



River Eden REDFA Update 12.09.20

After a long lull in REDFA news and a noticeable autumn feel in the air this update provides a catch up on River news and events ahead in what has been an exceptional year of unforeseen events.

Firstly and foremost we hope you, your family and colleagues are well and healthy and that you have been able to enjoy some time on the Eden and that your Club, syndicate or own fishery arrangements have survived the restrictions and events to see us through to next season.

This update is in three parts, acting as a communication to Committee & Members about proposed arrangements to return to normal business. Our last GPC meeting being 4th March 2020;

REDFA Meetings, AGM & Election of Officers

REDFA Officers met on the 24th August and proposed that the postponed March AGM would be carried forward to February 2021 to enable the two 2018-19 & 2019-20 year AGM's to be merged.

The next GPC Meeting to take place in October and a further GPC and Election of Officers in January 2021.

A set of 2018-19 year accounts have been prepared and will be distributed to the GPC in October. A new Treasurer Colin Corlett was elected in March but due to Covid restrictions the handover was not able to be completed and Colin will take up his position from January 2021.

Some REDFA Office holders will be standing down in January and we are looking to bring some new appointments onto the GPC. If you are interested or know of persons who have an interest in Eden fishing please make contact with Paul, Adrian, Nigel or myself.

Eden Bird Count - Sunday 8th November

Salmon Redd count - programme running end Nov - December - early Jan as last year

Eden Annual Monitoring report - we plan to combine the 2019 & 2020 year reports for February

Major catchment issues & initiatives

Potential Signal Crayfish spread from the Caldew

In April ERT's Head of Conservation, Alasdair Brock notified REDFA that eDNA water sampling in another Eden watercourse outside the Caldew catchment had detected the presence of Crayfish plague (crayfish plague is a positive indicator that signal crayfish have infected native white clawed crayfish in that location).

This is obviously a worrying development as Natural England classifies signal crayfish a High Impact invasive species to the river ecology as a whole including many riverine species.

A small number of volunteer anglers are presently assisting ERT with further Surveys of the affected small watercourse and its connected waters.

We hope to report nothing has been detected but please make every effort to continue to observe national ;

CHECK, CLEAN & DRY guidelines after fishing.

Red signal crayfish are quite distinctive, please report and photo any sightings immediately to ERT, EA, or REDFA.

Secretaries comment

If you reach the end of this Update you might conclude that the last two years has seen the most disruptive and unsettling developments in REDFA's long history and that decision making within catchment partnership groups has been at the heart of this. REDFA as a member of its NW counterpart NWATFCC North West Angling Trust Fisheries Consultative Council has chosen not to accept what might appear to be the inevitable but challenged these where necessary.

Rather perversely the Covid pandemic has brought about a rebirth of interest in angling as a pastime that has multiple benefits to individuals and communities.

REDFa and its fisheries and Riparian representatives have and continue to make important contributions to managing our catchment, protecting and improving our River and fisheries.

REDFa's incident & Pollution Monitoring Programme

In the past 18 month's REDFA have formed a very good working relationship with the EA's pollution enforcement team. Nigel Austin - REDFA's Pollution coordinator liaises with their team and a quarterly summary report is produced by the EA (limited by data protection etc) on River Eden catchment incidents, trends and EA responses and actions. This was modelled on a similar successful Ribble fisheries programme.

Nigel is able to receive and log Fisheries & Riparian incidents (once the person has first reported this to the National EA 24hr call centre 0800 80 70 60) and follow up any actions if the response is not forthcoming etc.

But Nigel needs to be contacted by the individual concerned or through Club Pollution coordinators channels. This has been very effective, but reports have dwindled to very few in the last 6 months. Are farmers responding to the "Farming rules for Water" or is this a result of Covid access restrictions on water ?

So please use it or we will lose what is one of the best programmes REDFA have kick started with the EA's support.

Nigel's can be reached on 07708 281957

Eden Catchment Plans

In June 2018 Eden Rivers Trust informed REDFA that it was withdrawing from the 2014 & updated 2016 Eden Fishery Plan and would be scaling back its delivery and resources to river monitoring and engagement with REDFA and Clubs. In July 2018 Daniel Brazier, Restoration Manager and Fisheries specialist left ERT and was not replaced.

