

Abstraction Plan Priority Catchment Update

Temporary Seasonal Trades trial.

Improving the way we manage water

February 2020

This note introduces the concept of a new way of water trading that we would like your help in trialling in your priority catchments.

Temporary Seasonal Trades (TSTs) - Background

Following the announcement of the first four [priority catchments](#)* in May 2018, we have now introduced six additional catchments (Figure 1). Priority Catchments are for developing and testing innovative solutions to achieve greater access to water and address unsustainable abstraction. We want to trial a new approach to water trading in the first four catchments from Spring 2020. This will fulfil a requirement in the [Abstraction Plan](#)* to trial novel approaches around water trading. Early feedback from some stakeholders on the TST concept has been mostly positive. So we want to work with our catchment groups and run trials to see if;

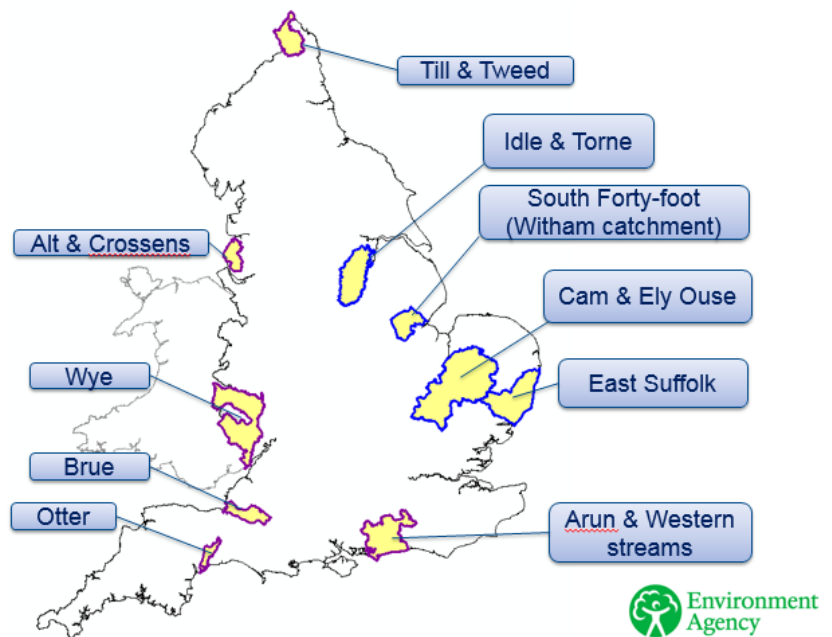


Figure 1 – Priority catchments, purple catchments are new PC's

- 1 there is demand for this,
- 2 how it could be improved and administered,
- 3 will it improve access to water sustainably?

If the trials demonstrate that both the environment and abstractors can receive benefit then we will move to make TSTs a policy for future water resource management. The policy would ultimately be rolled out nationally to all catchments.

TSTs - concept

TSTs are designed to help abstractors trade water over a single irrigation season. Abstractors need to apply for these trades during a defined “trading window”. The proposed trading window is March and April 2020, after the EA release its initial irrigation prospects report. The aim of the TST is to allow farmers to assess whether or not they have enough water on their licence(s) to meet their needs in the light of the forecast for the upcoming season. TST should not be confused with flexible abstraction* which is not intended to be used in 2020, given the improving hydrological situation, unless we experience a hot and dry summer.

If a reasonable case can be made for additional water, then a streamlined assessment process will be used to quickly grant access to that additional water for one season. Abstractors will have to satisfy a list of general rules and criteria, explained below. (* - See Abstraction Plan and flexible abstraction on .gov.uk for more information)

General Rules for participation in TST trials

The draft rules will ensure that participating in a TST trial must;

- Not cause environmental damage (deterioration)
- Not damage sites designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Not derogate existing abstraction rights or adversely affect existing lawful uses
- Abstractors can only trade in annual volumes, not daily or instantaneous rates
- The donor and recipient licences are from the same WFD Surface Water catchment
- The donor and recipient licences have the same abstraction season
- The recipient can demonstrate a justified need for the water through water efficiency and existing contracts
- To reduce the risk of environmental damage and to allow speedier determination – the recipient cannot increase their annual abstraction volume beyond an additional 30%. So if their annual volume was 100MI/a, they could receive a maximum additional abstraction of 30MI/a
- The donor and recipient licences are both from surface water or both from groundwater. The EA's "Water Resources: Help for licence trading" [map](#) can help abstractors understand their location

We will limit the number of participants in each of the first four Priority Catchments trial to 10 in order for it to be a manageable scale.

Volumes that can be traded

If the initial irrigation prospects are poor or possibly moderate and the water body status is classed as poor, the volume of abstraction that can be shared could be capped to the donor's Recent Actual abstraction where;

- Recent Actual average annual volume is calculated between 2007 and 2012

If the initial irrigation prospects forecast near normal water levels and the water body is not failing, then the cap may be based on the donor's Peak abstraction where;

- Peak annual volume is the peak maximum volume that the donor has abstracted during the period 2005 and 2015 (2000-2015 for Spray Irrigation licences)

Application Process and running the trial

The trial will mirror a real life abstraction licensing process although there will be no application charge. We have created a mock application form, external guidance for trial participants and internal guidance for staff to help in determining the TST requests. Priority Catchment Leads will be the point of contact for the participants and will liaise with their area specialists to undertake the approval process. We are aiming for a 20 working-day turnaround time within which the participants (donor and recipient) will receive letters, known as local enforcement positions, to set out the conditions for the duration of the trial. We will take opportunities to work closely with trial participants, gathering feedback and continually improving the service.

Find out more on Priority Catchments and get involved?

If you would like to know more about participating in a trial, please get in contact with of your local PC lead.

Idle & Torne – becky.stewart@environment-agency.gov.uk

South Forty Foot – darren.smith@environment-agency.gov.uk

Cam & Ely Ouse – ukwuori.fadayiro@environment-agency.gov.uk

East Suffolk – harri.condie@environment-agency.gov.uk