

WATER

Introduction

The Environment Agency monitors all rivers in the area on a monthly or three monthly basis. Water quality has improved in most rivers over the last year. Groundwater levels are rising rapidly in response to the heavy rainfall we have experienced this year and it is not envisaged that there will be any low flow problems next summer.

Indicator WR1: Water Consumption

Three Valleys Water Company covers 95% of Hertfordshire, plus Luton and small parts of Essex and Greater London. The average demand for water through the year 99/00 for the company was 682 million litres per day (Ml/d). Usage remained at moderate levels due to summer weather conditions combined with another mild winter. Average Day Peak Week demand at 815 Ml/d was 5.4% higher than in 98/99.

The average household per capita consumption of water in Hertfordshire is currently 171 litres per head per day. Consumption of water here in the South East tends to be higher than the national average. Total leakage has been reduced from 135 to 122 Ml/d since last year.

Indicator WR2: River Quality

The Environment Agency monitors the chemical and biological quality of our rivers using a system that classifies river quality:

A – Very Good B – Good C – Fairly Good D – Fair E – Poor F - Bad

The chemical quality of the rivers in Hertfordshire is shown on the map.

INSERT WATER QUALITY MAP WITH KEY AS LAST YEAR

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The graph below shows the proportion of river in each class between 1993 and 1999. The years are shown as 1995-97, for example, because the quality is averaged over a three year period.

INSERT WATER GRAPH A

- 338km of river in Hertfordshire are classified under this system;
- 35% of the rivers in Hertfordshire were of Very Good or Good quality (A & B) in 1997-99, an increase of 4% compared to 1996-98;
- 9% of the rivers in Hertfordshire were of Poor quality (E) in 1997-99, a decrease of 2% compared to 1996-98,

The improvement in water quality reflects the change in weather conditions, as water levels, flows and groundwater recharge return to their long term averages from the drought conditions of the mid 1990s.

Indicator WR3: River Quality Objectives

The river reaches that are monitored for their water quality also have River Quality Objectives (RQOs). The RQO scheme is based upon the recognised uses of a river. Objectives are based on the River Ecosystem (RE). These address the chemical quality requirements of different types of aquatic ecosystems as outlined below:

- Class RE1: Water of very good quality suitable for all fish species;
- Class RE2: Water of good quality suitable for all fish species;
- Class RE3: Water of fair quality suitable for all fish species;
- Class RE4: Water of fair quality suitable for coarse fish populations;
- Class RE5: Water of poor water quality which is likely to limit coarse fish populations.

Compliance with these objectives is recorded as pass, marginal or fail. This system will be extended to other uses in the future. Objectives based on biological monitoring are to be introduced in 2000. The length of river in Hertfordshire in each class in 1996-98 and 1997-99 and the compliance with the RQO is shown in the two graphs below.

INSERT WATER GRAPH B

INSERT WATER GRAPH C

- 340km of river in Hertfordshire had a River Quality Objective 1996-1998
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- 55% of the rivers passed their River Quality Objective in 1997-99, compared to 44% passing in 1996-98.

**For Further Information on Water Contact: John Mills, Environment Agency,
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