

EPA Water Conference 2025 **11 & 12 June**

Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill,
Galway and Online

#epawater2025





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Wednesday, 11 June 2025

10:00 – 16:00

Session 1: WFD Tier 1 (Direction of travel) Navigating the Policy Waterscape

Session Chair: Dr. Eimear Cotter
*Director of the Office of Evidence and
Assessment, Environmental Protection Agency
(EPA)*

09:00
In person registration and online log-in

10:00
Welcome address
Dr. Eimear Cotter

10:05
Minister's address
Christopher O'Sullivan
*Minister of State at the Department of
Housing, Local Government and Heritage with
special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and
Biodiversity*

10:15
**Implementing the Water Action Plan; Policy
challenges and opportunities**
Colin Byrne
*Principal Adviser, Water Division, Department
of Housing, Local Government & Heritage
(DHLGH)*

10:35
Tracking action – a new approach for water
Margaret Keegan
*Regional Coordinator Midlands and East
Region, Local Authorities Waters Programme
(LAWPRO)*

10:55
The National Climate Change Risk Assessment
Dr. Conor Quinlan
Senior Manager, Climate Services, EPA

11:15
Panel discussion with Q&A

11:30
Tea/Coffee Break

Session 2: Water Action Projects

Session Chair: Anthony Coleman
*Director of Services, Local Authority Waters
Programme (LAWPRO)*

12:00
**Peatlands water quality benefits from the
enhanced decommissioning, rehabilitation &
restoration scheme (EDRRS)**
Enda McDonagh
Environmental Manager, Bord na Móna

12:20
**Protecting water sources: reducing pesticide
risks in the Erne-Larah catchment**
Lorraine Gaston
*Integrated Catchment Manager, Uisce
Éireann*

12:40
**Nature Restoration Regulation – what does
it mean for water?**
Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey
*Wildlife Inspector Grade I, Scientific Advice
and Research Directorate, National Parks and
Wildlife Service*

13:00
Panel discussion with Q&A

13:15
Lunch

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Session 3: Water Quantity and Water Resources

Session Chair: Noel Byrne
Programme Manager, EPA

14:30
**Water Abstraction and Associated
Impoundments Authorisation**
Ann Marie Donlon
*Inspector I, Water Energy and Business
Support, EPA*

14:50
National Water Resource Plan
Angela Ryan
*Senior Manager in the Asset Management and
Sustainability Directorate, Uisce Éireann*
Gerard Cafferkey
Asset Strategy Technical Lead, Uisce Éireann

15:20
**National Barrier Mitigation Research
Programme**
Dr. Ciara O'Leary
*Senior Research Officer, Inland Fisheries
Ireland (IFI)*

15:40
Panel discussion with Q&A

16:00
Close of Day 1

Thursday, 12 June 2025 09:30 – 13:00

Session 4: Water Quality Initiatives

Session Chair: Roni Hawe
Programme Manager, EPA

09:30
**The Water Forum – bringing science and
stakeholder input to policy**
Dr. Triona McGrath
*Research and Policy Lead, The Water Forum –
An Fóram Uisce*

09:50
**Biodiversity Data Centre – Invasive Species
Action Plan**
John Kelly
*Invasive Species Programme Manager, National
Biodiversity Data Centre*

10:10
**Investigating the likelihood of harmful algal
bloom impacts in Ireland**
Philip Taylor
Environmental Data Scientist, UKCEH

10:30
Panel discussion with Q&A

10:45
Tea/Coffee Break

Session 5: Agriculture

Session Chair: Jenny Deakin
*Programme Manager, Water Programme,
EPA*

11:15
Agriculture policy response
Dr. Noeleen McDonald
*Agricultural Inspector, Department of
Agriculture, Food and the Marine*

11:35
Better Farming For Water Campaign
Prof. Pat Dillon
Director of Research, Teagasc

11:50
**Behavioural insights – ASSAP water quality
measure uptake**
Prof. Mary Ryan
Environmental economics research, Teagasc

