



## Rivers to benefit from new level of trust

The Environment Agency and the Association of Rivers Trusts are heralding their new alliance that will bring a dynamic approach to improving and protecting English and Welsh rivers.

A new partnership agreement between the two bodies will be ushered in at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Salmonid Conference on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October at the Baltic Centre, Gateshead.

Director of Water Management for the Environment Agency, David King said: "There is much to be done to achieve our goal of improving the rivers and lakes of England and Wales"

"I'm convinced that working together is key to making the necessary gains for our water environment. So I'm very pleased to announce this new agreement between the Environment Agency and the Association of Rivers Trusts aimed at promoting a more effective working partnership. It will help secure our shared interests of improving rivers catchments and generating wider environmental and community benefits."

Association of Rivers Trusts (ART), Director, Arlin Rickard said: "Our body represents many Rivers Trusts in England and Wales, providing umbrella representation for around 30 community-based river interest groups, a network that has grown rapidly in recent years. We believe this new alliance with the Environment Agency is a good way to support current partnerships and forge new ones.

"We are not a campaigning organisation or pressure group, we leave policy issues for government. ART operates using the best science and the most cost effective practical means to engage people, bring communities together and deliver better rivers."

The new agreement mean that both organisations will:

- exchange data and information that contributes to joint river projects,
- share knowledge, training, technical developments and support materials,
- assist and support the development of new river trusts and emerging like-minded groups,
- establish more efficient consenting processes, where available, for programmes of work under these partnership arrangements,
- consult on relevant policy or legislative change,
- co-operate on joint influencing initiatives towards our common aims.

David King went on to say: "We have an existing history of interacting with Rivers Trusts locally but this partnership will help us realise the considerable benefits of closer working at all levels and drawing on best practice.

"We will look for joint funding bids and share data and information, drawing on our relative strengths to identify needs and deliver solutions.

"ART's network provides a way of promoting environmental messages both to the river trusts and their local communities.

“Partnership working will help us link our work with initiatives by the trusts to improve the fisheries, biodiversity and recreational use of our river catchments.”

Environment Agency Head of Fisheries, Dafydd Evans will welcome the new agreement with Arlin Rickard at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Salmonid Conference beside the River Tyne – itself an example of a river where pollution has been cleaned up, hugely increasing its value to local communities. This includes the very significant social and economic value generated by the greatly improved fish stocks and the angling activity these support.

Dr Evans said: “In addition to all the work we do through regulation to protect fisheries, since 2003 the Environment Agency has spent more than £1.5 million on projects to directly improve salmon river habitat and to address obstacles to migration, “

“We also spend £2million each year on delivering projects to improve coarse and trout fisheries. Most of these initiatives have been achieved with partners such as River Trusts, which increases total investment to more than three times this amount.

“Working together like this also helps us to realise the wider environmental, social and economic benefits that our fisheries make to England and Wales - providing recreation and enjoyment for up to 4 million anglers and already worth £3 billion to the UK economy as a whole. “

**Media enquiries: 020 7863 8710 (five lines), or outside normal office hours, please contact the National Duty Press Officer on 07798 882 092**

#### **Association of River Trusts:**

Rivers trusts have been described as having “wet feet” because they have the reputation of being “doers” concentrating much of their effort on practical catchment, river and fishery improvement works on the ground. The Association of Rivers Trusts (ART) represents many Rivers Trusts in England and Wales, and provides umbrella representation for around 30 (and growing) community-based river interest groups. Rivers Trusts have enjoyed considerable success in generating income, by applying for grants and running river and riparian habitat improvement projects. The Trusts have a wide local network of river users and riparian owners, and are able to communicate and provide environmental best practice effectively to this diverse group of people.

#### **The Environment Agency:**

We are the lead environmental body operating in England and Wales and Europe’s biggest environmental regulator. We regulate waste disposal, nuclear facilities and emissions from industry, we manage the risks from flooding for people and property and, for rivers, lakes, estuaries and the coast, we regulate and monitor discharges, manage water resources, enhance the environment for wildlife and promote water-related recreation. We protect and improve salmon, trout, freshwater and eel fisheries in England and Wales and the River Border Esk.

#### **‘Salmonids in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’:**

The Association of Rivers Trusts is to host the 15th International Salmonid Conference (October 17-20) in Newcastle-Gateshead on the River Tyne. Normally held in North America, this is only the second time this prestigious event has taken place in Europe. The Environment Agency is a key sponsor and supporter of the event. The conference will focus on four themes:

- Post Industrial River Recovery
- Marine and Climate Change
- River Basin Challenges
- Fisheries Management

The Conference will also feature ART’s 2006 Annual Awards Dinner, to reward excellence and achievement by rivers trusts and individuals.