A clear solution for farmers
CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Priority Catchment Targeting Summary
March 2011 – March 2014

River Basin District: North West
Catchment: River Ehen & Keekle (West Cumbrian Catchments)
Total Area: 235 km^2

Reasons for designation

The West Cumbrian Rivers, Ehen and Keekle have been included in the Catchment Sensitive Farming project (CSF), Phase 3 (2011-2014) for two reasons:

- To reduce the loading of Faecal Indicator Organisms (FIOs) impacting on the local Bathing Waters at Seascale
- To improve the failing SSSI status of the Upper Ehen, where nutrient input is detrimentally affecting the freshwater pearl mussel population

Priorities

Bathing waters – Seascale
Under the revised Bathing Water Directive (rBWD) a large proportion of Bathing Waters in the North West are projected to fall below sufficient status
Microbial Source Tracking evidence gathered by the Environment Agency suggests that Agriculture on the Lower Ehen, its tributaries, Black and Kirk Beck, together with the River Keekle is contributing to FIOs loads to Bathing Waters at Seascale.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Nutrient loading in the Upper Ehen is detrimentally affecting SSSI condition, which is currently in unfavourable condition

Where there is overlap with the above priorities, CSF will also address:

Waterbodies failing to achieve Good Ecological Status
Ehen is classified as good and the Keekle is classified as moderate.

Objectives

- To introduce new livestock and land management practices and encourage farmers to put them into practice. This will reduce the FIO, nutrient and sediment input to water courses.
- To raise awareness of the effect that agriculture can have on bathing waters as well as recognising the contribution made by other activities such as poor septic tank management and waste water treatment works.
- Improve manure, slurry and fertiliser management and increase nutrient use efficiency
- Increase the understanding of soil issues and management techniques to improve soil structure, reducing potential run-off from the land surface
- reduce the use of the river as a drinking source by both cattle and sheep.

These actions are aimed at reducing the FIO and nutrient load to the catchment and making better use of organic and inorganic nutrients thus reducing the risk to watercourses.
River fencing and stock removal together with manure and slurry management has the potential to reduce the agricultural FIO input to the catchment thereby having a positive impact on bathing waters. It is also likely that changes to nutrient and soil management will reduce the sediment input to water courses.

Delivery

Bathing Water delivery has been targeted to stretches of watercourse/sub-catchments in the lower catchment. The Upper Ehen has also been targeted to reduce impacts on the pearl mussel population.

Delivery will help farmers to develop their own nutrient and manure management plans by providing them with on farm 1:1 training and soil sampling. Whole Farm Appraisals will be carried out to provide an overview of the key issues around the farm. More detailed follow-up training will be offered as required, including infrastructure, slurry/manure handling & storage. Workshops will be used to raise awareness of local issues and inform farmers of measures that they may be able to implement of their farms to reduce their impact e.g. nutrient budgeting and farm infrastructure improvements.

The collaboration project between CSF and West Cumbria Rivers Trust will continue work early in 2012 to encourage farmers to fence off stock from river edges as well as reduce riparian stocking levels. This project will serve to raise awareness of the issues and specifically develop fencing projects.

Targeting Map