


# Summer advice for fishery managers

2024

## Act now to protect your fishery

Prolonged dry weather can negatively impact fish stocks and the fisheries they support. Where water levels fall and warm up faster, low dissolved oxygen levels can put fish at risk; especially during warm weather and where there's lots of aquatic plant growth. Fishery managers will likely be aware of the risks affecting their waters, but we hope this advice will serve as a useful reminder.

### Riverine fisheries

- Think carefully before cutting aquatic plants (weed), as they help to hold up water levels, provide shelter and shade, and avoid disturbing silt, which can negatively impact water quality. Retaining bankside vegetation also provides valuable shelter and shade during warmer weather.
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- Aquatic plants are often chock-full of invertebrates – natural food for your fish! If you need to remove excess plant growth, temporarily place it in small piles on the riverbank, no further than 1m from the water's edge, and leave in situ for 24-48hrs – this allows any invertebrates to find their way back into the water. After this period, move the piles to another location onsite, where they can rot down and be far enough away from the water, so any run-off doesn't pose a risk to dissolved oxygen levels.
  - Avoid stocking fish during warm, dry weather. As water temperatures rise, water holds less oxygen. If you feel stocking is necessary, consider delaying until cooler conditions are restored (when oxygen levels are higher), or stock 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 valuable 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 provides 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 20degC 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 onto 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](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&sectionTitle=Save+Our+Salmon>



### 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, please 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 aquatic plants, 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**