

THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

The NRA is the national authority for the regulation and improvement of the water environment in England & Wales. We have statutory responsibilities for:

- Water Resources
- Water Quality & Pollution Control
- Flood Defence and Drainage
- Fisheries & Conservation
- Recreation & Navigation

National Rivers Authority
Information Centre
Head Office
 Class No
 Accession No AM4P

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLANS

The integrated management of river catchments is at the heart of the NRA's work. Catchment Management Plans (CMP) provide a means of setting priorities for the NRA and others to ameliorate environmental problems and to conserve and enhance the water environment - both now and in the future. The Plans, will by their very nature, involve us in close contact with local communities and statutory organisations who share our concern and interest in the water environment. However, it should be realised that the actions stated in this report are only options raised for consultation and do not represent firm commitment by NRA or other organisations. Feedback from the consultation exercise should help the NRA prioritise its activities in view of resource limitations.

'Understanding how rivers, lakes and groundwaters behave is fundamental to our job. However, we must also consider the ways the uses of the water and the activities potentially harmful to it, interact and are managed. Abstracting water, disposing of effluent, participating in water-based recreation and road construction are some examples.'

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS-GAINING YOUR VIEWS

The Consultation Report has been prepared as a means of undertaking detailed consultation with all interested parties.

When responding to us we hope that you will tackle both points of detail and strategic issues. We have prepared a questionnaire to aid this process. In particular we are keen for you to consider the following questions;

- Have we fairly assessed the issues and what opinions do you have on them and the actions we suggest ?
- Does our draft vision include your aspirations ?
- How should we progress the development of action plans ?

Open public meetings will be held shortly to discuss the consultation report.

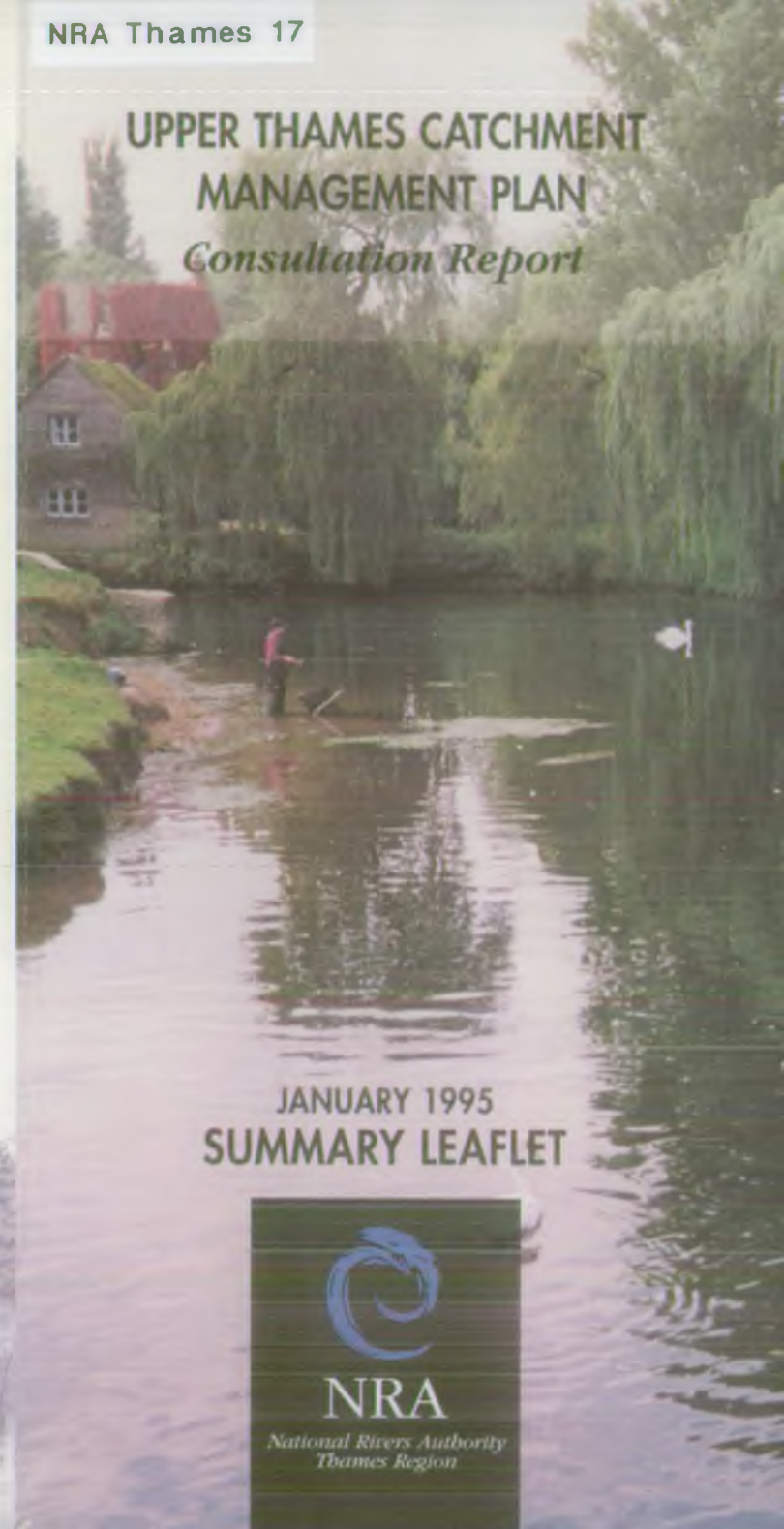
During the consultation period comments and questionnaires can be submitted to:

