

Freshwater Fisheries Forum
Update Report for River Basin Management Planning
March 2009

River Basin Management Plans

River basin management planning is the process by which Scotland is delivering the Water Framework Directive, which became law in Scotland via the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003.

It aims to prevent deterioration in ecological quality and also to improve the quality of our rivers, lochs, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, where this is needed. The key objective is to achieve good ecological status by 2015 but if more time is required, then by the longer timescales of 2021 or 2027.

The first draft River Basin Management Plans for the Scotland and Solway Tweed river basin districts were submitted to Ministers in December 2008 for their consideration and are currently available for public consultation, which ends on 22 June 2009. Supplementary area management plans were also produced which contain information on the local water environment, including current conditions, the main pressures and the actions required to address them. These are also available for public consultation until 22 June 2009.

To download copies of the draft River Basin Management Plans, their Annexes and the supplementary Area Management Plans, please visit the SEPA website www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx. Copies can also be requested on CD.

Many organisations and interests, who manage and use the water environment, have helped to write these plans and will be actively involved in delivering actions to improve the quality of our water environment. As the lead organisation and coordinator, SEPA is seeking your views on our water environment which will feed into the final plans, to be published in December 2009.

If you have any comments please submit them to SEPA either:

- by email to rbmp@sepa.org.uk;
- online at www.sepa.org.uk;
- contacting your River Basin Management Planning co-ordinator

The River Basin Management Plans are supported by the following documents released on 8 January 2009:

- Impact Assessments for the Scotland and Solway Tweed river basin districts looking at the costs and benefits of the draft plans and future directions consultations are available here www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2009/01
- Strategic Environmental Assessments for the Scotland and Solway Tweed river basin districts look at the wider environmental impacts of the draft plans and future directions consultations. These are available here: www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

These set out Ministers' ambitions for Scotland's water environment and should be read in conjunction with the draft Plans. Responses are requested by 3rd April 2009, and will help inform the final Plans to be published in December 2009

Heavily Modified Water Body Workshop

A workshop to review the assessment of Heavily Modified Water Bodies will take place in the week commencing 20th April 2009. AAG members and other fisheries trusts and boards will be invited to this event to provide you with an opportunity to understand how the assessments were undertaken and discuss any information you may have which you feel could contribute to these assessments. Attendees will be expected to make a formal consultation response after the workshop.

SEPA appreciate that many fisheries trusts and boards may not have been involved in the River Basin Management Planning process so far, but updates can be provided prior to the workshops if required.

Further information, including a list of water bodies to be discussed, is available. Please contact Julia MacPherson at julia.macpherson@sepa.org.uk.

Scottish Government consultations

The Scottish Government has issued two other consultation documents:

- Scotland's Water: Future Direction (formally known as 'Closing the Gap')
- Restoration of the Water Environment

These documents were published 8 January 2009 and responses are requested by 3 April 2009. These documents are available here: www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2009/01

Barriers to fish passage

SEPA has been collecting information on the location of barriers to fish migration as part of the process required to classify the ecological status of rivers. This work has been carried out in conjunction with FRS, RAFTS and fisheries boards and trusts. Currently, classification is based upon a relatively simplistic approach where a river is classifying as moderate or poor status depending upon the proportion of it which is not accessible to fish.

A classification tool based on fish populations is being developed and will be applied to some water bodies for the first River Basin Management Plan.

Fisheries Management Plans

SEPA welcomes the development of fishery management plans across Scotland and believe they have a key role to play in contributing to the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) for the Scotland and Solway Tweed river basin districts. Many of the fisheries management priorities overlap with those of river basin management planning. To date 14 responses have been provided by SEPA.

Restoration Fund

The Scottish Government has provided SEPA with funds to deliver restoration measures which will contribute to the delivery of Water Framework Directive objectives. Where possible, projects should provide additional environmental, social

and economic benefits. For example flood management, biodiversity or improved amenity value.

Projects which are likely to be funded include:

- Re-engineering of rivers to restore natural profile
- Removal of man-made fish barriers or the provision of fish passage
- Restoration of flood plains, coastal intertidal zones and wetlands
- Treatment of effluent from abandoned non-coal mines

Currently 18 projects have been funded and a further 21 have been recommended for funding for the financial year 2009/2010. A large proportion of these projects relate to the removal of old weirs, improvements to existing fish passes or installation of new fish passes.

Currently, the applications for the restoration fund are coming from interested parties across Scotland who can demonstrate benefits for the water environment that are relevant to the Water Framework Directive. However, a more strategic targeted approach to funding restoration projects is being developed for the longer term.

Application forms for funding, and more details on selection criteria and closing dates can be found on the internet at

http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/restoration_fund.aspx

or by emailing restoration.proposals@sepa.org.uk