12:05
**Managing coastal waters: transitioning from
top-down regulation to a balanced bottom-
up/top-down governance approach**
Flemming Gertz
Lead Scientific Advisor, SEGES Innovation

12:45
Panel discussion with Q&A

13:00
Closing address
Jenny Deakin
Programme Manager, EPA

13:10
Lunch / Close of Day 2

Speakers

Dr. Eimear Cotter

Dr. Eimear Cotter was appointed Director in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2017. Within the EPA, she is Director of the Office of Evidence and Assessment and has responsibility for the Climate Change, Water and Evidence Programmes. She holds a BA in Science from Trinity College Dublin, a Ph.D from Oxford University and an MBA from UCD's Smurfit Business School.



Christopher O'Sullivan

Christopher is the Fianna Fáil TD for Cork South West. In January 2025, he was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity. Born and bred in Clonakilty, West Cork, Christopher was a county councillor for 13 years, in which time he served as Mayor of County Cork. Since being elected to the Dáil Éireann in 2020 he has been a strong voice for the agriculture, hospitality, tourism and live entertainment sectors, as well as standing up for fishing communities hard hit by Brexit. Driving decisive climate action and protecting Ireland's rich biodiversity has been a major focus for Christopher in his role as vice-chair of the Climate Action Committee. Christopher is a keen birder and whale watcher.



Colin Byrne

As Principal Adviser for Water, Colin leads a team that oversees the implementation of water policy related directives, namely; the Water Framework, Groundwater, Priority Substances, Nitrates, Urban Wastewater Treatment, Bathing Waters and Drinking Water. Colin has over 35 years experience in the water sector. He has worked for the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, the Environmental Protection Agency, local authorities and the fisheries services. Colin has a Ph.D in aquatic environmental monitoring & management and a B.Sc (Ecology). He also has qualifications in project management and economics, as well as advanced training in senior leadership in the public sector.



Margaret Keegan

Mags Keegan is the Regional Coordinator for the Midlands and East region of the Local Authority Waters Programme. LAWPRO is a local authority shared service coordinating efforts to protect and restore water quality, engaging with communities, and increasing understanding of our catchments to support implementation of the right measure in the right place. Mags has an MSc in Hydrogeology and prior to LAWPRO worked in the EPA. She is part of the SMT responsible for strategic direction and overall programme delivery. She coordinates the ME regional committees, manages the ME Catchment and Communities teams, the LA Support and Coordination team and the finance, HR and IT function of the organisation.



Dr. Conor Quinlan

Conor is the Senior Manager for Climate Services in the Environmental Protection Agency, with responsibility for climate adaptation, including delivering the National Climate Change Risk Assessment, and the Climate Change in the Irish Mind Study.



Anthony Coleman

Anthony Coleman is Director of the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), an Irish local government national shared service tasked with coordinating implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive on behalf of all local authorities, providing support in catchment assessment, community engagement and development. Anthony has over 24 years' experience in local and regional government having worked in the areas of community and economic development, planning, environment and local transport. He previously worked in Asia and Africa in the field of humanitarian relief and aid and has qualifications in business, community development, management and leadership.



Enda McDonagh

Enda McDonagh, BSc Eng, IPMA, Environmental Manager at Bord na Móna (BnM), is an MSc student of Climate Change at DCU, with qualifications in Project Management, water/waste/energy. Having worked in environmental consultancy, and the OPW, he joined BnM to manage the regulation of activities under IPC Licences. Since joining BnM he has been working on various projects, including certification to ISO9001 and ISO50001, the Corrib Gas Project, environmental due diligence, EIAR & AA and the current Peatlands Climate Action Scheme, managing a team of environmental professionals and consultants on remediation/water monitoring/environmental & archaeological impact. He presents BnM on external working groups, including LAWPRO.



