

Press release: Warning for anglers after illegal cast net seized

Anyone caught fishing with an illegal cast net in North East waters will be prosecuted, the Environment Agency has warned.

The warning follows the seizure of a cast net from an angler caught using it to catch salmon on the River Wear at Durham. The seizure was a first for the area and Environment Officers want it to stay that way.

Fisheries Enforcement Technical Specialist Kevin Summerson is leading the investigation against the angler. He said:

Even though these nets can be purchased from a number of UK outlets it is illegal to use them in North East rivers. Anyone caught and prosecuted could face a hefty fine and even a custodial sentence.

We take illegal fishing very seriously. Whether anglers use illegal equipment or fish without a licence, it's not fair on other anglers and endangers the future of the sport.

"Our work is intelligence led and we work closely with our partners at the police and Angling Trust to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported to us.

We carry out enforcement work all year round and will be continuing throughout the coming weeks, including the upcoming Bank Holiday weekends. I'd urge people to help us protect the health of our fisheries by reporting any suspected illegal activity to us.

It is illegal to use cast nets to catch freshwater fish, eels, trout, migratory trout or salmon in the North East. They are also illegal if used to catch migratory trout, salmon or freshwater eels up to six nautical miles from the coast line.

The maximum penalty for this offence if convicted before a magistrate is an unlimited fine and/or three months in custody, or an unlimited fine and/or up to two years in custody before the crown court.

The Environment Agency works 24 hours a day to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to our Incident Hotline on 0800 807060.