

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT SUMMERHILL LOUGH, COUNTY FERMANAGH. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora, fauna, and physiographical features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Summerhill Lough area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its physiography and associated wetland flora and fauna. It includes the open waters of the lough and the surrounding marginal vegetation lying within County Fermanagh. Physiographical interest of this largely spring-fed lough is related to the presence of calcium carbonate deposits, or marl, which are precipitated out of the calcium-rich water to produce a marl lake. This is a relatively rare lake type in Northern Ireland. Biological interest is related to the presence of vegetation communities which reflect these calcareous conditions, including a limited Stonewort Charophyte community.

The chemical composition of the water reflects the underlying Carboniferous Lower Limestone bedrock and the surface glacial till in this area and is highly base-rich. Marl deposition and high water quality, clarity and base-richness are characteristic features of marl lakes. Summerhill Lough is one of the best examples of a marl lake in Northern Ireland and is notable for its clear, clean water, and very low phytoplankton productivity.

The lough exhibits the natural succession from open water to terrestrial vegetation and includes a number of scarce plant communities, in addition to a number of rare plant species. The aquatic vegetation is dominated by submerged beds of Bristly Stonewort Chara hispida, and by large, floating stands of Yellow Water-lily Nuphar lutea, White Water lily Nymphaea alba and large-leaved Pondweeds such as Shining Pondweed Potamogeton lucens. The emergent vegetation consists of a fringe of Common Club-rush Schoenoplectus lacustris, backed by a tall swamp of Great Fen-sedge Cladium mariscus, interspersed in a few places with Common Reed Phragmites australis.

Behind the swamp, the shallow waters support a narrow belt of flooded Alder Alnus glutinosa carr along its western margin, and species-rich stands of calcareous fen vegetation along the southern and eastern margins. The carr understorey consists of Common Reed Phragmites australis, interspersed with tall tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge Carex paniculata and Cyperus Sedge C. pseudocyperus. The fen is characterised by the predominance of Lesser Tussock-sedge Carex diandra and Yellow-sedge C. viridula ssp. brachyrrhyncha intermixed with other sedge types and herbs such as Marsh Pennywort Hydrocotyle vulgaris, Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria, and Water Mint Mentha aquatica.

The fen merges with a species-rich calcareous flush along the south shore which supports such characteristic species as Grass-of-Parnassus Parnassia palustris, Knotted Pearlwort Sagina nodosa, Yellow-sedge Carex viridula spp. brachyrrhyncha Glaucous Sedge C. flacca, Jointed Rush Juncus articulatus on a brown moss carpet. The remainder of the wet foreshore is covered by a sedge-rich marshy grassland which changes to drier mesotrophic grassland on the adjacent drumlin slope above.

In addition to the scarce plant communities, Summerhill Lough has several rare plant species, including Cyperus Sedge Carex pseudocyperus, and Cowbane Cicuta virosa.

The invertebrate community of the lough is typical of clean waters and includes the rare Waterbeetle Hydrochus ignicollis, a species of undisturbed fens.

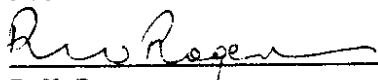
SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna and physiographical features of the area:

1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including gravel and peat.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock used or in supplementary feeding practice.
3. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
4. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure, slurry or artificial fertiliser.
5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill any form of wild plant, other than plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraphs (4) or (5) above.
7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for
 - (i) plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977;
 - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which a consent is not required under paragraph (3) above.
8. The release into the area of any animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice) or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
9. Burning.
10. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
11. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
12. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.

13. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh, fen, rivers, streams and open water), eg
- (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification in the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water-table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
14. The killing or taking of any animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
15. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area;
- (i) educational activities;
 - (ii) research activities;
 - (iii) recreational activities;
 - (iv) exercising of animals.
16. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.
17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 19 September, 1994



R W Rogers
Assistant Secretary

M. Cunningham
CIVIL SERVANT OF
CLARENCE COURT, BELFAST.

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities does not constitute planning permission. Where required, planning permission must be applied for in the usual manner to the Department under Part IV of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. Operations or activities covered by planning permission are not normally covered in the list of Notifiable Operations.

- (b) Also note that many of the operations and activities listed above are capable of being carried out either on a large scale or in a very small way. While it is impossible to define exactly what is "large" and what is "small", the Department would intend to approach each case in a common sense and practical way. It is very unlikely that small scale operations would give rise for concern and if this was the case the Department would give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.