RIVER TEST WEED CUTTING DATES 2025

SECTOR A and BOURNE *River Test from Source to the A34 bridge near Whitchurch*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Mon 9 Jun – Wed 18 Jun	Thu 19 Jun – Fri 20 Jun
	Mon 14 Jul – Sun 20 Jul	Mon 21 Jul – Tue 22 Jul
	Mon 18 Aug – Sun 24 Aug	Mon 25 Aug – Tue 26 Aug

SECTOR B1 *River Test from A34 bridge near Whitchurch to top of Middleton Estate at Longparish*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Tue 10 Jun – Thu 19 Jun	Fri 20 Jun – Sat 21 Jun
	Tue 15 Jul – Mon 21 Jul	Tue 22 Jul – Wed 23 Jul
	Tue 19 Aug – Mon 25 Aug	Tue 26 Aug – Wed 27 Aug

ANTON **PILLHILL and** **DEVER**	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Tue 10 Jun – Thu 19 Jun	Fri 20 Jun – Sat 21 Jun
	Tue 15 Jul – Mon 21 Jul	Tue 22 Jul – Wed 23 Jul
	Tue 19 Aug – Mon 25 Aug	Tue 26 Aug – Wed 27 Aug

SECTOR B2 *River Test from top of Middleton Estate at Longparish to top of Wherwell Priory (B3420)*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Wed 11 Jun – Fri 20 Jun	Sat 21 Jun – Sun 22 Jun
	Wed 16 Jul – Tue 22 Jul	Wed 23 Jul – Thu 24 Jul
	Wed 20 Aug – Tue 26 Aug	Wed 27 Aug – Thu 28 Aug

SECTOR C *River Test from top of Wherwell Priory (B3420) to the boundary of Leckford Estate/Houghton Club at Longstock*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Thu 12 Jun – Sat 21 Jun	Sun 22 Jun – Mon 23 Jun
	Thu 17 July – Wed 23 Jul	Thu 24 Jul – Fri 25 Jul
	Thu 21 Aug – Wed 27 Aug	Thu 28 Aug – Fri 29 Aug

SECTOR D *River Test from boundary of Leckford Estate/Houghton Club to the road between Horsebridge & Bossington Mill*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Fri 13 Jun – Sun 22 Jun	Mon 23 Jun – Tue 24 Jun
	Fri 18 July – Thu 24 Jul	Fri 25 Jul – Sat 26 Jul
	Fri 22 Aug – Thu 28 Aug	Fri 29 Aug – Sat 30 Aug

SECTOR E and WALLOP BROOK *River Test from the road between Horsebridge and Bossington Mill to the weed boom at Greatbridge*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Fri 13 Jun – Mon 23 Jun	Tue 24 Jun – Wed 25 Jun
	Fri 18 Jul – Fri 25 Jul	Sat 26 Jul – Sun 27 Jul
	Fri 22 Aug – Fri 29 Aug	Sat 30 Aug – Sun 31 Aug

RIVER DUN *River Dun from the source to the confluence with River Test at Kimbridge*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Dri 13 Jun – Sat 21 Jun	Sun 22 Jun – Mon 23 Jun
	Fri 18 Jul – Wed 23 Jul	Thu 24 Jul – Fri 25 Jul
	Fri 22 Aug – Wed 27 Aug	Thu 28 Aug – Fri 29 Aug

SECTOR F *River Test from the weed boom at Greatbridge to the sea*	***Cutting Dates***	***Clearing Off Dates***
	Fri 13 Jun – Mon 23 Jun	Tue 24 Jun – Wed 25 Jun
	Fri 18 Jul – Fri 25 Jul	Sat 26 Jul – Sun 27 Jul
	Fri 22 Aug – Fri 29 Aug	Sat 30 Aug – Sun 31 Aug

WINTER OPEN PERIOD

Weed may be cut any time after 14 October 2024 until 26 April 2025. Owners are asked to ensure that cutting is completed before trout spawning begins and that bank side vegetation is not allowed to fall in the river.

