

New byelaws to be introduced in the Severn Estuary and River Severn

- All salmon caught by rod and net fisheries must be released alive with minimum injury and delay to help combat stock declines.
- Salmon numbers are currently among the lowest on record and are below sustainable levels.

The Environment Agency is introducing restrictions on salmon fishing on the River Severn and Severn Estuary in response to the decline in migratory salmon stocks.

The introduction of byelaws are in response to the decline in migratory salmon stocks. Numbers are currently among the lowest on record and are below sustainable levels.

They will prohibit the operation of parts of the Severn Estuary commercial net fishery such as the draft net and putcher fisheries. They will require the release of all salmon caught by the lave nets in the estuary.

The number of available lave net licences will be maintained at a maximum of 22 through a new Net Limitation Order, to allow this cultural method of fishing to continue without impacting the fish stocks.

The new byelaws for the Severn rod fishery, will require mandatory catch and release of all salmon caught. They will also restrict fishing methods in order to improve the survival of released salmon.

The byelaw introductions have been approved by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs following a period of consultation.

All cases put forward by the Environment Agency to propose byelaws are also reviewed by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS).

CEFAS has confirmed that the science supporting the conservation case and risk categories justify the introduction.

It has been recognised that reductions in fishery exploitation alone will not recover salmon stocks but make a valuable contribution.

Kevin Austin, Environment Agency's Deputy Director for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment, said:

We are committed to protecting our precious salmon stocks for future generations to enjoy. This is why we are taking steps to limit pressures that contribute to salmon declines.

We understand that the new byelaws may not be popular to some

fishermen, and we are not making this decision lightly.

We must act now before it's too late and encourage all fishermen to play their part to ensure the next generation of anglers will be able to enjoy the benefits of sustainable salmon and sea trout fishing.

Fishing is only one of multiple factors that have led to the decline in salmon stocks in the Severn. However, we must do as much as we can to improve the chances for salmon to spawn successfully.

In the recent years, the effects of long periods of low flow, increased temperatures and exceptional floods have all been having an impact on the Severn fish stocks.

With the help of our local fishermen and angling community, the introduction of catch and release will be a welcome boost to improve the chances for salmon to spawn successfully.

Notes to editors

What are the new rules (byelaws)?

The byelaws now require all salmon caught on rod and line on the River Severn to be released alive with minimum injury and delay.

New controls on angling methods such as the use of barbless hooks and restrictions on certain baits will be implemented, and are intended to improve the survival of released fish so that they can contribute to spawning stocks.

New controls on angling methods will prohibit specified methods for fishing for salmon and sea trout by rod and line within the River Severn as follows:

- no fishing for salmon unless using an artificial lure fitted with a single barbless or de-barbed hook with a gape no greater than 13mm
- no fishing for salmon with rod line by means of any bait (worms, prawns and shrimp)
- no fishing with artificial fly unless furnished with a single barbless or de-barbed hook with a maximum gape of 13mm OR a single barbless or de-barbed treble or double hook with the maximum hook gape of any treble or double hook(s) being no greater than 7 millimetres
- closing the commercial net fisheries for Putter ranks and Draft nets in the Severn Estuary; Lave nets will continue to catch and release for cultural purpose

Responsible fishing provides a wonderful opportunity to connect with nature and feel the range of benefits doing so can bring.

However, it is important to remember that if you decide to take up fishing, you must have a valid rod fishing licence and adhere to fishing byelaws and fishery rules.

It's easy to buy a rod fishing licence online

<https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence>.

Rod fishing licence income is vital to the work of the Environment Agency to maintain, improve and develop fisheries.

Revenue generated from rod fishing licence sales is reinvested to benefit angling, examples include: tackling illegal fishing, protecting and restoring habitats for fish and improving facilities for anglers.