

newsletter

Eden
Rivers Trust



Summer 2014 Issue 29

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This issue... *Glyn Vaughan*

This is my first introduction to a newsletter as Chairman of Eden Rivers Trust. It is an honour for me to chair an organisation where such a small number of dedicated and focussed staff achieve so much in improving the beautiful Eden.

Of course, these improvements involve working closely with a number of partners including big organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, United Utilities, and so on. However, the most important partner is the community – those of you who live and work in the catchment, and volunteer to help make the Eden even more spectacular. Thank you.

In the last Newsletter, we mentioned the apprenticeship scheme, part of Cherish Eden. Well, we now have our apprentices and they are already making a difference. I welcome them all to Eden Rivers Trust and know that they will do a brilliant job, whilst getting fantastic training in river conservation that will enable them to pursue careers that benefit all of us who love our rivers.

We are delighted to announce that Gareth Pedley has been appointed as Catchment Fisheries Manager (CFM). Gareth is currently employed by Eden Rivers Trust and the Wild Trout Trust. In his new role he will be managing our fisheries monitoring programme and leading on the Eden Fisheries Plan whilst keeping a steady hand on the habitat tiller.

This Newsletter is packed with great news about what's been happening and what is yet to come. Please take the time to read it and please get in touch if you have any thoughts.

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Eden Fisheries Plan

Those interested in fishing in the Eden Valley have backed plans to produce a five year action programme to improve angling in the area. *By Simon Johnson*

In partnership with the River Eden and District Fisheries Association (REDFA), ERT organised the latest in a series of Eden Fisheries Plan seminars. The 40+ attendees provided feedback on the vision, outcomes, targets and actions in the draft plan.

Much of the discussion at the seminar focused on the worrying trend of the declining numbers of rod caught salmon on the Eden, reflecting a similar situation to other North West rivers.

Rod caught figures have now been released by the Environment Agency. In 2013 only 634 salmon were caught by anglers, which is only 61% of the Conservation Limit set by the Environment Agency (EA). Encouragingly anglers released 70% of all salmon caught. The implications of this are yet to manifest themselves and ERT will be working with REDFA and the EA through the Eden Fisheries Plan.

Many factors could be contributing to this decline including water quality, poor habitat,

barriers to upstream and downstream migration, exploitation and mortality of smolts at sea. ERT is doing more work than ever to address water quality, habitat and barrier issues to ensure that when salmon do migrate to our headwaters they have the best possible conditions available to spawn and nurture fry, parr and smolts.

The Eden Fisheries Survey has been completed and the findings will be available soon. In the meantime there were some interesting points to note. The survey was emailed to local Clubs and Associations, 40,000 EA NW Licence Holders, other national contacts and relevant websites. There were 2434 completed surveys which is a good return for an initiative of this type. Overall it showed there is potential to increase fishing and its economic value in the area. This could be through increasing the participation of existing anglers, inspiring a significant proportion of lapsed Eden anglers and attracting new anglers to the catchment.

The longer the better

Over a mile of the River Lyvennet near Penrith is being restored to its natural state to benefit wildlife and people. The river will once again be allowed to meander as it did decades ago, in a partnership project with the land owner, tenant farmer, Environment Agency and Natural England. *By Gareth Pedley*

Meanders are beneficial because they lessen the gradient of the river and therefore slow the flow, recreating a variety of features which are absent from straightened rivers. Examples include pools capable of supporting larger fish, shallow margins where freshwater plants can establish, shingle banks which are important for insects and gravel beds where fish can lay their eggs.

This diversity supports a much wider variety of insects, fish and other wildlife than man-made channels. Examples of animals which will benefit include salmon, trout, native crayfish, bullheads, stone loach, otters, kingfishers and dippers. The land owner and farmer will benefit because the meandering channel will be fenced to keep animals out of the river where they can pick up parasites and diseases. Slowing the flow and excluding farm animals will also stabilise the river banks and reduce the risk of erosion and

flooding which are a problem for people and property.

This is a fantastic opportunity to let the river function more naturally – a great example of what could be done in other areas of the Eden Valley.

If anyone would like to know more about this project, please contact us at the ERT office or email office@edenrt.org.



Petteril funds flow on

We are pleased to announce that the Environment Agency have secured further funding for the Petteril Project until March 2015. We have had great success this year, working with farmers on jointly funded measures to improve water quality in the river and we hope to continue this good work. *By Alison Reed.*

During the winter months we have worked with 14 farms and planned work to reduce the amount of dirty water going into the river. This has included improving drainage systems around farms and adding roofs to manure stores and yards where cattle gather before milking.

During the last financial year nearly 70% of the £130,000 spent on the work has come from the farm businesses. They have also contributed labour and materials.

Over 3.5 km of riverbank have been fenced to restrict livestock, 1,130 trees have been planted and cut logs and branches have been installed along river banks to create wildlife habitat and reduce erosion.

The project is now branching out to offer assistance with precision farming techniques such as Global Positioning Systems to accurately target the use of fertilisers.

This will reduce the amount of surplus fertiliser running off into the river as well as saving the farmer money.

Our team of apprentices has been working with our contractors on the Petteril. They are developing their skills in the management of rivers and also getting hands on experience of fencing along the river bank.



Kirsty Jacques, Joe Foster, Andrew Bates, Simon Johnson, Jack Johnstone, Antony Bailey & Toby Hadley

Pow now

Fencing and tree planting have been taking place within the Pow catchment with the aim of improving water quality and riverbank health. *By Chris West*

Fencing is an integral part of improving the quality of our rivers because it removes livestock access to watercourses, prevents poaching of river banks and allows thicker vegetation to develop which can help filter surface run-off. This creates a better environment for wildlife to thrive and reduces the amount of nutrients entering the water.

