

[Press release: Brown trout and endangered crayfish rescued from river pollution](#)

More than 500 fish and nearly 200 protected crayfish have been rescued and moved to safety after a pollution in a Lincolnshire river put them at risk.

The white-clawed crayfish – a protected native species under threat across the country – were saved by [Environment Agency](#) ecologists and transported to safe locations where their populations can re-establish out of harm's way.

Fast-acting fisheries experts also recovered wild brown trout, bullhead, and coarse fish, moving them away from the pollution and downstream to safety while clean-up efforts got underway.

The rescue was undertaken after a tractor overturned last week, spilling fertiliser into Gunby Brook, a tributary of the River Witham. Samples showed high levels of ammonia in up to 4km of watercourse – putting the river's delicate ecology at risk.

Environment Agency officers were swift to respond, working with the landowner to contain the pollution behind a series of temporary dams, carrying out sampling and monitoring conditions, and providing specialist advice on clean-up.

The affected water is now being treated and some of the temporary dams are being removed, where it is safe to do so, in order to restore the natural flow within the river.

An investigation is now underway into the circumstances surrounding the incident, which could lead to further action in the future.

Pete Reilly, Area Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

This is a prime example of how we aim to protect wildlife and nature – undertaking this rescue meant we were able to save hundreds of creatures which otherwise could have been killed even as we were working non-stop to control the pollution.

The spill is now contained and clean-up is ongoing, but our teams are still closely monitoring conditions and an investigation is underway.

Protecting people and the environment is our priority and we take every pollution seriously, so please report any environmental incidents to us on 0800 80 70 60 so we can respond as quickly as possible.

Native white-clawed crayfish have been in decline since the 1970s, when the invasive American signal crayfish escaped into UK waters. These invasive crayfish carry a plague that kills off the native species, and outcompetes them for food and habitat.

The UK is home to a quarter of the world's white-clawed crayfish and the river Witham and its tributaries are home to tens of thousands, making it one of the largest strongholds in the country.

The rescued 58 male and 41 female crayfish, plus juveniles and eggs, have been moved to safe locations in the nearby Cringle Brook and Wyville Brook.

Read more about the Environment Agency's [work to protect native crayfish in Lincolnshire](#).