

# The Stillwater Fisheries Accreditation Scheme

## Securing fish welfare by raising fishery standards

### The Scheme

The scheme is based upon a set of standards designed to protect and sustain the welfare of fish within fisheries. Achieving these standards largely centres on the Institute of Fisheries Management 'codes of practice' for the management of stillwater fisheries and its bio-security codes for stillwater fisheries.

The aim of the scheme is to drive upwards the competence of those managing fisheries and for fisheries to demand similar levels of competence from those that supply fish, provide fishery management advice, transport fish and carry out health examinations. This will have direct and indirect benefits to the health and welfare of fish stocked into stillwater coarse fisheries.

This will be achieved by awarding an accreditation mark at one of three levels:



### How it will work

- Fisheries that apply will be inspected by a 'competent professional' who has received scheme training.
- The application fee is £160, plus £40 for each fishery on a site (to cover water analysis costs). Multi-fishery sites may apply for accreditation.
- The status of fisheries that meet the standards will be recorded on a database that will be available publicly via the fisheries accreditation website ([www.fisheriesaccreditation.co.uk](http://www.fisheriesaccreditation.co.uk)).
- Those fisheries that do not make the grade initially will be given time to comply by working towards the required standards before being reassessed.
- Accreditation lasts for two years and is renewable thereafter.

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## Why the scheme is being introduced

The Stillwater Fisheries Accreditation Scheme has been introduced to encourage fishery managers to take responsibility for the proactive management of their fisheries. In doing so, they will greatly improve the quality of the sport fishing by enhancing the habitat, water quality and the other aquatic components of the fish's environment.

This might sound daunting but, with a good fishery management plan, it should prove to be quite straight forward. The benefits to anglers, as well as the natural environment, will be readily apparent.

The scheme will drive forward improvements and provide an accreditation framework for fisheries standards in the UK. This not only provides a recognised accreditation for the fisheries; it will also offer peace of mind that the water quality, fish health and bio-security of the fishery are all to the acceptable standards for the fish therein.

## Benefits

- **Bio-security**
- **Good fish health**
- **Enhanced water quality**
- **Improved sport**
- **Less predation**
- **Accountability**
- **More diverse habitat**
- **Increased biodiversity**
- **Better business**



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## The Partners



**Angling Foundation:** The Foundation awards its accreditation to fishing net manufacturers and wholesalers that meet its accreditation standards, issuing a licence to use its distinctive water-lily logo on accredited products.



**Institute for Fisheries Management:** The IFM is the competent body for fisheries management which trains future professionals through its Fisheries Management Diploma, validated by the Open University. The Institute is also author of the 'Codes of Practice for the Management of Intensively Stocked Stillwater Fisheries'.



**The Environment Agency:** The Agency as the modern regulator supports and helped develop the Stillwater Fisheries Accreditation Scheme, and it has provided vital financial assistance to enable the scheme to commence.



**The Fisheries and Angling Conservation Trust (FACT):** The support and input of FACT and the Fish Welfare Group were instrumental in the development and launch of the Stillwater Fisheries Accreditation Scheme.

## What are the 'codes of practice'?

The IFM 'codes of practice' are used to underpin the standards that will be used to accredit fisheries. These standards are those which are required to protect the welfare of the fish. They are based on sound science and fishery management principles which safeguard fish health, enhance water quality and provide excellent habitat.

The benefits of the 'codes of practice' in improving the fishery for the fish and angling are to ensure that healthy fish that are living in optimal environmental conditions. This will not only allow them to flourish; it will also provide anglers with good fishing.

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**CRITERIA:** The criteria for meeting the accreditation standard are based on eight assessment areas, focusing on different aspects of the fishery. These are habitat, nutrition, stocking, water quality, fish health, predation stress, competition angling and exploitation rates.

Each of these aspects is carefully assessed and an action is agreed with the fishery to either improve or maintain standards.

**Physical Habitat:** The habitat of stillwaters should be as natural and diverse as possible and include: submerged water plants; emergent and marginal vegetation; overhanging trees and bushes; wood in margins and sunk in deep water (out of fishing range) for added cover; deep water (>2m) to provide sanctuary for temperature extremes; shallow water for spawning and as fry habitat.

**Nutrition:** Plant presence in the margins, bait and fish diet, over/under feeding of the fish are all assessed.

**Stocking:** The assessment encompasses species suitability to the habitat, the stocking policy of the fishery and compliance with legislation and bio-security.

**Water Quality:** Water quality criteria to be considered include dissolved oxygen content, ammonia concentrations and aeration techniques, monitoring and record keeping.

**Fish Health:** This section covers bio-security measures, species suitability, stock introduction and water quality monitoring.

**Predation Stress:** The fishery must provide adequate cover and refuge for fish from avian, mammalian and other fish predators.

**Competition Angling:** It will be necessary to have a competition policy in place, if appropriate, covering the equipment in use and other fish-related welfare matters.

**Exploitation Rates:** The fishery owner or manager must be able to make good estimates of exploitation rates based on records of angler visits, stock density and average catches. This will help in assessing standards based on good record keeping.

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