The new CEO of the Trust and Chair of Trustees encouraged REDFA to engage with the newly formed Eden Catchment Plan with ERT acting as host facilitators - part of the Eden CaBA (Catchment area Based Approach). It was acknowledged at the time that the Catchment Plan was ostensibly a Flood alleviation and Natural Flood Management plan and subsequently ERT agreed to incorporate elements of the Eden Fisheries Plan vision and actions.

There followed a period of 18 months when the Plan widened to incorporate and present in its final draft its own vision for delivery of Ecosystem Services in the Eden catchment comprising;

Water Quality, Water Quantity - management of high & low flows, **Ecological Networks, Carbon capture & storage** (sequestration), **Recreation & Leisure**.

The Eden Catchment Plan is essentially a catchment partnership project plan, driven with partners facilitating this with combinations of external and joint partner funding. There are several hundred live and proposed projects on the Catchment Plan portal. REDFA and its committee of Club and Riparian representatives submitted their own proposals through Nigel Austin (REDFa Plan coordinator) in the drafting of the Catchment Plan. At this present moment in time REDFA and its Committee have reservations as to how the Plan addresses the very specific needs of fisheries management - meeting WFD, SAC & SSSI requirements and designations, scope of Monitoring programmes, unsustainable abstraction & maintenance of River flows, protection & management of fish threats (predation & invasive species), interface with enforcement, funding of fishery related project improvements, rod fisheries engagement in habitat & restoration plans and access conflicts with Riparian interests.

The Plan is being launched by the Eden Rivers Trust the Eden catchment host on the 23rd September.

REDFa supports the Plan but for obvious reasons has not been a comfortable participant of this Plan.

The GPC have taken a decision to review and communicate its position vis-à-vis the Plan in the New Year.

Formal Complaint & Parliamentary Ombudsman investigation of the EA decision not to review and revise Solway & NW River salmon stock Assessments

This concerns REDFA & Border Esk representatives request for an early review of the 2018 Solway NLO & Byelaws as a result of a meeting with the Defra Minister in February 2019 over the impact of the Byelaws and REDFA's analysis that spawning stocks were and are being under estimated with mandatory C & R measures applied incorrectly to rod fisheries. Specifically that the EA have not updated the original formulated estimates used in the 2000 Salmon Action Plan. Applied variable factors such as rod effort, rod catch and rod exploitation rates have altered significantly (50% reduction in angler declared game fishing effort - days fished in the last 10 years). The original NWATFCC complaint was not upheld by the EA internal Complaints process and NWATFCC this was referred to the Parliamentary Ombudsman for further investigation. A case officer has been now been assigned and we are informed that the investigation should conclude within the next 2 months.

Corby Weir - progress report

The last meeting involving the EA & Fisheries Steering Group was held on the 18th February, with the EA providing a short presentation of their preferred Option for a modified (lowered) weir that would be passable to fish. Following that meeting the Steering Group provided the EA with a number of performance criteria recommendations that should be met to ensure all fish (including eels & lamprey) could migrate freely without obstruction. It was agreed that the EA present their final proposals with performance guarantees, construction details and potential funding at the earliest opportunity in order that the project proceed, with 2021 a possible start date. We have now received an outline response from the EA to meeting those performance guarantees. The lowered weir profile may impinge on the functions of the existing counter where legal obligations are still linked to the existing structure. So both parties are considering how they could secure and agree a fuller programme of other life cycle monitoring schemes (with or without a counter) as a basis for reporting future population health. There has been some further delay since February with the EA representing their final proposal (Covid and Consultants) and as a consequence YFF sought Fish Legal advice in the event that timescales were not going to be met. The Steering Group are hopeful that we are now nearing a point of seeing a more detailed worked up scheme.

Enforcement Undertakings and distribution of River Eden Pollution fines

In 2015 a major pollution incident in Carlisle led to a significant sum of EU polluter fines being earmarked for delivery of key fisheries objectives. Including resourcing the Eden Fishery Plan (which was part of the 2013 ERT led catchment partnership "Saving Eden" Plan), provision to producing an annual monitoring & fisheries report, projects to remove bottlenecks in the catchment and specific monitoring objectives to target salmon population recovery. In 2018 the original Enforcement undertakings were amended and the £264,000 of monies diverted elsewhere. CAA & REDFA are jointly receiving Fish Legal advice concerning this.

