due 2006
Rossdreenagh River	2006 RPS on behalf of MCC	All follow up outstanding. (MCC to carry out follow up)
Inner Lough	2003 NRFB	

Database Management and Mapping

Consultants completed a GIS Mapping Project and Sludge Management Plan for Co Monaghan in Spring of 2002. The GIS Project provides a comprehensive mapping tool for catchment survey work. As the catchment surveys progress it is intended that data on all enterprises are entered on an access database and mapped using GPS.

Due to the extent of agricultural activities in the County and their potential impact on the environment, work commenced in 1999 on collection of relevant agricultural data. A comprehensive database on intensive agricultural enterprises, soil phosphorus returns, and a poultry manure waste tracking system has been established.

Monitoring Programmes

Lake Monitoring Programme

As detailed in Section 2 page 3.

River Monitoring

From Jan 2004 monthly river water samples have been collected and each river monitored for one 12 month period every two years. This work is contracted out to the EPA Regional Lab, Monaghan Town. The river sampling programme has been extended to include all river stations Q rated since 1995.

Additional Monitoring

Additional Monitoring Programmes carried out to identify “Hot Spots” and provide additional information of water quality in selected catchments and their tributaries are shown on Table D below.

Table D

River	Type of Monitoring	Comments
R Blackwater (03/B/01), and Tributaries including 03/S/02, 03/S01,	Physio-chemical, flow and biological monitoring in 2002-2003 period	Partial catchment survey work carried out in 2004– survey follow up due.
Mountain Water (03 M01) and Tributaries	Physio-chemical and biological monitoring – 2003-2004 period	Some problem areas identified – catchment awaiting survey
Emy Lough Stream	Physio-chemical and biological monitoring in 2004	Mini catchment survey completed 2003.
Finn River (36/F/01) and Tributaries	Physio-chemical monitoring 2004	Not yet scheduled for catchment Survey
Avaghon Lake Stream (36 A07)	Post survey Biological Monitoring	Catchment surveyed 2002, Lake outflow identified as significant
Maghery River (36/M/03)	Post survey Biological Monitoring	Both catchment survey in 2002 and Biological Monitoring 2005 failed to pinpoint source of low Q values in the upper reaches.
Knappagh (36/K/01)	Biological Monitoring (partial survey)	Suspected source ceased, River Q improved.
Conawary Lower (03/C/01) and tributaries	Physiochemical Monitoring	Catchment Survey 2005/06. Follow up due.
Proules (06/P/01)	Biological Monitoring (partial Survey)	Mini catchment Survey- urban sources of pollution identified

General Activities under the Water Pollution and Waste Management Act:

General activities of the Environment Section in the reporting period 2004 to 2005 Monaghan Co Council include the following enforcement work under the Water Pollution and Waste Management Acts.

11 cases referred for prosecution under of the WPA and WMA

28 Section 12 notices have been issued

17 Section 55 Notices have been issued.

The Council's Environment Section continues to investigate environmental complaints. Approximately 800 environmental complaints were received in From Jan 2004 to Dec 2005, many of which related to illegal dumping and litter. 58 water pollution complaints were investigated in same period.

Industrial Discharges

Significant improvements have been carried out by Industry in Co Monaghan. There are currently 22 "active" Licences issued under Section 4 of the Water Pollution Act. There are currently Section 4 Licence applications under consideration Almost all active Licences have been inspected at least once in the 2004 to 2005 period and monitoring of discharges is ongoing.

No prosecution cases for breaches of Section 4 of the WPA were taken in this period.

Landfill

Monaghan Co Council's Landfill being operated under a Licence from the EPA.

Awareness Raising During 2004 and 2005

The Phosphorus Teams Awareness Raising Programme has included the following activities:

Information / Public Meetings, During the reporting period a total of 5 meetings with the following groups were organized, IFA, Northern and Eastern Regional Fisheries Boards, and an Industry Group. Council staff gave presentations at 3 meetings organized by the IFA Co Executive and IFA Waste Management Committee. Presentations were given at 4 REPS meetings at the request of a REPS Planner. The Co Development Board Environment and Agriculture Working Group, the Erne Blackwater Surface Water working Group and TRACE Steering Group Meetings have also increased networking and information sharing between Council, stakeholders and research bodies.

Catchment Information Leaflets

Individual information leaflets with local water quality information have been produced for each catchment surveyed. Leaflets are distributed to each premises surveyed. See Appendix 2.

