



# A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

## Reducing the impacts of grazing in the Kennet and Lambourn Catchment

Pear Tree Stream, Copse Lock

### Kennet and Lambourn Catchment (33)

CSFO: Andrew Russell

#### Description

The Kennet and Lambourn catchment is made up of 12 hydrological sub-catchments, all contributing to the state of the water quality. The area to the south of the main River Kennet differs from the majority of the catchment's shallow chalk soils by having deep alluvial soils. Several small, seasonal and flashy streams run through this area into the River Kennet.

One of these streams is known as the Pear Tree stream. This flows into the confluence of the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Kennet at Copse Lock. This stream's catchment has typically smaller fields compared to much of the area, with a higher level of grazing and numerous small woods. Many of the fields are drained.

#### Pollution Problems

The area where the Pear Tree stream flows into the canal has been identified by the Environment Agency (EA) as being particularly problematic, with high levels of sediment and eutrophic blooms.



Silting of Pear Tree stream just before it reaches the Kennet and Avon Canal



Some of this is attributed to boat traffic on the canal and the problems of existing sediment and phosphate being stirred up. Some, however, has been associated with streams such as the Pear Tree stream. Further investigations to find the cause of the sediment loss from the Pear Tree stream catchment found there were issues with silted ponds and culverts, woodland runoff and poorly drained brideways.

Agricultural diffuse pollution can be attributed to sediment and nutrient loss from poached banks, and there may be some risk from nutrients and fertilisers entering ditch and drainage systems which connect with the streams.



Canal bank poaching, upstream of Pear Tree Stream



Discussion group looking at the issues from the head waters of the Stream down to the conflux with the canal

## Solutions

In order to engage farmers with land having problems associated with water quality in their local area, a discussion group was set up with farmers and landowners on and around the Pear Tree stream. Two walks were held, one upstream of the main river where one of the springs forming the stream begins.

It was clearly visible at this site that poaching had some impact on the sediment loads to the stream. There were also degraded water meadow ditch systems, creating further problems with waterlogged and poached land. The planting of a number of conifers at the source of the stream had altered the flow of the stream and was causing eutrophication of a headstream pond.

The farmer was in Countryside Stewardship managing some species rich grassland areas. It was recognised that there were more opportunities to develop options to improve the management of wet woodland and cattle drinking under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS). As a result, the Catchment Sensitive Farming officer (CSFO) recommended the Natural England Advisor to make an early transfer between schemes.

The second farm walk was at a farm alongside the canal, so farmers could relate what was happening on the small streams to the sediment loads at the canal. This farmer had already come into HLS and had reverted some maize fields alongside the stream to grassland, to minimise surface runoff. There were issues with poaching along the canal side, so it was recommended that drinking bays be implemented along with fencing to encourage the marginal vegetation to stabilise the banks and allow regeneration.

There was a further problem with a connecting track along the canal bank side. It has been proposed to relocate this to higher, less waterlogged land: this needs to be investigated further, as it may impact on an adjacent ancient woodland.

## Farmer Engagement and Motivation

Farmers gave positive feedback at the discussion group. They thought it was a useful forum to discuss local issues openly and get specific advice about their area. Visiting sites that demonstrate good and bad practice was useful to illustrate the problems faced and solutions available. One farmer also pointed out that, '...farming is becoming an increasingly isolated profession as farms grow and labour forces shrink; groups like this enable local farmers to come together generally as well as having a positive specific purpose.'

Following the discussion group the majority of farmers took advantage of one-to-one visits from their CSFO to look at their own farms for areas where they could reduce their contribution to diffuse water pollution.

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