



WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE UPDATE JANUARY 2009

The Water Framework Directive promotes a new approach to water management through river basin planning. It aims to improve and protect inland and coastal waters; drive wiser, sustainable use of water as a natural resource; create better habitats for wildlife that lives in and around water and help reduce the effects of floods and droughts.

The first draft River Basin Management Plans have now been produced and are out for public consultation until 22 June 2009. This briefing note gives you the background on the process which has led to the Plans being produced and explains why and how you and your region should respond to the plans.

RIVER BASIN DISTRICTS

10 River Basin Districts (RBDs) have been identified within England and Wales (Severn, South East, South West, Thames, Dee, Humber, North West, Northumbria, Anglian and Western Wales), with a further cross border RBD (the Solway Tweed) identified between England and Scotland. For the 10 RBDs in England and Wales, the competent authority for the delivery of the WFD is the Environment Agency. For Solway Tweed RBD, it is the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). The remainder of Scotland is covered by one RBD where SEPA is the competent authority. Northern Ireland shares 3 RBDs with Eire.

The Directive introduces six-year cycles of planning and action. The first and current planning process will continue until 2009, with the aim of implementing these plans by 2015.

River Basin Management Plans will be finalised for each River Basin District by 22 December 2009 in the light of responses to the current public consultation received by 22 June 2009. These plans will set out objectives for the management of the water environment. They will also provide a framework for more detailed decisions to be made. The plans will bring together water and land management.

WHY THE WFD COULD BE SIGNIFICANT FOR BOATING

The WFD has the potential to affect boating activities by placing restrictions or conditions on the following:

- Facilities maintenance and development e.g., dredging and disposal, bank protection, weed control

- Navigation/vessel movement e.g., boat wash, boat movement, bed disturbance, mooring
- Control of spread of alien species through hull fouling
- Discharges e.g., boat emissions, anti-fouling paints, boat wash down
- Abstraction or impoundment, including structures such as weirs and locks
- New development – e.g., dredging and disposal, infrastructure, land claim, new waterways i.e. Bedford to Milton Keynes

Although in practice any impacts from recreational boating have been shown to be relatively minor in the first planning cycle, it is essential that we remain vigilant and review and respond to all the draft River Basin Management Plans.

RBD LIAISON PANELS

Each River Basin District has a stakeholder "Liaison Panel", generally made up of 15 members from various major stakeholder groups. These panels are responsible for representing the views of a wide range of key stakeholders. Membership is limited and primarily governed by the characteristics of the particular river basin district and activities that may put particular pressure on water quality and water management. Each panel is chaired by the relevant Regional Director of the Environment Agency. Despite concerted efforts to secure a seat on every liaison panel, the recreational sector currently has direct representation on only two of the 11 panels – South East and Thames.

WHAT IS HAPPENING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL?



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At the national level in England, the RYA, and other recreational interests, sit on a national stakeholder panel that meets 3 or 4 times per year and is run by Defra. It is at this level that significant issues relating to the delivery of the legislation are discussed – e.g. definitions of “Good Ecological Status”, the economics of implementing WFD measures etc. The national stakeholder panel has a much wider membership and there are several recreational organisations represented on this panel, including most other members of the Boating Alliance.

The National River Basin District Liaison Panel was set up in June 2007. RYA’s Planning and Environmental Advisor, Susie Tomson, has a place on this panel on behalf of CCPR to represent recreational interests.

The purpose of this panel is to:

- Consider national issues
- Provide national level help and advice to EA
- Act as a forum for negotiations between deliverers on national measures
- Include major interests that can help drive action at all levels – government departments, regulation, planning and business

HOW ARE THE PLANS PREPARED?

The process for developing final River Basin Management Plans includes a number of steps. These are:

- Working Together (Statement of Steps and Consultation Measures for producing the River Basin Management Plan) (consultation ended 22 December 2006)
- Statement of Significant Water Management Issues produced by 22 December 2007
- Draft River Basin Management Plan produced by 22 December 2008 for consultation
- A final version of the River Management Plan will be published by 22 December 2009.

The River Basin District liaison panels have played a key role in developing the RBMPs.

RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS

Each main Plan includes

- information on the characteristics of the River Basin District
- a summary of the significant pressures and impacts upon water bodies and the economic analysis of water use
- objectives for 2015 and beyond
- environmental outcomes
- impacts at catchment level
- a summary of the proposed national and local measures by sector (the programme of measures required for the River Basin District to achieve Water Framework Directive objectives).

The plans will thus:

- establish a strategic plan for the long term management of the River Basin District
- set out objectives for water bodies and in broad terms what measures are planned to meet these objectives
- act as the main reporting mechanism to the European Commission

Each main Plan is supported by 14 Annexes running to some 2000 pages. These contain the detailed information explaining and supporting the Plan. The key annexes are:

- Annex B – objectives for waters, which sets out the current and projected ecological and chemical status for each water body
- Annex C – actions, which sets out the programme of measures and indicates which water bodies it is likely to affect
- Annex I – artificial and heavily modified water bodies, which includes many water bodies used for recreational boating – reservoirs, estuaries, harbours and coastal waters.

All the draft Plans and Annexes are available by River Basin on the Environment Agency website www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd At the bottom of each River Basin section is a facility called ‘What’s in Your Backyard’ which allows you to access information on each water body through maps. Some water bodies are not yet mapped on to this system however (especially if they are classified as Artificial or Heavily Modified) and the information that is available for the water bodies on this system is of a variable quantity and quality.



WHAT YOU NOW NEED TO DO AT REGIONAL LEVEL

- Review the main plan for possible problems – it 's probably best to read through the main plan and do a word search on the annexes using search terms like “recreational boating”, “navigation” and “sailing”
- If possible get people with local knowledge to review what is said about water bodies used for boating in relevant annexes
- Respond to the public consultation on the draft Plans:
 - through the e-consultation website, by post, email or telephone
 - by attending local workshops if these are being held in your area (check the EA website to find out if they are)
- Contact Kate Moore/Susie Tomson at RYA HQ if you have any concerns or find any problems
- Keep them up to date with the picture for your region/home country

RYA website:

<http://www.rya.org.uk/KnowledgeBase/environment/WFD.htm>

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