

Individuals and Communities

What action for water means for you

South East



Action for water

Everyone benefits from clean water, and a healthy water environment.

The end of 2009 marks the beginning of a new journey for the south east's water environment. The Environment Agency will publish the South East River Basin Management Plan, a long term programme of environmental improvements to make the south east a better place.

The environment of the south east is very special, and water quality has improved significantly in recent decades. However, it will take more time, effort and resources to deal with the pressures that still remain – as well as the future challenges of climate change and development.

Everyone can take action for water, to create an environment we are all proud of and can enjoy.

What are the challenges?

The south east's large population puts pressure on the environment through discharges from sewage works. Many urban and rural rivers have been modified for flood defence or navigation, often at the expense of ecological quality. Also, the way land is managed has given rise to a host of complex pollution issues in rural as well as urban areas.

There are also concerns over maintaining the water resources available for people and the environment. The south-east is a water scarce region and we must reduce household and non-household consumption. We need to balance our needs with the resources we have by using less, providing new resources and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

The river basin management plan

The South East River Basin Management Plan is a statutory plan, required under the European Water Framework Directive. One of 11 plans in England and Wales It covers the South East River Basin District, which extends from the Thames estuary in the east and almost as far west as Salisbury, and taking in the four county councils of Kent, East and West Sussex and Hampshire.

The plan introduces new ways of measuring the health of our waters based on the Water Framework Directive's tougher environmental standards. It describes the

pressures on the whole water environment, and our targets for improvement by 2015.

A range of actions are set out in the plan. They will require everyone to be involved – water companies, farmers, environmental organisations, local authorities, industry, individuals, communities and others. We need your help.



The South East River Basin District

What can individuals and communities do?

Everyone can help protect and improve the water environment – at home, at work or in the community.:

To save water at home



- Turn off the tap when brushing teeth, and take short showers rather than baths.
- Wash fruit and vegetables in a bowl rather than under the running tap - and use the remainder on plants.
- Hand wash cars.
- Install a 'hippo' or 'save-a-flush' in toilet cisterns.

- Run dishwashers or washing machines with a full load on an economy setting, and boil the minimum amount of water needed in kettles or saucepans.
- Purchase low energy and low water use appliances.
- Ask your water company to fit a meter. This will let you know how much water you are using and may encourage you to reduce consumption.
- Install a low-flush toilet, put flow regulators on taps and showers, and install waterless urinals at work.
- Consider installing grey-water recycling systems in homes or workplaces. This can save one third of domestic mains water usage.

To save water in gardens

- Choose plants that tolerate dry conditions. To help lawns through dry periods, don't cut them too short.
- To save water in gardens, collect rain in a water-butt, water at the beginning or end of the day, mulch plants, and use watering cans where possible instead of sprinklers or hosepipes.
- Fix dripping taps, and lag pipes to avoid them bursting in freezing weather.

To prevent pollution



- Use kitchen, bathroom and car cleaning products that don't harm the environment, such as phosphate-free laundry detergents, and use as little as possible. This helps prevent pollution.
- Take waste oil and chemicals such as white spirit to a municipal recycling facility: don't pour them down the sink or outside drains.
- Check that household appliances are connected to the foul sewer, not the surface water drain.
- Ensure septic tanks or private sewage treatment plants are well maintained and working effectively.
- Ensure household oil storage is in good condition, with an up-to-date inspection record.
- Report pollution or fly-tipping to the Environment Agency on 0800 807060.

To protect wildlife

- Put cotton buds and other litter in the bin not down the toilet. It may end up in the sea and harm wildlife.
- Eat fish from sustainable sources.
- Eliminate invasive non-native species from gardens, disposing of them responsibly.
- Adopt-a-beach to help keep beaches clean of litter than can harm wildlife and cause pollution.

- Join a river group to spot pollution, invasive non-native species, and take part in practical tasks.

The Howorth family make a difference

Saving water and protecting the environment is a priority for the Howorth family. Dad, Rich, says "We found we can save money running the household, whilst making a difference to our environment."

The Howorths have a water butt which collects rainwater for their garden, and installed a low flush toilet which also has a 'hippo' in the cistern. They found this made the biggest difference to bills, along with taking showers where possible, and getting their children to share baths.

Other simple but effective steps the family have taken include using phosphate-free detergents to wash dishes and clothes. Phosphate contributes to pollution of rivers and lakes when it leaves sewage works, or is in water which runs off towns and rural areas. They have also fitted low-cost spray attachments to their taps, which control the amount of water that runs out.



Rich says "We notice the difference more because we're on a water meter. I recommend you contact your water company if you're not already metered."

Contact us

The River Basin Liaison Panel steers this work in the South East River Basin District. You can contact your sector representative via the Environment Agency, or get in touch with us directly as shown below.

Website: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd>

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