

Salmon Five Point Approach – restoring salmon in England

Our Mission

To restore the abundance, diversity and resilience of salmon stocks throughout England

We will do this by:-

- a) Maximising the production of healthy wild salmon smolts in freshwater and seeking to reduce salmon mortality at sea.***
- b) Working in partnership across Government, its agencies and partner organisations to introduce new initiatives and improve the delivery of existing measures to protect and maximise salmon stock performance.***

Introduction

This document sets out the high level commitments, the necessary actions and key measures to improve the future for salmon following the Salmon Summit held in November 2015. This important meeting brought together Government and Environment Agency leaders, leaders from NGOs, other partner organisations and stakeholder groups with an interest in salmon and their dependent fisheries. It recognised the need to take a new and re-invigorated approach to salmon fishery management and conservation, taking advantage of improved opportunities for partnership working and the ambition of Government to create a healthy, vibrant environment that encourages sustainable economic growth.



The status of salmon in England

Salmon are a protected species and an iconic indicator of the health of the water environment. The 2014 assessment of salmon stocks showed a further decline in salmon populations to the lowest levels on record. Our assessment places each rivers' salmon stock into one of four categories with the strongest classed as 'Not at Risk' and the weakest as 'At Risk'. In 2014, 38 of England's 42 principal salmon rivers were assessed as being 'At Risk' or 'Probably at Risk'. None were categorised as 'Not at Risk', see Figures (1) and (2) below. The poor state of Atlantic salmon is not unique to England and is reflected across the UK and throughout much of its range.

Salmon are a valued part of England's 'natural capital' supporting an estimated 900 full time jobs and an estimated £22million in household income, which is particularly important for rural communities and economies where a salmon fishery exists. Healthier stocks would increase these benefits to the economy. Furthermore when the public were asked about their willingness to pay to avoid a severe decline in salmon stocks, this figure for England was estimated at £300million (Environment Agency, Economic Evaluation of Inland Fisheries, 2009).

Figure 1: State of England's 42 principal salmon rivers

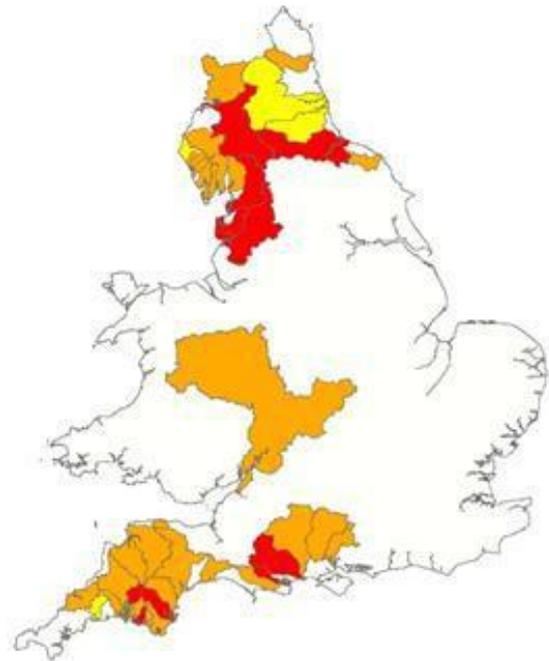
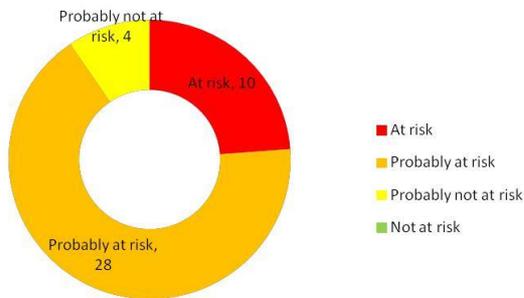
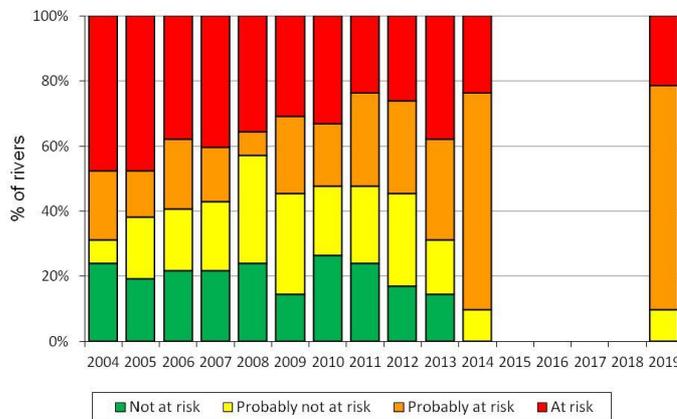


Figure 2: Percentage of England's 42 principal salmon rivers in each risk category assessed against the management objective, for 2004-2014 and as predicted for 2019



What needs to be done

The biggest single factor impacting the status of salmon populations has been declining marine survival, which has nearly halved over the last 20 years. This has been largely linked to climate change induced environmental changes which are believed to affect feeding. However, we know that when we address the pressures on salmon in the freshwater and coastal environments we see a clear response with improved smolt production and returning numbers of adult fish.