Lorraine Gaston

Lorraine Gaston is Catchment Manager at Uisce Éireann, where she has led the development and implementation of their drinking water source protection strategy since 2019, including the delivery of key pilot projects. Lorraine actively fosters partnerships across government agencies and local stakeholders to support integrated, long-term source protection. She has 20 years' experience working within the water and environmental sector, and prior to UÉ she worked in consultancy, specialising in European water policy and catchment science. She worked in the UK on catchment management initiatives and environmental assessments for water resource and drought planning for several water utilities.



Dr. Rebecca Jeffrey

Rebecca works in the Scientific Advice and Research Directorate of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Her current role encompasses overseeing conservation objective-setting, vertebrate, invertebrate, grassland and woodland conservation, as well as being the NPWS scientific lead in relation to the Nature Restoration Regulation. Her background is in mammal ecology.



Noel Byrne

Noel Byrne is the Programme Manager for the Drinking Water and Wastewater Enforcement Programme in the Office of Radiological Protection and Monitoring in the EPA. Noel was appointed to this role in June 2021. This programme has primary responsibility for enforcing the Drinking Water Regulations 2023, Urban waste water treatment authorisations and Abstraction licences. Prior to this appointment Noel worked in the Office of Environmental Enforcement in the EPA since 2001, managing the enforcement of Industrial and Waste licensed facilities. Noel has a Degree in Agricultural science and has a Master's in Business Administration.



Ann Marie Donlon

Ann Marie Donlon is an inspector with over 20 years experience in environmental regulation. She specialises in licensing activities to ensure adherence to environmental codes and law. Over the course of her career, she has collaborated with both national and EU-level organisations to advance environmental protection and promote a more sustainable society. In her current role, Ann Marie leads a team responsible for the registration and licensing of water abstractions and associated impoundments for the protection and improvement of our water environment and sustainable use of our natural resource.



Angela Ryan

Angela currently manages the Asset Strategy team which includes Forward Planning, Environmental Strategy, Water and Wastewater Asset Strategy. She has a strong strategic, regulatory and environmental background, and has recently delivered the 25-year strategic plan for all public water supplies in Ireland, the National Water Resources Plan.



Gerard Cafferkey

Ger Cafferkey is a Chartered Engineer with over 15 years' experience delivering complex water, wastewater, and environmental infrastructure projects. He currently leads Uisce Éireann's implementation of the Abstraction Licensing regime under the Water Environment (Abstraction and Associated Impoundment) Act 2022. Ger has worked across public and private sectors, applying his expertise in catchment hydrology, hydraulic modelling, flood management and sustainable drainage. His practical and strategic experience has also informed his guest lecturing on Hydrology and Water Resource Engineering at NUI Galway.



Dr. Ciara O'Leary

Dr. Ciara O'Leary is a senior research officer in the R&D department of Inland Fisheries Ireland with 19 years of experience in the field. Ciara oversees a number of national and international projects including the National Eel Monitoring Programme, Habitats Directive Fish Monitoring Programme, River Hydromorphology Group, Interreg DiadSea, National Barriers Programme and Barrier Mitigation Research Programme. Ciara liaises with OPW on the Environmental Drainage Maintenance Research Programme. She has responsibility for hydromorphology and between the barrier mitigation and river restoration projects is keen to build on evidence of positive benefits of these management measures on the river processes.



Roni Hawe

Roni is an environmental scientist turned civil servant with over 20 years of experience. Having started her career in the private sector, Roni has since worked in 3 different Government Departments and has been a contributor and implementer of policies concerning nature conservation, climate change and marine planning, among others. Roni joined the EPA in 2024 from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine where she most recently participated in the Offshore Wind Taskforce; led on climate action policy for the Seafood sector; managed the property portfolio of the six State Fishery Harbour Centres and last year managed an investment programme of over €70m.



