

Advice note to stillwater fisheries

Protect fish and wildlife in dry weather

Water situation update

As you are no doubt aware, the last two months have been very dry following a drier than average winter in Sussex. Most rivers are low for the time of year. However groundwater levels remain not far below average and it is unlikely that a serious drought affecting public water supplies will develop this year. High temperatures with low flows will, though, increase the risk of environmental problems. The latest water situation report for the Solent and South Downs Area can be found on our website:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/127606.aspx

You can also find the latest river and groundwater levels¹ for a number of strategic sites across the area here:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/99556.aspx

Suggested advice to stillwater fishery managers and owners

We recommend that you consider the following actions in order to minimise the risk of fish mortalities:

- Keep a close watch on water levels and look for any signs of fish in distress. Visiting the water early in the morning will allow you to observe your fishery when dissolved oxygen levels are at their lowest.
- To help maintain water levels repair leaking sluices or control structures so as to preserve valuable water resources.
- Consider restricting the use of bait and ground bait to avoid unnecessary pressure on water quality.
- Minimise the use of keep nets. If a match is planned consider using multiple weigh-ins to avoid unnecessary stress to fish stocks.

¹ This information has been gathered from our telemetry equipment so has not been subject to quality control

- Avoid stocking further fish.
- Consider reducing fish stock densities to avoid problems later with reducing water levels and low dissolved oxygen levels. Prior to moving any fish, a consent is required from the Environment Agency. This is designed to reduce both the spread of fish disease and non-native species.
- With the potential of low water levels and high temperatures, care must be taken over fish welfare.
- If you believe your fishery may be at risk from low dissolved oxygen levels due to algal growth, low water levels, elevated temperatures or over-crowding - be prepared - and check that you have access to water pumps, aeration equipment² and generators.

Please note:

- Talk to us before you relocate fish, as our written consent is required. This is designed to reduce the spread of both fish diseases and non-native fish species.
- We won't normally rescue fish. However, in exceptional circumstances, we may consider an emergency fish rescue, 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.
- Please report any dead carp to us immediately as this may be due to a disease outbreak.

If you see any fish in distress please tell us immediately by calling our National Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60

We have included a poster with this advice note, which you may wish to put up in an appropriate location at your fishery.

Thank you for your support in helping us minimise the impacts of the dry weather. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and keep you updated. For further assistance or advice, please contact our Fisheries and Biodiversity Department on 01903 703976 between the hours of 0900 - 1700.

² You can get aeration equipment locally from companies listed in the Yellow Pages or online.