Over the last twenty years, there have been notable successes with improvements recorded in some salmon populations, such as those on the Rivers Tyne, Mersey and Don where water quality and physical river habitats have been restored. These successes demonstrate that through careful management and partnership working, salmon stocks can recover when given the opportunity, even in the context of poor sea survival.

However, all parties understand that there is still much to do to offset the overall decline in salmon stock abundance. It is recognised that this can only be achieved through the implementation of a

strategic and co-ordinated approach concentrating upon the areas of water environment management that we are able to influence directly. This will ensure that we work in a collaborative and holistic way and fully consider the needs of salmon in the way in which we manage the water environment, the land and activities which occur in the surrounding river catchment area. It supports the concept of maximising the natural capital of environmental assets such as salmon, whilst ensuring sustainable development, economic growth and the well being of our country both now and for future generations.

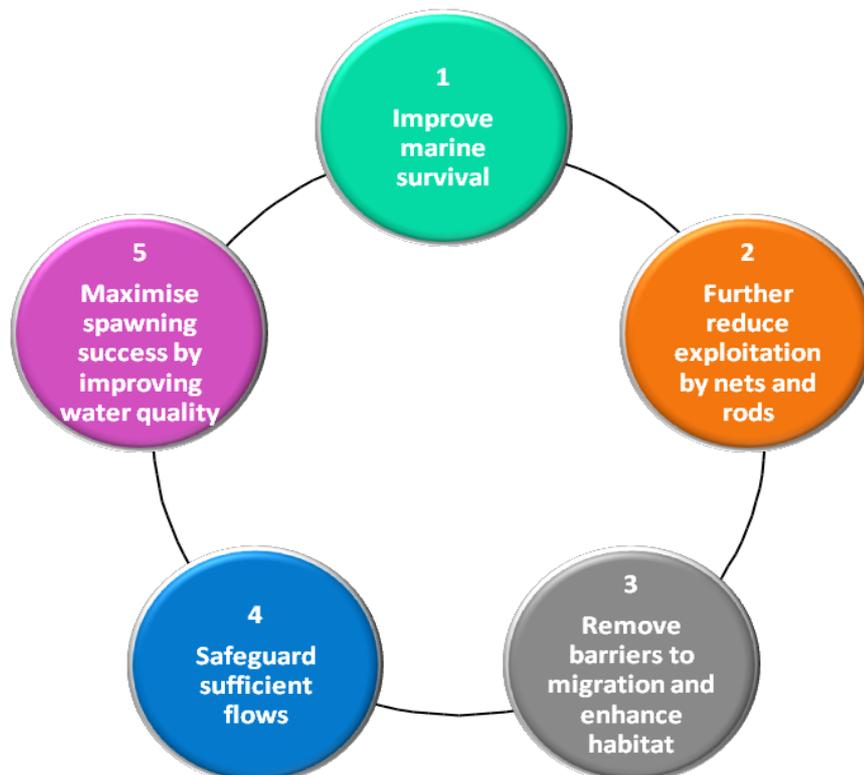
It is important to recognise that the measures that we are jointly setting out to benefit salmon will also have significant beneficial environmental outcomes for rivers, natural capital and many other species of fish and other wildlife. In particular, implementation of this approach will also assist in maintaining and developing sea trout populations, which also make a valuable contribution to the local economy and help to define the health of our river catchments.

How we are going to deliver

It is not possible for the Environment Agency alone to enable the restoration of salmon stocks and there is a need and benefit in working in partnership to maximise the co-ordination and efficient use of available resources, technical skills and the unique abilities of partners to deliver more for the environment. Furthermore, the measures which need to be implemented to protect and sustain salmon stocks need to be carried out across the whole of the Environment Agency, particularly with respect to influencing agriculture and managing delivery of river basin plans, water resources and water quality, with support from across Defra and its agencies.

This has led to the Environment Agency and its partners developing a five point approach to delivering a better future for salmon. This approach aims to address pressures at different life stages of salmon, recognises the range of regulatory interventions required across Defra and its agencies and the important role that third sector partners can play in its successful delivery. Annex 1 sets out the high level commitments being made by the Environment Agency and key partners to deliver this approach. Figure 3 shows how the five point approach will be applied.

Figure 3: Five Point Approach to conserve and enhance England's salmon populations



Starting in April 2016, the Environment Agency is putting in place an 18 month programme to kick start the new approach and help coordinate the actions needed by a range of organisations for the period 2016-2021. The most appropriate timetables have been agreed for each commitment, for

example matching the river basin planning cycle. The England Fisheries Group¹ will provide the strategic steer and advice to the programme.

Due to the lifecycle of the salmon, it will be some years before our renewed efforts can be measured. Nevertheless we are developing a set of key measures which when considered in combination will help us track the success of the programme and the approach going forward. These are likely to include:

- The status of salmon stock performance through juvenile stock performance and conservation limit compliance assessment.
- An increase in spawning habitat available to salmon.
- Maintained or improved ecological status of salmon rivers through WFD assessment.
- Increased social and economic benefits of salmon angling as measured through the number of licensed anglers and angler surveys.

