

Extension to 15 December

Severn Estuary Salmon Protection Emergency Byelaw

June 2020

After considering an application made to the Environment Agency for an extension of the emergency byelaw introduced last year to protect salmon in the River Severn and its estuary, the Under Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has extended the emergency byelaw for 6 months. The Severn Estuary Salmon Protection Emergency Byelaw will now be in place until 15 December 2020.

Why is there a need to extend the 2019 emergency byelaw by 6 months?

The 2019 salmon stock assessment shows that stock levels for the River Severn catchment, continue to be significantly below conservation limits. The number of returning adult salmon continues to decline despite the current protection measures we have in place. Continued protection is required to prevent harm to salmon stocks in 2020.

The Environment Agency fisheries technical team have spent the last 12 months reviewing and analysing the salmon stock assessment evidence to inform and consider the most appropriate longer term measures to protect the future of the Severn, Wye and Usk salmon stocks. This includes consideration of extending and expanding the current restrictions to enable a better recovery.

We wish to engage with fishermen and partners on such options. Winter flooding and Covid-19 have restricted opportunities to discuss future proposals - but we will look to do that as soon as practical.

This extension to the emergency byelaw will allow more time to consult and continue to protect the fishery from harm.

What next?

All fishermen should continue to adhere to the 2019 Byelaw restrictions – we thank them for their support.

We will make arrangements to engage with fishermen when safe to do so – or via virtual means if necessary.

Recap – why the 2019 emergency byelaw was introduced

The emergency byelaw was introduced to protect this salmon population after a review of data showed a significant reduction in salmon stock levels in the Severn. Numbers for the rivers Wye and Usk were also extremely low (rivers which Salmon from the Severn estuary migrate to).

Under the byelaw, draft net and putcher fishing in the Severn estuary is prohibited. Lave net fishing operates on a catch and release basis only. Rod and line fishing is on a catch and release basis only on the whole of the Severn throughout the rod season.

Broader Environment Agency actions to protect salmon

The emergency byelaw is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger national programme to protect salmon stocks which have declined to unsustainable population levels in many of our rivers. Other actions taken by the Environment Agency and its partners include removing fish migration barriers, improving water quality and working with landowners to implement better agricultural practices and addressing unsustainable water abstractions.

We understand fishing (all methods - rods and commercial nets) is only one of a number of factors that have contributed to the decline in salmon stocks in the River Severn; environmental factors at critical times in the salmon's life cycle, such as recent floods, the warm winters and barriers to migration, also play a significant part. Only by the use of immediate and robust action, with cooperation from others, can we contribute to improving the spawning population to aid the recovery of salmon stock in the Severn for the future.

Further information and a copy of the byelaw is available at: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/severn-estuary-salmon-protection-emergency-byelaw>. You can contact us on 03708 506 506 or via enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk if you have any questions. Please note due to the current health emergency we have reduced the times our phone lines are open (10am-4pm). This is under review and we hope to be able to extend them soon. The impact of COVID-19 on our teams means you may experience some delays in responses as most of our staff will be working from home.

