

Have your say on the future of sea net fishing

The Environment Agency is launching a public consultation on measures to protect salmon and sea trout in Yorkshire and the North East.

The Environment Agency wants to return healthy and sustainable salmon and sea trout populations to east coast rivers, while minimising the economic impact of fishing restrictions on local communities.

After taking public views into account, the Environment Agency will make a recommendation to Defra on the measures that should be put in place for the next ten years to balance the needs of the environment with those of the net fishery industry in tidal waters from Berwick on Tweed to the mouth of the Humber estuary.

It is illegal to net salmon or sea trout without a licence, and there is currently a Net Limitation Order in the region that means licences are limited in number. The current arrangements end on 22 December 2022, so this consultation provides people with an opportunity to influence how net fishing is managed in the future.

International decline in salmon

Fishing in the region has been limited in some way since the 1960's and licenced since 1865. In the years since the first regional Net Limitation Order began in 1992, populations of salmon and sea trout seem to have improved in some areas but remain vulnerable and at risk in others. Evidence shows an international decline in wild Atlantic salmon populations with many principal salmon rivers in England now considered to be "Probably at Risk" or "At Risk". Sea trout stocks are also dropping in a number of areas and are under pressure from fishing exploitation as salmon stocks decline.

Salmon and sea trout populations are also threatened by changes to their environment throughout their lifecycle caused by climate change and other human activities. The Environment Agency is looking at every stage of the species' journey that steps can be taken to increase their chances of survival. This includes making river systems more accessible and rearing fish safely in a farm environment to return to rivers and boost wild stocks.

People encouraged to review proposals

Jon Shelley, Environment Agency Senior Fisheries Specialist, said:

The decline in the numbers of both salmon and sea trout is of great concern and we are determined to protect the future of these important species.

Every fish returned safely to our rivers could lead to improved numbers of adult salmon and sea trout spawning, helping to contribute to a reversal in the current decline of returning adult salmon and sea trout numbers. The Net Limitation Order is one example of the decisive action being taken by the Environment Agency and other organisations to help as many fish as possible return to east coast rivers.

I'd like to encourage everyone with an interest in the well-being of our salmon and sea trout stocks, or an interest in the fishery, to review the proposals, participate in the consultation process and play a part in the recovery of these iconic species. The next generation should also be able to enjoy the benefits of sustainable salmon and sea trout fishing.

[A month long consultation launches online today](#) The survey will close on 17 June.