

Fish rescued as Shropshire rivers dry up

Yesterday, officers were out on the Teme at Lower Stanage and on the River Redlake at Bucknell, rescuing more than 60 brown trout and one salmon. Officers were also out on the Teme last week rescuing trout and salmon. All of the fish caught have been moved downstream to deeper waters.

It is an area prone to drying up when there has been little rain. Fish have been moved downstream and once the water comes back they will steadily flow back up and repopulate again. With May being the driest since records began, it is no surprise that Environment Agency specialists had to move fish downstream.

This section of the River Redlake at Bucknall has completely dried out

Dave Carrington, fisheries officer with the Environment Agency said:

In recent years we've had to regularly rescue fish on these rivers as they've been left stranded when the river dries up after a dry spell. We will continue to monitor these rivers as sections of them are likely to continue to dry up and will carry out further fish rescues if needed.

Fisheries technical specialist with the Environment Agency, Chris Bainger, also commented on the low numbers of juvenile salmon found during these rescues:

This may be an indication of the effects of recent flooding. The lack of juveniles is a real concern, as salmon stocks are already at a critically low level in the Severn catchment. If the juveniles are not present this indicates either a failure of adult spawning or the obliteration of the redds (nests) last winter, that will impact on the numbers of returning adults in 4 and 5 years' time.

With the long dry spell continuing, figures show that in the Severn Basin, in February, rainfall was nearly 3 times the average, while in May it was only 11 per cent of the average for the month. With demand for clean water currently outstripping supply, consumers are being asked to use water wisely, for example, by not using sprinklers or hoses to water gardens, and to take showers rather than baths.

The work was all carried out adhering to current guidelines on social distancing.

Warm weather can often lead to algal blooms or water that is too warm which make it difficult for fish to breathe. They are often seen gasping for air; if anyone sees fish in distress, please contact the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60.

Notes to editors

The role of the Environment Agency during a dry spell is to monitor and protect the environment, whilst balancing the needs of people, industry and agriculture.

During dry spells it's not unusual for some rivers and lakes in fast responding catchments to deplete quickly, during even short periods of low rainfall, and they tend to recover quickly when the rain returns.

There are currently no water use restrictions in place for local water company customers. And groundwater resources are normal for the time or year.

Like most years, we're releasing water from the Shropshire Groundwater Scheme and Clywedog Reservoir into the River Severn. The River Severn forms part of a large water supply system for the West Midlands. Around 6 million people rely upon the river for their drinking water as well as providing water for local businesses.

We're closely monitoring all rivers across the area, as is usual in warm dry weather, there are already abstraction restrictions in place. Further restrictions will be issued when necessary. These are issued when the river is too low to sustain the number of abstractions and protect the environment.