Mr J A Hamid
Catchment Manager (West Area)
NRA Thames Region
Isis House
Howbery Park
Wallingford
Oxon OX10 8BD
Tel: (01734) 533304

All comments must be with us by Friday 31 March 1995.

The full Consultation Report is available for inspection at local libraries and local authority offices. The Final Plan will only be produced once the consultation responses have been received.

**UPPER THAMES CATCHMENT
 MANAGEMENT PLAN
 Consultation Report**



**JANUARY 1995
 SUMMARY LEAFLET**



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



055626

MAJOR CATCHMENT ISSUES

1. RIVER FLOWS AND LEVELS

Issue: Flows and water levels in rivers fed by groundwater were a cause for public concern particularly during the recent 'drought' of



1989-92. It is perceived that groundwater abstractions contributed to this problem. The River Coln was investigated by the NRA in 1992.

Options for Action:

- Further studies to increase knowledge of groundwater processes (possibly costly).
- Monitor changes in aquatic plants and undertake research.
- Set ecologically acceptable flows.
- Undertake catchment specific studies in the other Cotswold catchments.
- Take opportunities to renegotiate abstraction licences when they expire or other water resources developments are proposed, ie, Meysey Hampton.

2. WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Issues: Some reaches fail to meet their chemical and biological targets. Other failures exist due to agricultural and urban pollution.

A nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ) at Fairford has been proposed to protect the public water supply abstraction.

Options for Action:

- Undertake research into the causes of failures to meet chemical and biological targets.
- Continue proactive approach to pollution control.
- Implementation of NRA groundwater protection policy and management of the NVZ.

3. FLOODING

Issues: Localised flooding and problems associated with the NRA's flood risk management policies:

- Non-tidal floodplain protection policy: In some cases the NRA has insufficient floodplain data to advise local authorities on land use and flooding matters (as prescribed by DoE Circular 30/92);
- Standards of Service approach: complex and in places not implementable in terms of cost/benefit.

Options for Actions:

- Localised flooding. NRA to clarify areas of responsibility to the public and continue to act as 'broker' between the affected community and local authorities.
- In consultation with others, prioritise and carry out surveys for flood alleviation purposes as permitted under Section 105, Water Resources Act 1991.
- Continue studies into the application of the Standards of Service approach.

