

Make time to go fishing



Fisheries in Yorkshire

February 2016



Yorkshire has recently experienced the wettest December on record, with rainfall of 230mm (9") being 191% of the average figure for the month. On 26 December, the River Calder and the River Aire both reached the highest levels ever recorded. The River Ouse peaked on 28 December at a level only 11cm (4") lower than the record level in 2000.

Our staff worked around the clock to both warn and assist communities and our partners. We are now in the process of inspecting our assets, talking to people in affected communities and working with our partners to identify and resolve the impacts caused by the floods.

As well as having a devastating effect on people, business and communities, extreme flows can also affect river habitats and wildlife.

The severe flooding through December and into January occurred during the period salmon and trout will have been spawning. Salmonids lay their eggs in gravels, in part to protect them from adverse environmental conditions such as high flows. If the flood conditions scour the bed material to the depth eggs have been laid then it is likely the eggs will die.

Floods can also impact the invertebrate communities on which fish feed. High losses can occur and this can have knock-on effects such as fewer fish or reduced growth.

Fish populations may also be affected by fish being washed downstream, over impassable weirs or even out into the estuary. We will only know the likely impact these floods have had on fish (and invertebrates) following surveys over the next few years (2016 – 2018).

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Have Your Say

- The Angling Trust West Yorkshire Fisheries Forum will be taking place at the Civic Hall in Brighouse on Tuesday 15 March. The Forum is an opportunity for individuals, clubs and fisheries to meet with The Environment Agency, The Angling Trust and key organisations to discuss issues relating to fisheries and fishing. The meeting is open to everyone. Please contact [John Cheyne](#) if you would like to attend and complete the [Yorkshire Fisheries Forum Survey](#) to say what topics you would like discussed.
- Please let the Aire and Calder Partnership know your thoughts on the rivers by completing their [survey](#). The partnership involves the Environment Agency, Natural England, local authorities and third sector organisations working to improve West Yorkshire's rivers.

Working Together

- Acting on feedback from last year's rod licence survey we have developed a number of proposals for rod licence reform, including a 365-day rolling licence, to replace the current 31 March end date, free junior licences and an option to buy a three-rod licence. Any changes will require Government approval and could not come into effect until March 2017. We are aiming to release further details in May.
- Numbers of salmon are at a record low. To address this, the Environment Agency will be concentrating on improving marine survival, reducing exploitation, removing barriers to migration and enhancing habitat, safeguarding sufficient flows, and maximising spawning success by improving water quality. More details can be found in the summary of a recent [Salmon Summit](#).
- Our latest [Annual Fisheries Report](#) is now available outlining fisheries activity and expenditure in England between April 2014 and March 2015. Local reports describing the work in each Environment Agency area over the same period are also available.

Stillwaters



[Peter Mischenko](#) arranged a health check for fish at Dewsbury Angling Club pond as part of a stock reduction proposed by the club. In the next month we will also be helping out with fisheries management at Little Howbrook Pond, near Sheffield. Netting operations and fish movements are best carried out before the end of March when water temperatures increase and coarse fish enter their spawning period.

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Rivers



Work has begun on Knostrop and Crown Point weirs in Leeds as part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme. The weirs will be replaced with collapsible structures, to be lowered during floods. During normal flows the new weirs will be at the same height as the structures they replaced. Fish passes are being built to allow migration past these barriers.

- Hirst Mill weir on the River Aire and Otley weir on the River Wharfe were both breached during the December floods. A hydropower scheme and fish pass are being built at Otley and a temporary repair has allowed the work to continue. Emergency repairs have been made to Bradford Rowing Club's weir at Hirst Mill. We are working with the club and the Aire Rivers Trust to include a fish passage easement into the permanent repair, supported by funding from Green Port Hull.



Photo: Martin Read

One thousand barbel were released in the River Dearne in January, as part of our ongoing stocking programme for the river. The barbel were reared at our fish farm in Calverton.

- We have helped the Upper Don Fly Fishers and the Wild Trout Trust to install over half a kilometre of stock-proof fencing, near Penistone. We are also working with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust on stock access control and tree planting on a tributary of the River Swale.
- A fish refuge and spawning area has been created on the tidal River Aire by connecting a clay pit to the river. Reeds, shrubs and small trees will be planted to provide shade and cover.



The River Stewardship Company has installed securely fastened woody debris into Barlow Brook, Chesterfield to provide cover for fish and increase the range of habitat available. We have also been helped by Chesterfield Borough Council and local landowners. Stock-proof fencing has been installed upstream to reduce sediment input.

Biosecurity and Disease

- Springtime increases in water temperature can sometimes trigger outbreaks of disease in fish. This winter has been warmer than usual and we have already responded to some reports of fish in distress. If you see fish showing signs of disease, please phone our free 24-hour hotline 0800 80 70 60.



An unusually high number of salmon and sea trout from the River Esk last summer were reported to be infected with fungus. Over the next three years we will be helping Cardiff University as they address the question of why some rivers are more badly affected by fungal outbreaks than others.

- The Yorkshire Floating Pennywort Forum reports a continued decline in the total amount of floating pennywort on the River Calder with the River Don catchment offering the best chance of eradicating the species. The River Aire from the confluence with the Calder was being treated for the first time in 2015 and responded well.

Enforcement

- The Environment Agency has prosecuted Yorkshire Water Services Ltd after an ageing sewage pipe burst and killed hundreds of fish in Walton Angling Club's waters, near Wakefield. The company has been fined £600,000 and ordered to pay £24,000 in legal costs. Fisheries officer [Pete Turner](#) provided advice on restocking, which is being paid for by YWS. The company also intend to compensate the angling club and the local authority for financial losses.
- In October, November and December, our fisheries enforcement officers questioned 1,055 anglers with 59 being reported for various fisheries offences. Six reports of suspected fisheries offences were reported to our 0800 80 70 60 hotline over the same period.
- We regulate the salmon and sea trout net fishery in Filey Bay and work with the commercial fishers, Natural England and Wold Ecology to monitor by-catch of sea birds. The 2015 by-catch was the lowest to date and the fishery is now an example of best practice with regard to by-catch.

Please contact us for more information on any subject covered in this newsletter. Phone us on 03708 506 506 (Mon to Fri 8am to 8pm) or email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk. Please report incidents to our 24 hour Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60.

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