

Summer advice for river fishery managers

May 2022

Act now to protect your fishery

Prolonged dry weather can affect fish stocks and the fisheries they support. Where river flows and water levels fall, low dissolved oxygen levels can put fish at risk and some rivers can dry out. Risks are especially acute during warm weather and where there is a lot of weed growth. Fishery managers will be well aware of the risks affecting their waters, but we hope this advice will be a useful reminder.

- Think ahead and be prepared. Plan what to do in the event of an incident. Sharing your plans with staff or with angling club members will help them be aware and prepared to reduce the impacts of warmer weather incidents at your fishery.
- Be vigilant. Keep a close eye on river flows and look for any signs of fish in distress.
- If you think your fishery may be at risk of low dissolved oxygen (due to algal growth, low water levels or rising temperatures), be prepared and check that you have access to aeration equipment. You may be able to make your own Venturi aerator with help from our [online step-by-step videos](#).
- Think carefully before cutting weed as it helps to hold up water levels, provides shelter and shade, and avoids disturbing silt, which can reduce water quality. Retaining bankside vegetation can also provide valuable shelter and shade during warm weather. If you do cut weed, leave it on the bankside for 24 to 48 hours to allow any invertebrates to return to the water. But after that, make sure you remove it to avoid any organic run-off further reducing dissolved oxygen in your fishery
- If you plan to stock your water with fish, consider delaying until cooler conditions are restored and stocking in lower densities.
- Avoid stocking waters vulnerable to drying out, such as headwaters and perched or raised channels, particularly from mid-summer when groundwater and river levels are likely to fall most sharply.
- Talk to neighbouring fishery managers, river keepers and other parties about how best to manage river flows to avoid ecological impacts.
- In raised or perched channels, check hatches and structures for unnecessary leakage in order to maintain depth. Even with low flows, deeper areas will still provide fish with shelter and useable habitat.
- Low flows and reduced water levels can increase the risk of predation by fish-eating birds. To reduce this pressure, maintain as much rough and overhanging marginal cover as possible, particularly adjacent to pool habitats which provide areas for fish to hide.
- Take care over fish welfare, particularly for more sensitive species, including salmon, sea trout, brown trout, grayling, pike and barbel. Take particular care when playing, landing and releasing salmon and sea trout during warm weather and avoid fishing if the water temperature exceeds 18°C by mid-morning. Unhook fish in the water if possible and only take them out of the water for unhooking if absolutely necessary. Take photos in the water - keeping a fish in the air, even for a few seconds, can greatly reduce its chances of surviving after capture and going on to spawn successfully.
- More advice on good catch and release practices for salmon and sea trout can be found at https://www.fishingpassport.co.uk/download/C&R_2013.pdf or by watching the Angling Trust series of "The Gift" videos: <http://anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=1180§ionTitle=Save+Our+Salmon>



In extreme conditions, some rivers can dry out

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

Please note:

- Please make sure you hold an abstraction licence if you are abstracting more than 20 cubic metres/day and comply with the conditions of your abstraction licence. For more information, please see <https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/water>.
- If you need to stock your water with fish, you must make sure you have a site permit and can comply with the conditions. This is designed to reduce the spread of fish diseases and invasive non-native fish species. You may need an authorisation from us to remove fish from your water (other than by rod and line). Details of these permits can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-move-live-fish-to-or-from-a-fishery>.
- If you need to control weed, please remember you will need our agreement to use herbicides in or near water. You can find out more at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-to-use-herbicides-in-or-near-water>.
- We may be able to provide aeration for affected waters. In exceptional circumstances, we may rescue vulnerable fish, if we can find somewhere safe to move them to and on the condition that the fish have been health screened within the last six months. It may be beneficial to health screen your stock prior to the summer season.
- Fish may be more vulnerable to fish diseases during warm weather and when they are stressed. Please report any suspected disease outbreaks to us immediately.

If you see any fish in distress or suspect a fish disease outbreak please tell us immediately by calling our National Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

For further information

Please contact your local fisheries team by calling 03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm) if you would like advice or assistance.

For the current water situation in your area please look at our website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/water-situation-reports-for-england>

Thank you for your support in helping us minimise the impacts of the dry weather.

Environment Agency Fisheries team



Encourage your anglers to take care when handling and releasing fish during warm weather

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88