

Press release: Emergency review of salmon numbers to protect stocks in the Severn estuary

Licences for all forms of net fishing on the estuary, usually available from 1 June, are not currently being issued as new figures on the stock for the Severn, Wye and Usk, which salmon from the Severn estuary migrate to, have been shown to be extremely low and further consideration of the availability of permits is required.

The review of the stock assessment will continue until 14 June when a decision will be announced on what further action is needed to protect the species. The Environment Agency is considering introducing an emergency byelaw prohibiting any salmon fishing by nets in the estuary for the current season, which continues through to the end of August, or whether other action can achieve the protection that is required. A review on whether rod anglers will be required to return any salmon caught after 16 June will be part of this consideration.

Reducing the taking of salmon is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger national programme to protect salmon stocks. Actions taken by the Environment Agency and its partners that contribute to protecting salmon stocks include removing barriers, improving water quality and agricultural practices and addressing unsustainable water abstractions.

David Hudson, Environment Manager for Gloucestershire said:

We have not taken this decision lightly. There are a variety of environmental factors that have led to the decline in salmon stocks in the Severn estuary, it's not just about the number taken through fishing.

But only through taking action now, and through the co-operation of others, will we manage to protect this iconic fish in the Severn for future generations. Doing nothing is not an option.

I know this will impact many fishermen and am sorry for the disruption but it is essential we take strong and immediate action to protect salmon in the river Severn as they are particularly at risk. We are liaising with our colleagues in Natural Resources Wales and Natural England and with those affected.