

What have we been doing?

The majority of the project delivered advice to landowners, which focussed on the following:

Improved Nutrient Management on farms has been a key theme of CRP and we highlighted the significant environmental and economic benefits this can provide to every farm we visited. A particular focus was soil and manure testing and wherever possible we provided farm site specific cost-benefit analysis. We aimed at raising awareness of the timeliness of operations, problems associated with misapplication, storage and handling.

Improved Soil Management: We worked with farmers to identify areas of land prone to soil loss and promoted practices such as contour ploughing, under sowing, bi-cropping, leaving rough ground after maize, buffers along watercourses, and other techniques for providing year-round soil protection. In one example our advice has encouraged a farmer to change his cropping regime from fodder beet to grassland in order to reduce the risk of soil runoff and to save costs.

Tackling Farmyard Issues: Farmyards are often the source of a large proportion of pollution incidents but also represent an area where considerable financial savings can be made. We consistently advocated clean and dirty water separation, checking for water leaks, assessing options for alternative water supplies, the collection and use of rainwater to help save costs and reduce the volume of dirty water arising from the yard. We also identified problems associated with yard/track runoff and advised on various techniques such as installing runoff diverters and sediment traps, and methods of reduced frequency cyclical ditch clearance.

Grant aided works: Through CRP, £255,000 of grant aid has been issued for such items as 169km of stock proof fencing to protect watercourses, formalised drinking points or water troughs, sediment interceptors, relocation of gateways, crossing points, clearing of angling access and stream blockages. A further 60% was contributed by farmers as their own time in labour or contractor's fees. The environmental benefits and economic incentives for works are varied - during the follow up survey one farmer noted that his new fencing has saved £3 per cow/year in a 120 cow herd due to reduced vet bills.

Pesticide Savings: Over 9,896 hectares have been covered by advice on spray savings, in particular relating to the timing of application and targeted spreading areas. Where farmland weed species were identified as a problem we advised on the use of both cultural and biological techniques in order to encourage farmers away from a reliance on chemical control.

Wildlife and Conservation: Our work within the catchments has presented a good opportunity to inform landowners of the (sometimes rare) flora and fauna on their land. This has been well received and will foster an improved understanding of how farming techniques can be adapted to suit the needs of both the farmer and wildlife, all the more important now as the emphasis shifts towards environmentally sensitive farming. We regularly signposted farmers to agri-environment schemes such as Environmental Stewardship or the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. One notable example was in 2003 when a 1000+ acre intensive dairy farm was successfully entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme following our advice.

Managing Rivers, Banks and Vegetation: Our technical expertise in managing rivers has been put to good use and we regularly discussed issues relating to maintaining and improving habitats, controlling erosion, managing woody debris and bankside vegetation, including several often found invasive plant species. Importantly, WRT's involvement with the Cornwall Japanese Knotweed forum and Camel Invasives Group has allowed us to pass on the latest advice to landowners. WRT advisors produced several management plans for Angling Associations to provide management recommendations for their waters and at various sites it is evident the overall quality of the habitat and conditions for fishing have subsequently improved owing to enthusiastic uptake of recommendations.

Angling issues: We established 35 fishing beats through the Angling 2000 scheme which have not only brought significant income to the county from visiting anglers, but encourage ongoing sensitive management of the land that borders the river in order to maximise the habitat for fish and other wildlife. We are currently seeking funding to expand and continue the scheme.

Tourism and Diversification: Cornwall is a popular tourist destination and we often gave advice on options for diversification and potential grant funding from complimentary schemes. This typically related to adding value to current businesses, barn conversions, developing farm trails, wildlife and fishing ponds and marketing/advertising. The current farming climate has encouraged many farmers to consider options for diversification and we provided information and advice, for example, on planting new (and managing existing) woodlands, and establishing game/coarse fisheries.

Demonstration Sites, Awareness and Education: The Trust installed 8 demonstration sites through CRP at a range of locations from riverside public parks to an organic farm near Blisland. This has allowed us to raise the profile of issues affecting rivers and enabled CRP to reach a large and diverse audience (e.g. the Camel Trail receives 350k visitors/year). WRT advisors carried out numerous walks and presentations to schools, community groups, angling clubs and conferences and exhibited at the Royal Cornwall Show, Smallholders Fair and smaller local shows. A Geographical Information System was used to map and track project progress. A comprehensive CRP education CD was developed and sent to all schools in Cornwall, while education officers were available to teach in schools, on the riverbank and also deliver vocational courses.

Working in Partnership: A key aspect to the success of CRP has been working in partnership with a number of organisations. In addition to EN and the EA this has included: Cornwall County Council, North Cornwall District Council, the Forestry Commission, Farm and Wildlife Advisory Group, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, IMERYS, The Cornish Guild of Smallholders and the local Angling Associations.

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CORNWALL
rivers project



Westcountry Rivers Trust Final Report of Project Activities (2006)

The Cornwall Rivers Project has been a 4-year (2002 - 2006), £2.6M project, partly funded by Defra and the EU (E.A.G.G.F.) under the Objective 1 Programme. Its primary aim has been rehabilitation of key rivers and their catchments across Cornwall while bringing improvement in the economic viability of local rural communities.

During the project, Trust staff visited over 870 landholdings in Cornwall, each one receiving advice and a confidential individually tailored and free 'Integrated River Basin Resource Management Plan' that identified opportunities to improve farming practice, to protect the environment and to make economic savings. These plans cover a total land area in excess of 560 km² (56,000 ha) and over 1,380km of surveyed watercourses.

An independent economic survey of the project revealed that the majority of respondents have already made significant savings through taking up our advice – the average annual savings per farm are calculated to be in excess of £1369. If all 870 farms make such savings, the entire cost of the project will be repaid in little over 2 years, representing ongoing sustainability and excellent value for money.



Objective One is
part-funded by the
European Union



Summary of achievements

An example of a good drinking place

After fencing

Solar electric fencer unit

Looe - before gate and drinker installed

Looe - after gate and drinker installed, to restrict access

Himalayan Balsam

