

Arun & Western Rother update

Autumn 2019



Local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO) Update

Over the summer we have been busy supporting farmers with their Countryside Stewardship applications, ensuring utilisation of the best options in the right places to make improvements for soil and water. The free specialist advice CSF offer for Maximising Countryside Stewardship has also further achieved this for those who wanted a more in depth assessment of how Countryside Stewardship could compliment their business.

The Petworth & District Annual Ploughing Match (photo above) held on the 28th September was a great way to celebrate the end of a busy and difficult harvest season and it was good to see so many of you there. The ploughing match saw over 50 ploughmen competing in a range of classes, alongside other competitions such as grain judging and best bale of hay. Catchment Sensitive Farming joined our partners Southern Water on a stand alongside a number of other stands and displays, including local agronomist Stephen Woodley, NFU and most importantly a bacon sandwich wagon.

Now that the busy harvest period has come to an end we look forward to visiting more farms and discussing the new specialist advice topics available, which we anticipate there being a lot of interest in. The Arun catchment, which was previously covered by Emma Hinton, is an area we are keen to get to know better. Please contact us if you'd like to arrange a visit to discuss ways of reducing diffuse pollution whilst improving farm productivity. In addition to the advice we can offer you, we also want to learn from you! As part of our CSF Conservation Agriculture 2019/20 campaign we are interested to hear about measures you have implemented on your own farm; anything ranging from herbal leys to min till. We would love to learn about what you are doing and how it is working for you.

From Thomas Edwards & Samantha Read



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Upper Arun and Rother headwaters Revitalisation

The Arun and Rother Rivers Trust have been successful in securing funding to undertake a series of works along the River Arun corridor from Pallingham upstream to Mannings Heath, as well as the upper Western Rother from the headwaters at Hawkley down to Petersfield. These works aim to make improvements or prevent deterioration with respect to the Water Framework Directive targets(?).

This will include an extensive feasibility survey of the upper River Arun corridor and the Rother headwaters between Hawkley and Petersfield, mapping river features and characteristics, local land use, presence of Invasive Non-Native species, problem areas, special habitats; opportunity areas and more. As part of this feasibility stage there will be a detailed assessment of each river structure that is limiting fish passage, and make recommendations / proposals for improvements.

Developing on evidence from feasibility studies the Rivers Trust will prepare to deliver a range of work to improve the river for fish, through habitat enhancements to both the river channel and banksides. Measures may include:

- Channel pinching using brush berms or similar features to create a range of in-channel water flow types and help creation of vegetated side bars.
- Use of woody deflectors or other features to increase in-channel habitats and retain sediment.
- Bank side tree planting to reduce erosion (mitigating sediment and nutrient transport) and increase channel shade where needed.

If you are interested in this project and would like to find out more please contact us or Sandra Manning-Jones (ARRT)
sandramanningjones@gmail.com

In the New Year ARRT also hope to commence a floodplain hay meadow restoration project in the Rother Valley, alongside SDNPA. This work will focus on ways to restore lost meadows, and provide benefit for sediment reduction, increasing biodiversity, and creating a buffer for the river.



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Important links

Rother Valley Farmers Group



The Rother Valley Farmers Group (RVFG) first annual report is now available online at:
<https://arrrt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/RVFG-Annual-Report-Year-1-2018-19.pdf>

It has been produced to summarise the group's activities from April 2018 to March 2019, and the environmental outcomes arising from them.

The Rother Valley Sediment Project

The Rother Valley Sediment Project we completed back in the spring with the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust has been published on the ARRT website including links to presentations and guidance –
<https://arrrt.org.uk/rother-valley-sediment-project/>
Please do have a look at this as there is some really interesting catchment specific mitigation that we can advise on as well as Conservation Agriculture techniques explained by Nuffield Scholar David Miller.

When2go smart tool

When2go is a smart tool which helps to improve application timings of metazachlor and quinmerac, to minimise the risk to water. By evaluating a combination of soil type, drainage, cultivation method and weather, the tool provides an eight-day forecast with a traffic light system to indicate the optimum timing for water stewardship. By following the recommendation, you can ensure your herbicide application stays in the field where it is needed and minimises threat to water.

