

News story: Crackdown on illegal angling in North East over Bank Holiday

During the Bank Holiday weekend, from 4 to 6 May, Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers checked 363 anglers at separate locations in Durham, Teesside, Tyneside and Northumberland using local knowledge and intelligence to target offending.

Over the three days 17 people were reported for various fisheries offences, most of which were for fishing without a licence.

As well as the rod licence offences the officers discovered two illegal crayfish traps, which were seized.

David Shears, Senior Fisheries Enforcement Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

Despite the unseasonal low temperatures there were still anglers and offenders active though low river conditions reduced salmon angling activity. Officers dealt with the illegal crayfish traps and are working with the fishery to prevent further offences.

We use intelligence gathered previously to indicate the locations where anglers are likely to be fishing illegally, and we concentrated our efforts towards those areas. We shall continue to target those waters where evasion and illegal activity is high and those caught may be prosecuted.

Money from rod licences goes back into the freshwater and migratory fisheries. People who fish without a rod licence are having a direct effect on the work we can deliver.

He added that the current coarse fishing close season on rivers, some canals and some stillwaters started on 15 March and finishes on 15 June. There is no close season on most canals and most stillwaters.

Mr Shears said:

The close season in our rivers is important to allow the fish time to breed and spawn and so maintain a healthy stock of fish. Without it, our fisheries would be put at risk.

People caught fishing without a licence can be fined up to £2,500. Children under 13 do not need a licence. Licences for children aged between 13 and 16

are free, but a junior licence is required.

Anyone who suspects illegal fishing to be taking place should report the matter to the Environment Agency's incident hotline, on 0800 807060.

For more information and to buy a rod licence go to www.gov.uk/buy-a-uk-fishing-rod-licence. To check your flood risk and to sign up to receive flood warnings on your phone, go to www.gov.uk/flood.