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Keep pastures like new

A sheep expert at SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), has been taking livestock farmers through the principles of how to make the most of pasture quality.

News story: Dry weather update – 17th July 2018

The Environment Agency continues to urge people to follow water company advice and use water wisely during these hotter summer months to help manage demand and reduce the impact on the environment. United Utilities has

announced a 'temporary use ban' which is likely to come into effect in early August for its customers in the North West.

Paul Hickey, head of water resources at the Environment Agency, said:

Over two very dry months, we have seen a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West and we support the announcement by United Utilities to manage water supplies by introducing household restrictions.

Across the rest of England, most groundwater supplies are at healthy levels and water companies have enough water to maintain supplies if resources are managed properly.

Many rivers around the country have dropped to lower levels than normal for this time of year, which can be damaging to wildlife. We have robust plans in place to respond to these pressures and have stepped up our incident response as well as regulation of those abstracting water to ensure the environment is protected.

We are meeting with affected groups including farmers to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for prolonged dry weather. We encourage everyone to use water wisely to conserve supplies and protect the environment.

During hot weather the Environment Agency works with water companies and other organisations to reduce the impacts of the hot weather on the environment. Steps include rescuing fish, responding to incidents, regulating water abstraction, advising businesses and farmers on water usage and monitoring for environmental impacts.

The Environment Agency also takes action to ensure water companies have made robust plans for managing water supplies, although water companies themselves would decide on proposing water restrictions.

If the public see fish gulping for air that could be because of reduced oxygen and river flows, please report it the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

More detail on the current water situation is available on the Environment Agency's Creating a Better Place blog:

[Summer has started – what does that mean for the water situation in England?](#)

Press release: Expansion of wildlife

protection sites in Essex

Two important sites for waterfowl in Essex have been afforded the strongest environmental protections available.

Allfleet's Marsh and Brandy Hole, part of the Crouch and Roach estuaries, have now been made [Special Protection Areas \(SPA\)](#), [Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#) and designated as a [Ramsar wetland of international importance](#).

Environment Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

This is fantastic news for wildlife and the local community. The designation of this additional land into the existing protected area demonstrates that our management and stewardship of important wildlife habitats is achieving a high standard. We have committed to developing a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife in our 25 Year Environment Plan. Through these plans we will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

Both sites are now functioning as part of the Crouch & Roach Estuaries system. They support intertidal mudflats and developing saltmarsh and provide suitable habitat for the internationally important wintering water birds such as dark-bellied brent geese, lapwing, shoveler and golden plover amongst many other waterfowl species.

The Crouch and Roach Estuaries are an integral part of a continuous network of designated coastal habitats extending north from the Thames Estuary to the Colne Estuary, known as the Mid-Essex Coast.

Kate Jennings, Head of Site Conservation Policy, [RSPB](#) said:

The Essex coast used to be a place full of amazing and abundant wildlife, but over the last 400 years, land claim for agriculture, coastal erosion and rising sea levels have taken their toll. The extended designation recognises the importance of new mudflats and saltmarsh created to offset past losses, and is a major step towards restoring this spectacular place. The designation, protection and management of our finest and most valuable places for wildlife will be key in achieving this Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, and this designation is particularly welcome as it will protect areas immediately adjacent to the RSPB's Wallasea Island Wild Coast project, where we are working with partners including Defra and the Environment Agency to create more coastal habitat for people and nature.

Approximately 95 per cent of the area of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest and about 60 per cent of the total area of our most important or 'priority' wildlife habitats is now in good condition for wildlife or has management in place to restore its condition.

Since 2011 we have established management on approximately 130,000 hectares of land to create new wildlife-rich habitat in the wider countryside.