

Environment Agency announces new national salmon and sea trout byelaws

Environment Agency's national salmon and sea trout byelaws, applicable in England, have been confirmed by Defra. This means that the byelaws will become law and come into force on 1 January 2019"

The Environment Agency are introducing these restrictions on fishing in England in response to the international decline in migratory salmon stocks. Salmon stock numbers are currently among the lowest on record and are below sustainable levels in many rivers.

The byelaws will become law on the 1st January 2019 and will see the following restrictions being implemented:

- Closing all commercial net fisheries for 'At Risk' and 'Probably At Risk' rivers (some fishing for sea trout will still be allowed). This will include all drift net fisheries;
- Mandatory catch and release by anglers on the rivers that are classed as 'At Risk' to be introduced in June 2019. These are the Cumbrian Calder, Dorset Stour and Yealm;
- Mandatory catch and release by anglers on the rivers that are listed as 'Recovering Rivers'. These are rivers where salmon were effectively wiped out and small populations have re-established in recent years with improvements in water quality on mostly heavily polluted post-industrial catchments. Examples of these are the Mersey, Yorkshire Ouse
- Renewal of the 1998 Spring Salmon Byelaws. These protect the larger, early running salmon, and do not involve any new measures.

The new byelaws come into force following an Environment Agency consultation, which sought views on how to better manage salmon fishing in England and the Border Esk.

As part of new byelaws there will be voluntary catch and release expectation for salmon caught rivers classed as 'Probably at Risk' to ensure catch and release levels greater than 90%

Reducing the taking of salmon by rods and nets is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger 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.

Kevin Austin, Environment Agency's Deputy Director for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment said:

"It is only through continuing to take concerted action, and through the co-operation of others, that we will successfully protect this iconic fish for future generations

We are not implementing these changes lightly and have consulted widely with those affected. There is no single solution to protecting salmon stocks; reducing the catch of salmon can only partly contribute to the recovery of salmon stocks."

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Notes to Editors:

1. The most vulnerable rivers will be the rivers classed as “At Risk”, as calculated in the national salmon stock assessments. These are the Cumbrian Calder, Dorset Stour and Yealm:
2. Voluntary catch and release levels at rivers classed “probably at Risk” will be required to be greater than 90%.In reality. This will mean that anglers will need to put back all of their fish. Many Clubs already manage this very well and give incentives to support their members doing the right thing.
3. Voluntary catch and release levels should be encouraged on rivers classed as ‘Probably not at Risk’.
4. Other countries that have closed salmon net fisheries include, Eire, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Faroese fisheries.
5. Reducing exploitation by nets and rods is one action of the ‘Salmon Five Point Approach’ which has been jointly developed and committed to by a wide range of partners which include Government, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Angling Trust, River Trusts, Wild Trout Trust and the Institute of Fisheries Management. You can find out more about the [Salmon Five Point Approach](#) here.
6. [2017 national salmon stock assessment.](#) Lists all salmon rivers and their current status in terms of numbers of salmon present.
7. Recovering rivers are those rivers where salmon populations are returning in ever increasing numbers. This has usually been due to historical water quality and barriers blocking the route for salmon.
8. The English salmon fisheries in the Severn Estuary will remain open as these stocks are still considered to have a harvestable surplus and are currently classed as ‘Probably Not At Risk’