<https://www.agricentre.basf.co.uk/en/Sustainability/Water-Stewardship/wHen2g0-Smart-Tool/>



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Get in touch with your local advisory officers



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Metaldehyde ban overturned following legal challenge

The ban on the outdoor use of metaldehyde slug pellets from 2020 was overturned in the High Court in July following a challenge from a producer on the legality of the ban. According to Defra, the legal challenge was based on how the process was conducted and it is currently reviewing the decision, which a spokesman said they would do as swiftly as possible.

In the meantime, we continue to provide free support and advice to farmers and landowners about our catchment management solutions for the 2019/2020 cropping season. This support includes:

- £1 per kilogramme payment incentive to switch from metaldehyde to ferric phosphate, funded by Southern Water.
- Free calibration of slug pellet machinery.
- Free pesticide training including PA1 and PA4(s).
- Free workshops and promotional events on topics such as Integrated Pest Management.
- Free confidential on-farm one-to-one advice.

Up-to-date advice and guidance on metaldehyde restrictions can be found at getpelletwise.co.uk, or please get in touch with your CSFO via the contact details above.



Future farming: Changes to farming in England

What will happen when we leave the EU? Guidance and a downloadable leaflet is now available on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-farming-changes-to-farming-in-england>

It sets out the latest information on farming policy in England after Brexit. It will be updated as needed and aims to remove some uncertainty. It gives information that farmers and those in the farming industry might need to get ready for the coming changes, such as:

- phasing out direct payments
- changing how we work together
- changing rules and regulations
- grant programmes.

Please take a moment to get familiar with these changes to get ready for Brexit.



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New specialist advice services

CSF is a confidential government service providing advice to farmers on environmentally and economically sustainable practices to improve soil, water and air.

Along with our continuing suite of specialist advice, we now promoting an additional five new services outlined below:

1. Assessment and Monitoring of Soil Health
2. Natural Flood Management
3. Water Resources Audit
4. Livestock nutrient planning. Animal nutrition to reduce losses of nutrients & ammonia to the environment
5. Woodland for Water and Air

Contact your CSFO for more information.

Conservation agriculture – mob grazing



CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE
2019/20 CAMPAIGN

There's an old saying, "Never leave the sheep in the same field long enough to hear the church bell ring twice". Mob grazing or short duration, high density grazing is a modern version of a traditional practise seen to improve pasture and stocking rate.

Livestock do not selectively graze as they are put in a situation where there is competition for food. This type of management allows the diversity of an herbal ley to remain diverse and creates a mixed diet benefiting the health of the animal.

The trampling effect of mob grazing means that around about 40% of the crop is pushed into the soil, providing food for soil biology to thrive and create organic matter. This also provides soil cover reducing risk of erosion during the non-grazing resting period.

Harder grazing over shorter periods of time forces plants to grow deeper and stronger roots, making them more resilient by tapping into lower soil, accessing water and nutrient supplies. The deeper roots also support better soil structuring and creates a stronger plant that can recover quicker after being grazed.

The more rhythmic grazing carried out by the livestock means that manure and urea is more evenly distributed across the paddock. This means that nutrient supply to the soil, and benefits of soil organic matter building from manure, is across the paddock and not in patches.

Ironically, the higher stocking rates grazing for a much shorter period of time has shown to mean that compaction is less likely. There is less movement across the paddock in comparison to set stocking meaning less impact from hoof movement.

Mob grazing systems have proven to support higher stocking densities in comparison to set stocking while completely cutting out artificial fertiliser use, reducing animal medicine requirements, cutting out mineral supplement needs, and reducing winter feed costs by extending the grazing period.



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In most cases of mob grazing, only 5-10% of ground is being grazed at one time which allows the other 90-95% to recover over a number of weeks and sometimes months. This allows the diversity of plants to flower and set providing food and habitat for a range of wildlife like birds, voles, insects, pollinators and owls.