Dr. Triona McGrath

Dr. Triona McGrath is the Research and Policy Lead with the National Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce); the statutory body set up to facilitate stakeholder input to water policy in Ireland. One of her key roles is to commission and manage research projects that supports the Forum develop policy advice for the Minister, the Water Policy Advisory Committee, Uisce Éireann and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. Triona leads the policy positions and submissions development process on behalf of the Water Forum. Triona's prior research focused on ocean climate change, completing a PhD and numerous post doctorate projects with the Marine Institute and the University of Galway.



John Kelly

John Kelly is the Invasive Species Programme Manager at the National Biodiversity Data Centre, where he leads the Shared Island Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative and the Data Centre's new Invasive Species Work Plan. With over 20 years of experience in biosecurity and invasive species management across Ireland, the UK, and internationally, John has made significant contributions to high-profile conservation efforts. Before his current role, he led the eradication of invasive ferrets and rats from Rathlin Island, a priority conservation project funded by EU LIFE and DAERA. Earlier in his career, he played a key role in the Invasive Species Ireland project, funded by NIEA and NPWS.



Philip Taylor

Philip specialises in analysing lakes and their catchments, investigating the impact of environmental stressors and pressures varies across this space. His recent research includes spatio-temporal analysis of algal blooms, predicting the effects of climate change on lakes, and exploring complex relationships between connectivity and biodiversity. He works with large datasets, designing integrated modelling pipelines and automated QA systems with a wide array of GIS, database, web development and coding languages. He manages the UK Lakes Portal, which brings together data, research and stakeholders across the UK.



Jenny Deakin

Jenny is a catchment scientist with 35 years of experience working in Ireland and Tasmania. She has worked throughout her career in a variety of water management related roles in the public, private and academic sectors. She holds a number of degrees which have provided her with the foundation for her expertise in the scientific evidence base to inform water management policy implementation, within an integrated catchment management framework. Jenny's current role is Programme Manager of the EPA's Water Programme. The team are responsible for water quality monitoring and assessing the pressures impacting on waters.



Dr. Noeleen McDonald

An Agricultural Inspector with the Air and Water Quality Division since 2023, Dr. Noeleen McDonald joined the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in 2018. Prior to this, she worked as a soils researcher with the Teagasc Agricultural Catchments Programme. She holds a degree in Agriculture and Environmental Sciences from University College Dublin. As a Teagasc Walsh Fellow, she completed a PhD at Queen's University Belfast, focusing on soil nitrogen mineralization in grasslands. Before undertaking her PhD, she worked with Teagasc as a REPS and Nitrates Derogation Planner. Her career to date has encompassed roles in advisory services, research, policy, and regulation.



Prof. Pat Dillon

Prof. Pat Dillon is currently Teagasc Director of Research. He has responsibility for leading Teagasc's research programme which has an annual budget of over €90 million, with over 700 researchers, support staff and graduate students. Prior to this was Head of Teagasc Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Programme. He provides a strong national leadership role to the Irish agri-food industry. In his career as a research scientist he led many large scale research programmes in areas of grazing management, stocking rate and calving date, dairy cow fertility, dairy cattle breeding and economic farm system modelling. This has had both strong national and international recognition.



Prof. Mary Ryan

Mary's career spans both advisory and research contexts in the areas of: - the economics of farm afforestation, forest carbon sequestration, water quality, biodiversity and recreation - development of new sustainability indicators - examining the behavioural drivers of farmers' implementation of water quality protection measures, developing farmer and advisory networks in organic farming - building effective organic knowledge networks for farmers and advisors.



Flemming Gertz

Lead Scientific Advisor on Water Environment at SEGES Innovation. Flemming has been dedicated to improving the Danish water environment since the mid-90s. Over the past 25 years, he has focused on a catchment-based approach and nutrient transport to enhance the coastal water environment. He has developed several innovative drainage measures to reduce nutrient runoff from fields and has worked on marine restoration projects, including eelgrass planting and seeding. Flemming has also participated in numerous international projects within the Baltic Sea and North Sea regions. In recent years, he has been instrumental in advancing Danish water management towards a more bottom-up approach.





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Conference Platform: EPA Water Conference (sli.do)



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