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. **Cutting should start at the beginning of the dates allowed. Please inform your downstream neighbour when you have finished clearing off and of any subsequent problems. Regular communication with your neighbours upstream and downstream is essential to ensure trouble-free weed cutting and clearing down. Weed cutting boats should finish one day before the end of each cutting period**

2. **The Environment Agency has granted consent for the general cutting of weed on the River Test. In the event of low river flows (and high water temperatures) the Environment Agency may request that weed cuts are postponed or reduced in extent in order to maintain water levels and quality. Cutting of weed outside of the authorised dates, without the Agency's consent, constitutes an offence under Section 90 of the Water Resources Act 1991**

3. **Grass cuttings and bank trimmings must NEVER be put into the river. Depositing any form of solid waste in the river, including bankside vegetation, is strictly prohibited under Sections 85 and 90 of the Water Resources Act 1991**

4. **Riparian owners are asked to carry out bank maintenance and other works likely to cause displacement of silt before Christmas, to avoid damage to spawning. The advice of the Agency should be sought before the commencement of any work and the necessary land drainage consents obtained.**

5. **Weed cutting should be undertaken in a manner which is sensitive to the needs of the river habitat. Overzealous or indiscriminate cutting of river weed or marginal vegetation can negatively impact habitat for healthy fly life, fish and other wildlife.**

6. **Above all else, be considerate and use your common sense. Do not send downstream what you would not want to receive from upstream.**

CONTACT POINTS IN CASE OF DIFFICULTIES

The Association's **Volunteer River Test Wardens** may be contacted on the following mobile numbers on the dates indicated. Please contact the T&I Office outside these dates if you have any weed cut issues.

Lt Col Nigel de Foubert	07796 622 208	During the weed cut
Mr Chris Geal	07710 063 456	During the clear down
Lt Col Keith Fisher	07711 931 812	The three days after clear down

Test & Itchen Association
Kimbridge Lane
Kimbridge
Romsey
Hampshire SO51 0LE
Paul Vignaux: 07340 865 502

Environment Manager Solent
Environment Agency Romsey Depot
Canal Walk
Romsey
Hampshire SO51 7LP

Environment Agency
Emergency Hot Line
0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)
(Mobile Phone Users must prefix 0800 number with a *)

FURTHER GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE 2024

1. **Weed cutting**.
   A few words of background may assist in appreciating the context and the role that weed plays in our streams.

   Preserving and enhancing the growth of *Ranunculus* (water crowfoot) and other submerged vegetation provides an essential refuge for invertebrates and fish, including juvenile salmonids, known as parr. On chalk streams, *Ranunculus* is primary habitat for salmon parr and for other small fish, and studies have shown the more of it there is, the greater number of parr it supports. Whilst excessive buildup of any weed can cause an accumulation of silt, *Ranunculus* does help to retain organic material, which can provide mayfly and other larvae with habitat whilst assisting keeping gravel runs between beds of submerged weed clean and healthy.

   Ranunculus acts to increase water depths during summer months by up to 80 cm, helping to keep the river cool in hot periods. Cutting should be put on hold, if possible, or certainly applied with discretion particularly during times of drought or low flows.

   Weed cutting should always be restricted to what is deemed necessary, be selective and where possible carried out by hand. Mechanical cutting has the potential to remove significant amounts of weed and damage riverine habitat. The use of devices, such as weed cutting boats, should be avoided unless absolutely essential.

   The timing, amount, and pattern of weed cutting are vital factors affecting weed growth and in managing any potential adverse effects on the riverine environment. Further information can be found at Management of Riparian and Instream Vegetation.

2. **Catch and release of fish caught.**
   A full Angler's Guide to Catch and Release can be found at Catch and Release for Salmon, but much applies to the return of all game fish. Fish should always be returned quickly and carefully, and preferably not taken out of the water for photos or unhooking. Any handling of fish should be avoided.

