

Guidance for Regional Proposal Assessment Committee (RPAC) and case officers on improving water quality

Introduction

Management of the water environment has made huge improvements in water quality over the last 50 years, leaving diffuse pollution as the largest source of pollution in Scotland's waters. SEPA and partner organisations are in the initial stages of implementing Scotland's first national coordinated and strategic approach to mitigate diffuse pollution through the Diffuse Pollution Management Advisory Group (DPMAG). This approach is described in the recently published Rural Diffuse Pollution Plan for Scotland, a supplement to the river basin management plans and available at:

www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/diffuse_pollution_mag.aspx .

The plan aims to deliver:

- a national campaign of awareness raising, guidance and training;
- a targeted priority catchment approach with a sequential process of evidence gathering, awareness raising, and farm visits to identify risks, target measures and provide one to one advice.

The catchment approach is key to delivering the major improvements required in the water environment.

The Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP) is expected to play a key role in achieving the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

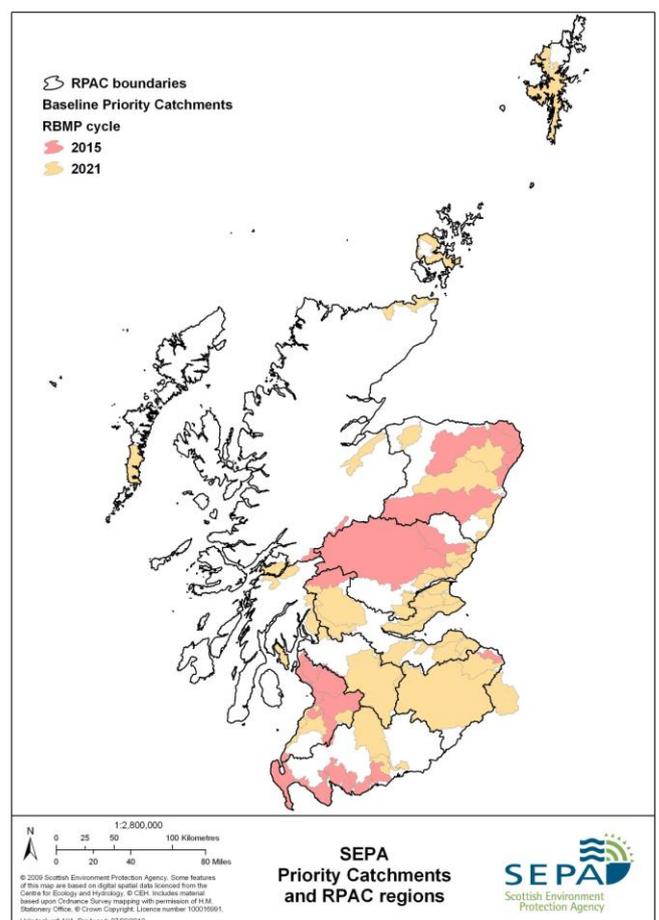
Priority catchments

Catchments have been selected using a risk based method where water bodies or protected areas are significantly failing water quality standards due to rural diffuse pollution. High priority has been given to those areas affecting human health (ie drinking water, protected areas and catchments draining to bathing waters).

Fourteen priority catchments have been identified in the first river basin management cycles for the Scotland and the Solway Tweed river basin districts, containing some of Scotland's most important waters (for conservation, drinking water, bathing and fishing). Priority catchments have also been proposed for future cycles. Map 1 shows the diffuse pollution priority catchments for the first cycle (to 2015) and those proposed for the second cycle (to 2021).

There is now a national target for reducing diffuse pollution in the 2015 priority catchments. See Annex A.

Map 1



The priority catchments for 2015 are listed by RPAC area in the table at the end of this document.

New national target

Reducing diffuse pollution is now a national target and applications from land owners for funding to mitigate it in the 2015 priority catchments will score 'high' if required criteria are met. Land managers need to show a suitable farm assessment has been carried out to ensure options are targeted to where they are required. This will either be in the form of advice from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) or equivalent agency, or a self-assessment.

If a land manager has been visited by SEPA and a farm assessment carried out, the land manager will be provided with a form showing the type and location of suitable rural priorities options. This can then be used in the application. In such cases, it is not envisaged that the application will need to go back to SEPA for checking. Where a farm assessment has not been carried out by SEPA, land managers will still be eligible to apply if a suitable assessment is carried out by an advisor or a self assessment is carried out and submitted. Guidance on the self assessment is being produced by SEPA. In these cases it is expected that applications will go back to the SEPA catchment coordinator for checking.

Measures to be promoted include those in Box 1. This is not a prescriptive list and other measures (particularly those for biodiversity and forestry) may be beneficial if implemented to give an additional benefit for water quality. Additional guidance will be provided on this in due course.

Box 1

- Water margins and riparian buffer strips
- Arable reversion to grassland
- Livestock tracks, gates and river crossings
- Constructed farm wetlands

Regional guidance

Subsequent guidance will be developed describing the main pollutant pressures and suitable measures for each priority catchment on an RPAC specific basis.

Regional priorities still apply to those RPAC areas containing no 2015 priority catchments.

Catchment co-ordinators

The table below lists RPACs, 2015 priority catchments and SEPA's catchment co-ordinators.

RPAC region	Priority catchment	Catchment co-ordinator	Contact details
Ayrshire	River Garnock	Linda Tait	SEPA Ayr Office, tel: 01292 294000
	River Irvine		
	North Ayrshire Coastal	Lucy Filby	SEPA Ayr Office, tel: 01292 294000
	River Doon		
	River Ayr		

Grampian	River Ugie	Eddie Nicol	SEPA Elgin Office, tel: 01343 547663
	River Deveron		
	Buchan Coastal	Derek Johnston	SEPA Aberdeen office, tel: 01224 266681
	River Dee (Grampian)	tbc	
Borders	Eye Water	Will Dryburgh	SEPA Galashiels Office, tel: 01896 754797
Dumfries & Galloway	Galloway Coastal	Jacqueline McColm	SEPA Dumfries Office, tel: 01387 720502
	Stewartry Coastal		
Tayside	River South Esk	Susan Arnott	SEPA Edinburgh Office, tel: 0131 273 7292
	River Tay		

Annex A

Target - improve the quality of Scotland's surface and ground waters by reducing diffuse pollution.

The European Union Water Framework Directive sets strict water quality targets to be achieved by 2027 by all members. Within Scotland, priority catchments have been chosen where there is a high risk of failing to achieve the Water Framework Directive's targets and also because of their risk of impacting on bathing waters, drinking water or shellfish waters.

This national target will apply to proposals where the diffuse pollution mitigation options have been applied for under Regional Priorities 16-20.

To score a 'high', your proposal must contribute to improving water quality in one of the priority catchments. Land managers within priority catchments should already have been notified by SEPA. Further information and a list of priority catchments are available at:

www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/dp_priority_catchments.aspx

To achieve the required improvements in water quality, it is important that options are targeted to where they are both required and effective. Proposals must therefore be supported by a farm assessment to identify sources of diffuse pollution and target options appropriately.

Proposals should include the measures needed to address all the sources of diffuse pollution on the land holding. If you are not proposing to address them all, you should explain why.

Where diffuse pollution measures are applied for under other priorities, a 'high' will be awarded where the total expenditure on diffuse pollution mitigation measures would be expected to exceed 25% of the total value of eligible costs for the whole proposal (including any amount for leverage).

Collaborative applications

Improvements to water quality are most effective when land managers work together and options are implemented throughout a catchment. For example, where buffer strips can be put in place along the entire length of a river or burn, collaborative working is strongly encouraged to achieve this.