



# State of the Natural Environment – Natural England April 2008

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Full report (and sections) available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/son/default.htm>

Resource documents (containing supporting material) available from:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/son/resourcedocs.htm> - at the time of writing Open Water (Rivers, canals, ponds) document was not available. The full document is over 300 pages long so these points are as condensed as possible. Page numbers are given to allow you to find out more about context and related information.

Sections 3.7 and 3.8 deal with Open Waters and Wetlands respectively and are of particular interest to Trusts. AT the end of every section there is an estimation of the 'economic value' of whatever is being discussed. This gives some useful quotes on values and methods of calculation that could support Trust funding applications.

## Key points for Rivers Trusts

1. Conclusions identify 'wetland and freshwater habitats' condition as giving 'particular concern'.
2. Rivers and Streams are one of the 'declining stock' habitats (p.48)
3. Information gaps have been identified and the need to work with partners to plug them is spelt out.
4. Need to work on a 'sufficiently large landscape scale' identified
5. Acknowledgment of report relying heavily on SSSI data in the absence of sufficient information for the wider environment
6. Chalk rivers – UK has more than any other EU country (3,900km) and their value is indicated for various species and habitats (p.93)
7. The main cause of unfavourable condition in Open Waters is eutrophication (p.98)
8. 55% and 31% of England's rivers have high phosphate and nitrate levels respectively. (p.98)
9. Only 2% of England's rivers are covered by SSSI designations, of those only 28% are in favourable or recovering condition (p.98 table). Highlights the potential benefits of working on catchments rather than sites (also alluded to in the Freshwater section on p. 241).
10. Freshwater fish (including most protected species) are not systematically monitored (p.100)
11. Tyne, Tees, Wye, Severn and Dee are used as examples in 'recovery' of fish stocks (p.100)
12. Threats to Open Waters (section 3.7.4.2 p.101), Wetlands (S 3.8.4.2 p.109), Coasts (p.134), Marine (p.146),
13. Economic value of wetlands is acknowledged through indirect uses such as carbon storage, flood risk management and clean water. Willingness to pay is greatest when wetlands are linked to flood control (p.103)
14. Economic value of 'charismatic species' uses Otter and Water Vole as examples (p.152)
15. Chapter 3. Biodiversity – Evidence Gaps (p.163). Good hooks to support Rivers Trusts monitoring work.
16. 150.6 million visits to inland water in England (4% of all leisure visits in 2006). (p.169)
17. Under-represented groups defined (p.170). Useful to link to Access to Nature Funding stream (administered by Natural England).
18. According to NE of the 59,909km of major rivers, minor rivers and canals in England 4,308km (7%) are navigable.
19. Biofuel crops need to be sited to avoid water stress (p.212)
20. Development will affect water tables, water quality, pollution and runoff. (p.218)

21. Climate Change will increase the risks associated with Water Abstraction (p.219)
22. Chapter 5. Evidence Gaps – call for better, more systematic, recording of non-native invasive species (p.233)
23. Section 6.6.1. – Catchment Sensitive Farming (p.277-279)
24. Asset Management Plans prepared by water companies are seen as being able to ‘reduce the impacts of abstraction’ (p.280)
25. Refs to SCAMP and Ripon catchment management projects (p.283 and p. 281 respectively).
26. WFD will “increase the number of pollutants requiring monitoring and control in the future” (p.290)

## Useful quotes / ideas

- a. “High quality landscapes are crucial to providing high quality ecosystem services” (p.8)
- b. Public understanding of biodiversity is generally low (p.41 box) and complex terms cause overestimation of the complexity of the environment (p.168)
- c. Government definition of various ‘running water’ types (p.92)
- d. According to Ordnance Survey there are 136,000km of rivers in the UK, 70% of which (95,000km) are small headwaters and streams. A good fact to emphasise the value of working on such waters. (p.96)
- e. Households would pay £45 per year to improve water quality (p.99 box)
- f. England’s history of valuable ‘Amateur naturalists’ is highlighted. (p.148)
- g. Figures for spend by people enjoying the rural environment (p.167). Average rural visit spend £13.99. No details on the value of volunteering though it is mentioned as being of value. (p.167)
- h. 25% of Urban areas is garden (p.120). Useful to consider in encouraging SUDS and other pollution reducing measures amongst urban authorities.
- i. Some suggestions as to what climate change may mean for rivers (higher winter flows, lower and more frequent low summer flows, risk of rivers becoming impassable due to flow conditions.) (p.205)
- j. Statement that river catchments are particularly vulnerable to invasive species (p.208)

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