4. FISHERIES

Issue: Some parts of the fishery are not performing as well as expected

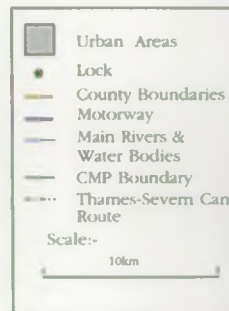
Options for Action:

- Continue to regularly monitor the state of the fishery.
- Investigate the inadequacy of spawning gravels.
- Prepare a fisheries development plan to enable a strategy for future action and help resolve conflicts between fisheries and other users.



5. COTSWOLD WATER PARK

Issue: Important water feature especially in terms of fishery,



b) Continued (proactive) involvement in planning and development issues.

c) Continued long-term monitoring to detect trends and changes over time.



9. COMMUNICATION

Issue: Effective communication is vital if integrated management is to be realised. There are still areas of misunderstanding between the NRA and external parties that needs to be addressed.



Options for Action:

a) Six monthly newsletters on catchment management progress.

b) Catchment working group.

c) Additional public relations material and information campaigns.

CATCHMENT BACKGROUND

The Upper Thames catchment lies within Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire. It includes the complete length of the River Thames upstream of St Johns Lock and various tributaries including the Rivers Leach, Coln, Churn, Ray and Cole. The catchment has an area of approximately 1000 Km², 9% of Thames Region's total area.

The area is predominantly rural with a high quality landscape most notably the Cotswolds in the north of the catchment, designated an area of outstanding natural beauty. However, the south is dominated by the urban conurbation of Swindon (pop. 150,000). Other settlements include Cirencester, Wroughton, Cricklade and Highworth.

The area is skirted along its southern boundary by the M4 motorway and the A40 trunk road crosses the north. The remains of the Thames-Severn canal stretch from Lechlade to the west and further south are the scattered remnants of the Wilts and Berks canal.

The Cotswolds Water Park also lies within the Plan area. It is the largest concentration of gravel pits and associated land in Great Britain. One thousand hectares is open water in the form of over 100 man made lakes. As a consequence, it is of outstanding importance as an inland water fowl site.



Other assets in the catchment include some high quality game and coarse fisheries, a wealth of archaeological features and valuable opportunity for informal countryside recreation.



flood alleviation, recreation, conservation (nationally) and development pressure. The Park is also subject to aggregate extraction.

Options for Action:

- a) Development and agreement of a land use strategy for the park.
- b) Establish baseline data by a series of further studies, ie, hydrology etc.
- c) Flood risk research and management.

6. RECREATION AND CANAL RESTORATION

Issues: Need to maintain balance between different users whilst promoting recreation; Proposals to restore the Thames-Severn and Wilts & Berks canals.

Options for Action:

- a) Further investigations into the environmental aspects of the canal restoration and operation
- b) Development and implementation of NRA Thames Region's Recreation Strategy in the Upper Thames

7. WATER RESOURCES: INCREASED DEMAND IN SWINDON, SEVERN-THAMES TRANSFER & SOUTH WEST OXFORDSHIRE RESERVOIR PROPOSAL

Issue: Swindon is planned to grow over the next 10 years with the addition of some 10,000 houses. Options to meet this and other forecast increases in demand in the Upper Thames such

as transfer schemes need to be considered within the context of the NRA's regional and national water resources strategies.



Options for Actions:

- a) Seek to manage growth in demand, ie, Water Companies leakage control.
- b) Continue data collection and investigation into the environmental implications of water resources development options.
- c) NRA planning guidance to local authorities: discourage further development in areas which currently have insufficient water resources.



8. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT

Issue: This is the underlying concept of Catchment Management Planning. The principal now needs to be developed into a more

practical approach to bring together all strands of environmental management.

Options for Action:

- a) Choosing areas in the Upper Thames as case studies for researching the practicalities of integrated management through community based activity.

