

# 'TOP TIPS'

## For Landowners and Managers in the River Ehen Catchment

June 2014

### Farming today

Farming land today, means that landowners have to know about and comply with a raft of UK legislation. The River Ehen has additional special legal protection as it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as well as Special Area of Conservation for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel and Atlantic salmon, this places a legal responsibility on landowners and managers to ensure that their activities cause no harm.

The river is home to our last breeding population of freshwater mussels in England, but they are struggling to survive here too. They can live for more than 100 years and as filter feeders they perform an essential function of keeping the river clean; if they are at risk, it is a warning that the health of the river is declining. The Ehen mussels have been affected by several factors including pollution from septic tank effluent, diffuse water pollution and increased siltation from rapidly eroding riverbanks. We in the Ehen Catchment, have the challenge and responsibility to make sure that they we protect these mussels and help them to thrive again.

### 'Top Tips'

These 'Top Tips' aim to highlight some of the practical things that you can do to help manage your land in this specially protected area.

- Reduce dirty water runoff from farmyards by roofing middens and organising clean and dirt water drains .
- Fence off the river and provide alternative drinking troughs to avoid risk to mussels through trampling and polluting the river with droppings and mud.

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### Calendar for Works

*Fencing: all year but in suitable weather and ground conditions.*

*Tree Surgery & Tree Planting: November to March.*

*In-river works (only with advice and consents): June to September .*

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## 'Top Tips'

- Locate drinking troughs away from the river to reduce stock poaching and provide a gravel-base around watering points to minimise poaching.
- Locate supplementary feeding stations away from the river and tributaries; ideally, move regularly to avoid build-up of nutrients and excessive ground disturbance or place on a hard-base.
- Avoid accessing the river with machinery to reduce direct damage to mussels and salmon redds, as well as preventing disturbance to silts or oil/fuel entering the river.
- Application of pesticides and veterinary products should be carried out away from the river, tributaries or waterlogged land. Locate sheep dipping stations or other livestock treatment facilities more than 30m away from watercourses.
- Avoid ploughing, digging, cultivating or other disturbance of the ground near the river and tributaries as uncultivated buffer strips capture soil and nutrients. Ploughing with the contour rather than up and down the contour also helps keep soils and nutrients on the field, therefore saving you money!
- Avoid the spreading of manures, fertilisers or pesticides near ditches or watercourse.
- Plant locally native trees along riverbanks and ditches to create buffer strips as this slows flow of water in peak periods, stabilises riverbanks and traps soil and nutrient run-off from surrounding land. Good trees for this area are Alder, Goat Willow, Aspen in wet areas and Hawthorn, Oak, Hazel, Birch, Crab Apple and Cherry in drier ground.
- Alteration of the riverbanks, channel, bed or flow can cause serious damage to your bank and areas downstream; contact the Environment Agency for advice and a consent is required for any works within 8m of the main river or contact Cumbria County Council for works to tributaries.
- Create wetland areas where possible e.g. ditches at field corners or consider creating smaller ponds or filter beds to encourage settlement of silt.

## Contacts

- Becky Gray, Natural England Land Management Adviser (HLS and SSSI Consents) (07810 814542)
- Susan Kenworthy, Natural England Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (07827357205)
- Chris Addy & Mike Farrell (0370 8506506), Environment Agency, for advice on Flood Defence Consents and best practice for biodiversity and fisheries.
- Diane O'Leary (017687 44347), Pearls in Peril Project, can offer advice and funding for projects and oversee their delivery.
- Rachel Oakley (07836374808), Project Officer for Wild Ennerdale, can offer advice on activities of Wild Ennerdale Project.
- Pete Leeson (07831523621), Woodland Trust, can offer advice on tree planting and maintenance and potentially offer trees for planting.
- Cumbria County Council (01228 606060), for planning advice and Flood Defence Consents for tributaries of the River Ehen.
- Lake District National Park (01539 724555), for planning advice.
- Local Police Wildlife Crime Unit (call 101) to report any suspicious activity e.g. removal of mussels.