How to get involved

The England Fisheries Group are playing a key role in the five point approach and represent a range of fisheries, angling and conservation interests. The Angling Trust organises regular forums in each region for anglers, fishery owners, angling clubs and people involved in the angling trade. Anyone is welcome and you don't have to be a member of the Angling Trust to attend. These forums are an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues about the Environment Agency's plans for tackling the problems affecting salmon stocks in that region and to contribute to regional input to national initiatives by both the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust.

<https://anglingtrust.net/regional-forums/>

The Rivers Trust is a committed partner in the delivery of the five point approach. Rivers trusts provide a charitable, incorporated vehicle for communities to deliver improvements to their river and water environment. Anyone interested in the work of the rivers trusts, or getting involved in their local trust, can find details at <http://www.theriverstrust.org/>

If you want to get involved in your Catchment Partnership visit: www.catchmentbasedapproach.org

If you have any questions for the Environment Agency please contact our Senior Advisor for salmon Lawrence.talks@environment-agency.gov.uk

¹ 1 The England Fisheries Group includes senior representatives of Angling Trust, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Canal and Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Institute of Fisheries Management, Rivers Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation UK and Wild Trout Trust, Meetings are also attended by Defra and Welsh Government officials.

Annex 1 Five-point approach High Level commitments 2016-2021

No.	Commitments	Lead Body	Delivery period
1.	IMPROVE MARINE SURVIVAL		
1.1	Work with North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) to manage fishing pressures outside of UK waters.	Defra	2016-2021
1.2	Optimise survival of adult salmon and smolts in estuarine and coastal environments.	Environment Agency	2016-2021
1.3	Support NASCO and other initiatives to develop research into salmon mortality at sea as funding opportunities allow	Defra	2016-2021
1.4	Raise the profile of salmon by supporting the proposed international year of the salmon.	Defra	2017
2.	FURTHER REDUCE EXPLOITATION BY NETS AND RODS		
2.1	Review regulation of net fisheries to better protect salmon stocks with a presumption of only allowing exploitation where there is a harvestable surplus and ending coastal mixed stock fisheries.	Environment Agency	2018
2.2	Appraise options, make recommendations to the Environment Agency and assure implementation of approved measures to reduce the impact of angling on salmon stocks, focussing on protected rivers and those facing the highest risk.	Angling Trust	2017
2.3	Develop and implement a national framework for more joined up and effective enforcement to protect salmon in coastal and estuarine environments with the Marine Management Organisation, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and other relevant bodies.	Environment Agency	2017
2.4	To complement delivery by the Environment Agency, develop and make recommendations to the Environment Agency and implement an approach by which third sector and private interests support delivery of salmon enforcement in rivers.	Angling Trust	2017
3.	REMOVE BARRIERS TO MIGRATION (UP & DOWN) AND ENHANCE HABITAT		
3.1	Ensure salmon priority fish passage and habitat actions are embedded and delivered as an integrated part of water environment improvement plans focussing on bottle-necks to production.	Environment Agency	2016
3.2	Assess the impacts of barriers upon downstream smolt migration and identify priority actions to address them.	Environment Agency	2016-2021
3.3	Maximise delivery of priority fish passage and habitat actions for salmon by working through partnerships with local communities in a cost effective way using the Catchment Based Approach.	Rivers Trust	2016-2021

3.4	Develop and secure funding and implement a programme to address priority barriers to salmon migration through the Fisheries Partnership Working Group	Rivers Trust	2016 - 2021
3.5	Deliver new fish passage regulations.	Defra	2017
3.6	Reduce impact of damaging avian predation on parr and smolts.	Angling Trust	2016-2021
3.7	Influence land use and related channel management to reduce pollution and restore more natural flow conditions for salmon.	Environment Agency	2016-2021
4.	SAFEGUARD SUFFICIENT FLOWS		
4.1	Ensure that we are using best available evidence to inform future environmental flow constraints for abstraction permitting and that the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme delivers improvements for salmon	Environment Agency	2018
4.2	Secure further improvements for salmon through the water company price review process.	Environment Agency	2016-2019
4.3	Ensure abstraction reform provides a framework for more flexible management of abstraction to better safeguard flows for the environment, in particular for upstream and downstream migration.	Defra	2020s
4.4	Ensure hydro and tidal power schemes do not cause deterioration in salmon populations.	Environment Agency	2016-2021
5.	MAXIMISE SPAWNING SUCCESS AND JUVENILE SURVIVAL BY IMPROVING WATER QUALITY		
5.1	Implement the water companies' National Environment Programme PR14 and secure further improvements for salmon through PR19.	Environment Agency	2016-2019
5.2	Ensure incident response and enforcement takes into account the impacts on salmon.	Environment Agency	2016
5.3	Secure opportunities to improve conditions for salmon through agri-environment schemes including the development of payments for ecosystem services.	Defra	2017-2021
5.4	Through the Catchment-Based Approach work with local farming communities and others to improve the environment for salmon.	Rivers Trust	2017-21
5.5	Assess priorities for action in addressing water pollution impacts on salmon	Salmon & Trout Conservation UK	2018