

The River Avon & Its Tributaries Near Malmesbury

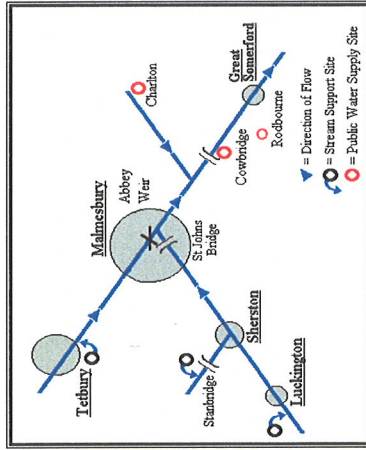


Stream Support Trial Update - October 2003

BACKGROUND

Following on from the Statement of Intent agreed between Wessex Water, the Environment Agency, Ofwat and English Nature last year, an Operating Agreement is now in place which specifies the actions Wessex Water will take to minimise abstractions from the Wyle, Malmesbury Avon and the Piddle over the next four years.

In line with the Operating Agreement the operation and resulting impacts of stream support were tested this summer. The focus of this year's test was to monitor the impacts of running stream support at the maximum consented volumes (Tetbury 10 MI/d, Stanbridge 10 MI/d and Luckington 10 MI/d).



TARGET FLOWS

The aim of the operating agreement is to maintain flows at three points:

Abbey Weir (Tetbury Avon) Target flow 6.8 MI/d.

St Johns Bridge (Sherston Avon) Target flow 7.2 MI/d.

Great Somerford (Main Avon) Target flow 28.0 MI/d.

This year's trial will be to stress the stream support system and assess the impacts.

CURRENT SITUATION

Stream support continued to run at the maximum rate of 10 MI/d from Tetbury and close to the maximum at Luckington and Stanbridge boreholes until mid October when the trial was scaled down. Stanbridge was switched off at the end of September for a short period to test groundwater levels in the lower aquifer.

The dry stable conditions this summer have meant the tests have been very successful and that we have been able to gain a much better understanding of ground water resources in the Malmesbury catchment. Since the 18th October pump rates were reduced to maintain target flows at Abbey Weir, St Johns Bridge and Great Somerford only. Low rainfall this autumn has meant that river flows in the South West are still declining and there has not yet been any recovery in groundwater resources. Therefore the Environment Agency and Wessex Water will be reducing stream support further so that the Malmesbury Avon more closely mirrors the natural decline being seen in other rivers and groundwater resources are conserved.