Fencing works for the farmer as well because allowing a strip of ungrazed vegetation to develop means that the riverbank is more resilient to erosion and soil loss is reduced. Riverbanks are often unproductive areas of the farm where parasite numbers are high and various sources are now recommending fencing off watercourses for animal health reasons.

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) have recently clarified their position on riverbank fencing which should allay any fears about implications for single farm payments.

Ask us for details or view the 'Single Payment Scheme Handbook for England Supplement for 2014' on the RPA website.

Let's do it together

The Saving Eden Coalition is launched! A new initiative that brings together individuals and organisations affecting the river, to work in partnership to Save the Eden. *By Lucy Butler*

Launched earlier this year, the Saving Eden Coalition hosted by Eden Rivers Trust is one of 100 partnerships established around the country to improve rivers and water quality as part of the Government's new "Catchment-Based Approach". We all want healthy rivers and lakes. They provide us with clean drinking water, recreational opportunities, beautiful landscapes, high quality wildlife habitats and flood protection, but none of us can achieve this on our own. This exciting new initiative is all about getting people and organisations to work together in a more joined-up and co-ordinated way.

Over the next 18 months Coalition partners will work together to develop the Saving Eden Catchment Plan. This will identify exactly how and where partners can share knowledge, expertise and activities to achieve real improvements in the river and our lakes, and how we can better involve local people in Saving Eden.

At the Coalition launch attendees were asked to sign up to the Catchment Charter



which sets out the seven big outcomes we all want to achieve for the Eden. Signatories included representatives from United Utilities, Carlisle City Council, Eden

District Council, Newton Rigg College, local farmers and landowners, Cumbria County Council, River Eden & District Fisheries Association, National Trust, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Lake District National Park Authority.

To find out more about why people are joining the Coalition and why they are committed to Saving Eden watch our short film at www.savetheeden.org



Completed fencing along Pow Beck.

Happy crayfish

More than 11km of riverside fencing have been installed or are underway within this three year Defra-funded project in the Eden Valley. The aim is to improve rivers which have poor water quality and scarce wildlife. *By Joanne Backshall*

The poor health of these rivers can be caused by farm animals which create closely grazed, eroding banks with wide, shallow, silty channels where wildlife has nowhere to feed and breed. Riverside fencing and tree planting allows these effects to be reversed with consequent improvements in wildlife and water quality.

Rivers targeted include the Croglin Beck in the Pennines, the Hoff and Helm Becks near Appleby, the River Lowther near Haweswater and the Lyvennet south of Penrith. In the latter, the work is in combination with the river restoration project there.

All these rivers contain the endangered native crayfish as well as a variety of other animals and plants.

Improvements on farms have also been undertaken to reduce the amount of pollution entering rivers.

Working with farmers, we complete a farm assessment and then provide advice on the best way to keep the river clean. This usually has the added benefit of saving the farmer money and helping to improve farming practices. For example, the volume of animal manure generated is reduced and yards, drainage and tracks are altered to stop manure and soil reaching the river.



Brains and rain

The Eden Demonstration Test Catchment is starting to tell us valuable information about how the Eden and its tributaries are reacting to farming activities and other pressures, such as a changing and unpredictable climate. The information will help us better target the advice and assistance we deliver in the future. *By Will Cleasby*

We are now reaching the end of the first three years of the project. In conjunction with Lancaster, Newcastle and Durham Universities and with Newton Rigg College we have established four test areas in the Eden catchment – Morland Beck, Dacre Beck, Pow Beck and Newton Rigg College (Thacka Beck). These test areas have some of the most sophisticated water and weather monitoring equipment available.

We now know from the data gathered that over 75% of the sediment (the fine soil) and phosphates in the river comes from the land during high rainfall events.

So helping farmers plan farming activities using more accurate weather forecasting is one of the key messages to come out of the project. Another is that reducing soil compaction, for example using a tractor-towed aerator or sub-soiler, will allow the heavy rainfall to soak into the fields rather than run straight off in to the river, taking valuable but polluting soil and nutrients with it.

As we look to the next three years of the project we will work closely with universities to find ways of tackling the problem of pesticides in rivers, a key concern for many organisations. We will also work with Lancaster University to see exactly what the impact of diffuse pollution is on fish and other wildlife and how this can be minimised.

Join in the fun

Learn new skills, be outdoors in the fresh air, meet new people and help save the River Eden. *By Joanne Spencer*

The time and effort that volunteers contribute to Eden Rivers Trust plays a huge role in the successful delivery of the projects that we are involved in and we value your contributions enormously.

As part of the Trust's £2 million Cherish Eden project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, we want to encourage more people to care for, and take part in helping to look after our local rivers and streams.

From April onwards we are holding regular volunteering events on the last Thursday of the month. These events are a practical hands-on way of helping to protect and care for the River Eden and its tributaries.

Activities will include Himalayan balsam bashing, river clean-ups and monitoring and survey work of fish and other wildlife.

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and learn new skills. Most of our activities involve working outdoors but we also have opportunities for helping out with events from setting up exhibitions, taking photographs, handing out information and telling people about our work.

To find out more and to get involved please contact Paul Greaves on 01768 866788 or email paul@edenrt.org. You can also look at our website or visit our Facebook page for regular updates.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us in our work, both financially and in kind. We would not be able to do it without your amazing help!



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