River Flows & Ullswater Drought Permit Order

August has seen our Rivers, reservoirs and lakes returning to near full capacity. It is difficult to envisage that in June & July the catchment reached early drought trigger alerts. This has become an almost yearly event with changing patterns of extended dry spells interspersed with heavier and shorter rainfall flood events. REDFA has been tracking and analysing these impacts on River levels and flows (Cm³/sec flow volumes) and has good contact with Steve Garner the EA, Team Leader for Fisheries, Biodiversity & Morphology. We sought assurance in June that that the UU would not attempt to make an application for contingencies for increasing abstraction through by way of an Ullswater Drought Permit Order. Steve informed REDFA this would not happen and UU were now reconsidering their NW - Water Resources Management abstraction strategy. REDFA opposed and caused UU to withdraw its 2018 Ullswater DPO, engaging with UU, EA & NE to secure agreement they would review and represent a changed DPO for consideration.

Fisheries Technical Specialists appointments in the Eden & North Cumbria catchments

With the departure in March 2019 of Andy Gowans EA Fisheries specialist and Danial Brazier ERT in July 2018 the Eden & Border Esk have been running without appropriate resource.

It is difficult to believe that a River of Eden's stature - the largest NW River with hugely important SAC & SSSI designations could have reached this point. Certainly the absence of engagement in the development of the Eden Catchment Plan has been felt and other fisheries improvement projects have stalled over this period.

In July REDFA requested and received assurance from the EA - Senior Environment Manager at Penrith that they were now advertising for a replacement for Andy Gowans.

ERT have drafted in Dave Greaves a former ERT Technician to assist with ERT monitoring & volunteer programmes.

Other matters of interest

Beaver enclosure Trial - Lowther sub-catchment

Those that have kept up with these developments will know Natural England approved the construction and siting of a five 5 year captive Beaver Trial in January this year in this important Eden sub-catchment. The intention of the trial being to study the benefits and possible adverse impacts to the River environment from Beavers to inform future decisions on possible wild release of Beavers.

- ~ Some people love Beavers ~ some people feel Beavers have a role to play in "natural rewilding" management of our catchments ~ others believe none of this and are fearful of the unintended consequences of releasing another species that became extinct in the UK over 400 years ago.
- ≈ It is fair to say most anglers and fisheries sit somewhere between the 2nd & 3rd of these.

The original trial scheme was to release 4 Beavers, 6 beavers have now been approved for captive release (2 adults and 4 kits) with expansion permitted for up to 10 in the fenced enclosure over the 5 years. REDFA has been opposed to the trial because of concerns over the potential impact from escapees and possible illegal releases (e.g. Tay system experience), but also that the enclosure location is unsuitable to generate study data on the benefit /impact to water attenuation and ecology from wider colonisation of the main river - the enclosure is 300 metres from a main river with a very small watercourse and coppice within the enclosure. REDFA, NE & the Cumbria Beaver Group had coordinated a 3 hour session of presentations and a Q & A in March this year involving Eden & NW fisheries representatives but had to postpone this at short notice due to the Covid restrictions. We hope to reschedule this latter this year. In the meantime the Cumbria Beaver Group website link <https://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/beavers>

REDFA & NWATFCC made a written request to join the Cumbria Beaver Group in June 2019 to represent the catchments principle riparian and fisheries interests. We received no invitation to join or attend meetings. On a point of note - Recapture of escapee's is the responsibility of the applicant's project management team. We hope the trial goes smoothly and does shed light on what is a controversial policy for species reintroduction.

Canoeing and other means of navigating the River Eden

REDFA

has been in contact with regional British Canoeing representatives since 2014 in attempts to renegotiate existing Voluntary Access Agreements, most prominently the Lazonby to Armarthwaite waters. Discussions were hampered in 2018 when the national Canoe body launched its national Access Charter- "Clear Waters" claiming canoeists have historic rights of navigation to all inland waters.

Legal precedent and High Court judgements rule otherwise (the Angling Trust and Fish Legal position in public statements) unless there is a legal navigable rights bestowed on River users e.g. the River Wye.

Rory Stewart tried to broker an agreement between Canoeists and Fisheries before his departure as MP. There is a desire to reach agreement with Canoeists and resolve conflict and increasing abuse of access and existing Agreements. Paul Davidson and Adrian Brown are managing and progressing this.