

news release

Anglers asked to check flies

Workshop held to help protect river water quality

In a first for the area, a special workshop took place for fly fishermen at Fotheringhay near Peterborough last week, to help anglers detect changes in water quality by checking the flies they see when out fishing.

The workshop was run by the Environment Agency and the Riverfly Partnership in the hope that people regularly on the riverbank, such as fly fishermen, can alert the Environment Agency if they detect changes in riverfly populations and so water quality. The group in Fotheringhay adds to the 300 people across the UK already trained and monitoring 200 sites.

Fly fishermen closely observe the flies naturally on the river and imitate these with the flies they make to lure fish. The fishermen can use this observation of natural flies to make a judgment on river quality. If their data indicates that water quality has dropped, they can alert the Environment Agency who can then investigate further and take appropriate action. Insects provide a reliable indication of the state of rivers and streams, with changes in their population warning that something is not quite right, such as water becoming polluted.

Chris Extence from the Environment Agency said: 'Anglers can provide us with the eyes on the ground to help us detect when things are not right in our rivers. Their help is invaluable to us and gives them an opportunity to actively protect the rivers which are vital for their sport.'

'We're hoping that the special observation skills of fly fishermen will help them to become keen judges of water quality and give us really early indications of possible problems.'

The Riverfly Partnership works with local organisations to help protect the quality of watercourses and conserve riverfly populations.

Bridget Peacock, Director of the Riverfly Partnership said, “It’s great to see more people trained as this rapidly expanding scheme for water quality is becoming a key element to help ensure the good ecological quality of UK rivers. We’re already getting good results with two significant sets of pollution¹ identified by people who have been trained, which both resulted in successful prosecutions by the Environment Agency.”

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Media enquiries: Contact Rita Penman or Catherine Burbage on 01733 464357 (during normal office hours, also for emergency service only, 24 hours).

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Notes for editors

1 Pollution and prosecutions were in Wales

Photos of the workshop available on request.

The Environment Agency is the leading organisation for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. We are responsible for making sure that air, land and water are looked after by today’s society, so that tomorrow’s generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.