

Environment Agency continues crucial work to protect fisheries amidst summer like no other

Environment Agency officers up and down the country were on high alert to manage the impacts of low water levels in rivers and fisheries, particularly low flowing rivers, and respond to reports of fish in distress as quickly as possible.

Action included deploying or loaning aeration equipment as well as using hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels, providing expert advice to angling clubs and anglers and, as a last resort, relocating fish through fish rescues.

Teams working in the Kent, Surrey and London region responded to over 60 fish incidents and fish rescues, preventing large scale fish loss and damage to fragile river fish populations, while ensuring these incidents did not become larger, more serious events.

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Partnerships Manager said:

This summer's unprecedented dry weather saw our officers carrying out hugely important work to protect our fish populations, environment and surrounding wildlife, while also continuing to clamp down on illegal fishing through our annual enforcement campaign.

Anglers are our valuable eyes and ears and I want to thank all those reporting incidents so we are able to respond as quickly as possible and ensure angling continues to be a safe and enjoyable hobby for everyone".

The months of July and August also saw the Environment Agency continue its annual enforcement campaign, Operation Lungfish, which clamps down on illegal fishing by ensuring all anglers have a fishing licence.

Operation Lungfish plays a vital part of the Environment Agency's year-round efforts to keep river banks safe from crime and antisocial behaviour, and tackle the problems illegal fishing can bring including risks to vulnerable fish stocks such as salmon and eel.

Targeting poachers and those fishing without a licence remains a high priority and anglers caught and prosecuted for not having a fishing licence can face a day in court and a significant fine. The six week long campaign saw Environment Agency enforcement officers supported by Voluntary Bailiffs

from the Angling Trust and local police officers to conduct patrols on rivers, lakes and ponds, with 5,300 licences checked and over 200 people reported for fishing illegally.

Nino Brancato, the Angling Trust's National Enforcement Support Manager, said:

Protecting fish and fisheries from poachers and fish thieves and increasing rod licence compliance is of great importance to all anglers. The Voluntary Bailiff Service is an important partnership between the Angling Trust and Environment Agency, empowering anglers to support the police and the Environment Agency in fighting back against fisheries crime and protecting fish and fisheries especially during Operation Lungfish. The VBS initiative continues to be enormously successful, driving forward positive change.

Operation Lungfish activity included Fisheries Enforcement Officers in the North East targeting illegal angling taking place overnight at vulnerable locations such as weir and bridge pools. They combined patrols with other enforcement activities, including fish dealer checks to ensure no fish caught as a result of illegal activity were being offered for sale, and the seizure of illegal traps.

Warm weather incident responses and Operation Lungfish are vital to support fisheries, angling clubs and anglers and are funded purely by fishing licence income. Get a fishing licence on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or go digital and help us invest more into fishing and improving the environment.