

Rivers

Current UK status and trends

Water quality improving but problems caused by high levels of abstraction are increasing

Estimated current Northamptonshire resource

Progress towards BAP targets 2008–2015

Unknown

Lead partner

Environment Agency

Target areas



Habitat description

Rivers are exceptionally varied and dynamic habitats forming invaluable wildlife habitat. In Northamptonshire they vary from the fast-flowing streams rising in the southern and western uplands of the county, to the wide, slow-moving lowland River Nene. These watercourses form, either in their own right or in association with other habitats, a vital nature conservation and wildlife resource for the county. Marginal and bankside vegetation is an integral part of the river habitat and acts as an important migration corridor.



The Rivers Tove, Great Ouse, Avon and Nene all have their sources in the southern and western upland areas of the county. The River Welland forms part of Northamptonshire's northern boundary and flows north-west to the Wash. The Tove and Great Ouse flow east towards Bedfordshire, the Avon flows west into Warwickshire, and the Nene flows north-east from its source near Daventry across Northamptonshire and into Peterborough. Major tributaries that drain into the Nene are the Brampton Nene, River Ise, Harper's Brook and Willow Brook.

The River Nene is eutrophic, receiving treated sewage effluent from the Whilton, Billing, Broadholme and Corby sewage treatment works. Most of the rivers and streams in Northamptonshire have been engineered or managed to some extent, either for modern flood defences, or historically for milling, navigation and during railway construction.

Main issues and threats

- Abstraction for public water supply, industry and irrigation adversely affects flows in the county's major rivers
- Barriers in the form of weirs, locks and flood defence structures alter the natural flow and sediment regime of the river and prevent fish migration

- Land drainage and management practices have adversely affected water quality and river flows
- Arable cultivation and livestock grazing on the riverbank result in marginal, bankside and in-stream habitat loss, increased siltation of gravel beds, and increased herbicide, pesticide and ammonia seepage into the watercourse
- Invasive non-native plant and animal species like American signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), and floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*) outcompete native species

General strategy

- Reduce the current level of abstraction and restrict future abstraction by the use of Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies and abstraction licensing
- Use agri-environment schemes to promote good practice like establishing buffer strips along riverbanks
- Implement catchment scale habitat improvement schemes
- Promote river improvements alongside planned urban developments
- Control the spread of invasive non-native species
- Identify and develop action plans to remove or modify priority barriers to fish and eel passage
- Produce catchment- and reach-scale plans for major river fisheries in Northamptonshire

Targets

1. Ensure no deterioration of river habitat quality (National River Habitat Survey Programme)
2. Ensure all rivers in Northamptonshire meet Good Ecological status or Good Ecological Potential by 2020

Actions

A. Monitor and manage the spread of invasive non-native species on watercourses	Environment Agency NBRC
B. Ensure biodiversity gains are made through flood defence work	Environment Agency Wildlife Trust
C. Encourage better management of agricultural land to eliminate point source pollution	Environment Agency RNRP Anglian Water
D. Encourage a catchment-wide approach to identifying sites suitable for conservation initiatives and for the targeting of improved management regimes	RNRP Environment Agency Wildlife Trust

<p>E. Ensure fish passes are created or barriers to fish movement removed at identified locations</p>	<p>Environment Agency RNRP</p>
<p>F. Enhance for biodiversity 2km of river</p>	<p>Environment Agency RNRP</p>

Flagship species



- European eel
- White-clawed freshwater crayfish
- Water vole
- Otter

Further information and management advice

- ▶ [Further habitat information from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [River restoration case studies from the Wildlife Trust](#)
- ▶ [Wildlife Trust’s management advice](#)
- ▶ [River Restoration Centre online library](#)
- ▶ [Environment Agency website](#)
- ▶ [Guide to Catchment Sensitive Farming](#) (from Natural England)
- ▶ [Nene Catchment Partnership](#)