

the Wey Fisheries Action Plan projects

Case studies



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Published by:

Environment Agency
Rio House
Waterside Drive, Aztec West
Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD
Tel: 0870 8506506
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

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Marsh Farm

In 1997, Godalming Angling Society purchased 26 acres of land at Marsh Farm, Milford, with a view to providing two 3-4 acres lakes, a half-acre training pool, a wildlife pool and a teaching centre housed in a pavilion-style building. A successful application was made for Sports Council Lottery funding – the largest fishing related grant ever approved.

The Environment Agency provided much-needed funding for the construction of the 118 fishing platforms with access for disabled anglers and donated a safety boat. Numerous complex planning issues had to be resolved and the work that started in 2002 was completed in 2004 with three fishing lakes opened to members and day ticket holders.

All stock, apart from the bream in Richardson's Lake, was netted from Johnson's Lake next door. The fish have grown and the lake now holds tench weighing 9lbs, crucian carp weighing 4lbs 4 ozs, roach, bream and rudd weighing 2lbs 8ozs, and perch weighing 2lbs 8ozs.



Marsh Farm construction



Marsh Farm complete



Marsh Farm angling try-out session

River Tillingbourne fish spawning and bypass channel – Albury

After being approached by the local angling club about restoring the banks, we identified the potential to improve a section of the Tillingbourne that was showing poor habitat due to shading, impoundment and a build-up of silt.

A derelict mill structure impounded the reach. It was decided that, rather than simply repairing the bank, a new channel bypassing the structure would provide the greatest enhancement for the fishery and wildlife.

The River Tillingbourne supports both native brown trout and coarse fish. For the fish population to flourish there must be adequate habitat for spawning and survival of juveniles.



Tillingbourne's new channel

Weirs or structures can be impassable to migrating fish trying to swim upstream to look for new spawning areas. Previous research work has shown that both coarse fish and salmonids such as trout will migrate for miles to find potential spawning habitat.

Spawning habitat for brown trout consists of fast-flowing water and a gravel layered riverbed with clean loose gravels where trout cut spawning redds (gravel nests) around November or December. The gravels in which trout spawn must be free from silt that can smother eggs and reduce survival rates. Most river-dwelling coarse fish also spawn on gravel in April or May. In-stream weed cover undercut banks and marginal overhang provides protection against predators and a safe haven for juvenile fish survival.



Tillingbourne after new establishment

This location on the Tillingbourne was chosen as an ideal site to create a combined fish spawning and bypass channel. The channel measures 150 metres and was designed to create a pool and riffle habitat. Gravel was imported to provide a habitat for spawning on the riffle sections. The opening of the tree-lined canopy above was designed to let light in and enhance the growth of both in-stream and marginal weed cover. The new channel bypasses the derelict mill structure and provides an upstream passage to migrating fish.

Construction began with backing from the fishing club and permission from all interested parties. Our fisheries team funded this project and our internal work force carried out the construction work. It took approximately three months to complete.

The steeper gradient of the river upstream ensures that faster flows create naturally diverse conditions with gravel runs and glides kept free of silt to provide potential spawning habitat.

Brittens Pond

Guildford Angling Society have been working with the Environment Agency for some years to deal with the impacts of poor water quality on fish stocks in Brittens Pond, a five acre lake on the Whitmoor Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The club used aeration equipment and monitored oxygen levels, but the situation continued to deteriorate.

The Brittens Pond Enhancement Project was set up in 2005 to tackle the problems caused by a large build-up of silt that comes from surface water drainage systems in the surrounding area. This silt is stirred up by large fish, like carp, preventing plant growth and reducing water quality. The project aims to limit impacts by removing some of the existing silt and constructing a trap to prevent more silt getting into the pond. However, it is also important to ensure that a pond of this type and size is inhabited by the right number and mix of fish species.

In 2007, we carried out a survey to assess the amount of carp living in the pond. The survey involved carefully netting fish which were then weighed individually, measured, logged, and marked with a harmless blue dye before being



Brittens Pond netting

released back into the water. The fisheries team returned three weeks later to net the pond again. Fisheries officers were able to get an accurate estimate of how many carp live in the pond by counting all the marked and unmarked carp.

As a result of the survey, the project team agreed to reduce the number of carp in the pond. This will not only improve water quality and plant growth, it will also lead to an increase in the size of the remaining carp and improvements in the condition of other species such as tench, roach and perch. These actions will restore the pond as an all-round fishery, providing sport for anglers of all ages and experience. Guildford Angling Society plan to hold coaching events at the pond in the future for local children. The project will be completed in 2010.



Brittens Pond and net

Proposed bypass channel through Bulldogs Island – Weybridge

Weirs at the bottom end of the River Wey have effectively blocked migration routes for fish from the Thames for probably more than 300 years. While the lock system may provide a migration route for some fish during certain periods, it is far short of an effective fish pass.

The National Trust and Latchmere Homes have backed a proposal to build a by-pass channel through Bulldogs Island. The by-pass will, once again, allow the free movement of fish from the Thames into the Wey system. In addition to providing free fish passage, the new stream will create highly valuable river and wetland habitats through the island encouraging wildlife to flourish.

Wey Valley project officer

Collaboratively funded by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), the Environment Agency and Woking Borough Council, the Wey Valley Project is the first point of contact for farmers, landowners and managers looking for advice and information on environmentally friendly floodplain management in both commercial farming and non-commercial situations.

The project officer can offer advice on grant schemes and habitat management and can also clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies and authorities that work within the river valley. The service offered by the Wey Valley Project Officer includes a free first-time visit to any landowner with floodplain or river valley land.

An important aspect of the Wey Valley Project's work is the emphasis on partnership between statutory agencies, local government, non-governmental and voluntary organisations, farmers, landowners, residents and river user groups that have an interest in the wellbeing of the Wey Valley landscape.

Fly life monitoring programme

The Anglers Monitoring Initiative was launched nationally in 2007 following a successful pilot scheme carried out across three rivers in the United Kingdom, including the River Wey. The scheme is now open to all anglers throughout the United Kingdom who are concerned about the health of their rivers.

The Pilot scheme on the River Wey was instrumental in the development of this project. Monitoring groups co-ordinated by Frensham Fly fishers, Peper Harow Angling Club and Albury Fly fishers ensured the continued success of the pilot study through to its launch as a national programme.

Since the launch of the scheme at the Riverfly Partnership's conference in 2007, more angling groups have become involved. Regular monitoring of the invertebrate fauna now takes place on the Rivers Loddon, Lyde, Whitewater, Wandle and Wey North.

Enthusiasm and commitment of angling groups working with the Environment Agency is vital to the continued success of this programme. The scheme also helps in the fight against pollution by providing an early warning of deterioration in water quality.

The Anglers Monitoring Initiative has shown itself to be an essential tool in the battle to maintain healthy river environments. For more information about the Riverfly Partnership visit www.riverflies.org



Water resources flow study – Unstead

The Environment Agency commissioned Environmental and Engineering Consultancy (Entec) to carry out an investigation into the flow on the River Wey at Unstead where it divides into two channels: the natural River Wey and the Wey Navigation. The aim was to establish and agree a water level management regime with the National Trust (operators of the Wey Navigation) which would allow more water to flow down the natural Wey under low flow conditions, without disruption to the operation of the Wey Navigation.

Entec produced a number of recommendations which were reviewed by the National Trust and the Environment Agency. The National Trust are going to trial one of the options to put more flow down the natural River Wey, and the trial will be monitored.



Unstead Weir biological sampling



Unstead Weir



Unstead hydrometric set-up

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