   Beaching of fish can cause injury and dislodges scales and should not be used to land fish. Please use knotless meshed nets with care.

   Although primarily directed to the salmon angler, the following top 3 "rules" have a wide application.
   - Keep fish in the water.
   - Avoid fishing in high water temperatures.
   - Play fish hard and keep the fight short.

3. **Methods of catching fish.**
   Only fly should be used to target salmon and sea trout, preferably using a single barbless or debarbed hook with a hook gape of no more than 13 mm (1/2 an inch).

   Spinning or bait fishing should be avoided due to the increased chances of deep hooking and fatal injury. Studies have shown both methods result in a higher post catch and release mortality.

4. **Enhancement of riverine habitat**
   Owners are encouraged to adopt policies designed to improve water velocity, manage bankside vegetation to provide cover/shelter and create areas with minimal human disturbance wherever possible. Simple and easy measures might include interventions to help keep spawning gravels clean or designating areas as salmon sanctuary areas where no fishing or recreational activity takes place. The Environment Agency is looking to work with riparian owners to create a network of salmon sanctuaries areas where disturbance is limited, and refuge areas are improved. Advice on habitat restoration is available, as is part-funding for projects requiring consent. For more information, please email SSDEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

5. **Hatch control**

   Smolts. Studies have shown that in-river mortality of sea-going juvenile salmonids, known as smolts, is significant and greater above man-made barriers such as weirs. Smolts hesitate or rest before going over a weir which means they are often held up, making them vulnerable to predation.

   In absence of removing a structure, hatch operation can be optimised to aid smolt egress by applying a number of simple principles during the smolt migration period, which runs from mid-March to the end of May:

   - Smolts will typically take the last possible exit with the most dominant flow, so flow should be focused via one route which is located the furthest downstream.
   - Where there is sufficient water available, uninterrupted flow should be maintained through the most downstream hatch (i.e. open as far as possible).
   - Spreading flow across the structure should be avoided i.e. by opening lots of hatches a small amount, particularly at low flows.
   - To avoid the likelihood of harm, the preference is for smolts to go under a hatch rather than over it. Where a hatch or set of hatches are bottom-opening they should be operated as such.
   - To avoid the likelihood of harm, if smolts must go over a structure rather than under it, there should be a sufficient depth of water downstream (at least 0.9 m wherever possible).
   - Smolts will hesitate if there is a shallow depth of water going over a sill or fixed weir. If possible, upstream water levels should be managed to allow for a greater depth (a minimum of 0.2 m wherever possible).

Upstream Adult Migration Upstream adult salmonid migration can occur all year round, but timing largely depends on distance from the tidal limit. In the lower river, adults are likely to be present all year round. There are peaks in migration at certain times of year and in the lower river, this is namely June to July and October through to December. The further up the river you go the later in the year you are likely to see adult salmonids. Significant migration can occur from May through to January, so fish passage should be optimised during this period by applying the following principles, some of which mirror those for downstream smolt migration.

- Flow should be concentrated to attract fish at one point and along one channel (where the channel divides).
- Uninterrupted flow should be maintained through at least one hatch. Spreading flow across the structure should be avoided.
- There should be no obstruction at the point of flow. If flows allow, the bottom of the hatch should be clear of the water surface so there is a visible air space and kept clear of debris. The hatch should be 0.5 metres clear of the water surface wherever possible. If flow does not allow a hatch to be fully opened, a minimum gap of 0.3m should be maintained. This is the body depth a multi sea winter salmon can reach. If the gap is any smaller, there is a risk of damage to the fish.
- The head difference (the difference between upstream and downstream water surface level i.e. above and below the sluice) at the weir structures should be kept as low as possible. A head difference exceeding 0.6m may cause an obstruction

6. **EA hotline**

   Report any incidents of poaching, illegal fishing or suspected pollution to the Environment Agency 24/7 hotline on 0800 807060. It would be good to put this number in your mobile phone now!

Jonathan Durrant
T&I Chairman