Information Leaflets on *Managing Phosphorus in Farming* (2 No) and *Prevent Silage Pollution* have been produced and pre 2004 were circulated via the Dairy CoOps. We continue to send out these leaflets where a need /problem is identified. A leaflet on *Septic Tank and Wastewater Treatment System Guidelines* has been produced and is distributed

to households with problem or suspect septic tanks. From June 2006 it is proposed to circulate the “Septic Tank/Treatment System “leaflet with planning approval notices. Press Articles and Adverts/ Radio A total of 25 articles and adverts relating to water quality appeared on local press. Adverts related to Good Farming Practice, slurry spreading and silage making. Articles on general water quality were placed in 2 Council Environment Bulletins.

Advisory Letters. Approximately 80 farmers were sent advisory letters in relation to Soil Testing for Phosphorus. Over 110 advisory letters have been issued following catchment surveys.

One to one Site meetings Staff have carried out over 400 site visits in relation to catchment surveys and water pollution complaints during the 2004 and 2005 period.

Liaison with the Planning Section

Environment section staff continues to liaise with the Planning Section regarding environmental assessment and control of new developments. A very substantial (two and a half fold) increase in the number of planning files examined by the environment section was recorded in the 2004-2005 period. In the period 2004 to 2005 the environment section have examined and reported on 761 planning files that include 205 agricultural, 201 housing schemes, 364 industrial/commercial developments and 9 public schemes. Contributions have been submitted to the proposed Development Plan to improve aspects of sustainable development.

Period	Agricultural	Comm./Industrial	Housing Dev/ other	Other	Totals
2003-2003	113	93	52		258
2004-2005	205	346	201	9	761

Liaison with Water Services:

A member of the Phosphorus Team surveyed 21 local authority operated waste water treatment plants in early 2005. A report is currently in preparation and will be presented to management and discussed with Water Services in late 2006.

Problems Encountered

The continued decline in water quality is still evident. Development pressures are a cause for concern. A very substantial increase in development activity is evident. Criteria for sustainable development would be useful. Monitoring of new developments to ensure compliance with planning conditions attached to protect waters is considered necessary but as yet not undertaken.

Staff Retention – the Phosphorus Team lost 2 fully trained members of staff one in May 2004 and the second in May 2006. Some slow down in catchment survey work is evident as a result. In addition to replacement of staff members with trained officers it is essential that further resources will be required to achieve the targets set in the Phosphorus Regulations and to build capacity within the council to implement the required programme of measures that will accompany the River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive.

Lack of integration of environmental protection policies into the activities of various sectors (particularly in the recent past).

Cross border pollution incidents can be more difficult to resolve.

It would be beneficial to develop a reliable risk assessment tool for diffuse source pollution.

Computer facilities/tools for the interrogation of environmental data and trend analysis are also considered necessary.

The local authority role of “poacher” and “gamekeeper” can give rise to concerns by the public of the effectiveness of local authority’s pollution control role.

Successes to date

The review of CAP and the changes in farm payments from production based payments to single payments scheme is likely to benefit water quality in the medium to long term. Information meetings resulted in offers of cooperation and are considered very beneficial. Good relationships with industry and improvements in industrial wastewater treatment in recent years.

Cooperation with the IFA is resulting in regular contacts with farming groups. Staff are encountering a positive response to site inspections on farms.

The EPA biological monitoring for one of the three catchments surveyed by council staff in the 2002/2003 period indicated significant improvements in water quality in 2004. The other two catchments remain as yet moderately polluted – requiring further investigation. Improvements in the Biological Quality of the Erne Catchment are promising (page 8 refers)

Participation in projects described on page 6 should result in better knowledge of activities contributing to water pollution, effective mitigation measures and improved participation.

Summary

Co Monaghan faces a particular set of problems in relation to water quality, which to some extent are unique to this county. It is a drumlin county, with heavy soils in many areas resulting in high runoff risk. The extent of intensive agricultural activities in Co Monaghan poses problems for the recovery /disposal of agricultural waste in an environmentally sustainable manner. In addition many of the county's rivers have low assimilative capacity.

Rapidly expanding industrial and commercial activities, rural housing and expansion of urban areas need to be controlled and monitored. Monaghan Co Council need a fully resourced and dedicated Team to progress measures set out in the Measures and Implementation Reports

There will be ongoing review of measures to maximize effectiveness of measures to improve water quality in the county.

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