More time is spent in and around the livestock to help move them from paddock to paddock. Although this sometimes means a higher work load on the grazing part of the business, it also means spending more time to observe the animals and pick up any signs of lameness, disease or other injuries within the herd or flock. This ultimately means a happier and healthier group of animals.

smilingtreefarm.com/blog/mob-grazing

Reducing ammonia, saving money & helping the environment

CSF is now offering air quality advice alongside our existing water work, we are working with farmers to help them reduce their emissions of Ammonia.

Ammonia is one of the key pollutants highlighted in DEFRA'S clean air strategy, it has been targeted because of its links to respiratory disorders in human health and its long term damage to certain vulnerable protected sites and sensitive habitats.

From a farming perspective lost Ammonia is essentially lost nutrients, so why waste these nutrients which have been targeted for crop growth.

Ammonia can be lost at many stages during the process of feeding livestock to spreading manures, so it's really important that the whole process is considered, starting at the very beginning with livestock diets to ensure that animals get just the right amount of crude protein to maximise milk yield or animal growth.



Covering all lagoons by 2027

It's not just the organic manures either, Ammonia is readily lost from Urea based fertilisers that do not contain any slow release coating or inhibitor.

CSF can now offer a site visit to look at your farm and help you look at the Ammonia risks and potential losses from your system, we can help you plan for changes proposed in the clean air strategy such as covering slurry lagoons and use of low emission spreading techniques. We can provide specialist visits too that will help you look at livestock diet, housing and infrastructure, manure and livestock handling, spreading manures, this can be from your own or imported manures.

If you want to know more or to find out who your local catchment officer is please call the South East Ammonia lead advisor Andrew Russell on 07901 512398 or email andrew.russell@naturalengland.org.uk



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Farming rules for water – are you compliant?

Do you know that the farming rules for water have now been in place since April 2018 and cover the whole of the country to include areas that are not in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones?

Did you know that the rules are checked during a routine cross compliance inspection and any breaches identified can affect your BPS payment?

Did you know that CSF can help you meet the requirements through our advice service?

How can we help?

If you haven't had a visit from your local catchment officer then we can carry out an initial visit to see where we can help improve local water and air quality by looking at your farm, its infrastructure and interaction with the local environment, we can help you apply for land management and water capital grants and signpost you to other grant applications such as the Countryside Productivity Scheme.

Soil sampling & nutrient management planning – an introduction to nutrient planning, we will sample 5 of your fields and show you how to interpret soil sampling results and plan your nutrient applications accordingly, this will help you plan and manage valuable resources and save you money by only applying nutrients where they are actually needed.

Soil health check, we can have a look at your soils structure and help you identify where problems currently exist, this can include compaction, poor soil health and machinery choice.

These are just a few of the services that CSF can provide, a summary of the new rules are to the right, so if you have any queries or want our help and advice just give your local CSFO a call.

The rules are summarised as follows:

- 1. Planning use of manures and fertilisers**
 - Plan in advance each application of organic manures and manufactured fertilisers to meet but not exceed soil and crop nutrient needs
 - Your planning must take into account soil testing for pH, nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K), and magnesium (Mg). Nitrogen levels can be determined by assessing soil nitrogen supply instead of soil testing.
- 2. Organic manures must not be stored on land**
 - Within 10 metres of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
 - Where there is significant risk of pollution entering inland freshwaters or coastal waters
 - Within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole
- 3. Organic manures or manufactured fertilisers must not be applied**
 - If the soil is waterlogged, flooded or snow-covered
 - If the soil has been frozen
 - If there is significant risk of causing pollution
- 4. Organic manures must not be applied**
 - Within 10 metres of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
 - Within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole
- 5. Manufactured fertiliser must not be applied**
 - Within 2 metres of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
- 6. You must take all reasonable precautions to prevent significant soil erosion and runoff from**
 - The application of organic manure and manufactured fertiliser
 - Cultivation practices and harvesting
 - Poaching by livestock
- 7. Protecting against soil erosion by livestock**
 - Any land within 5 metres of inland freshwaters and coastal waters must be protected from significant soil erosion by preventing poaching by livestock
- 8. Livestock feeders must not be positioned**
 - Within 10 metres of any inland freshwaters or coastal waters
 - Within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole
 - Where there is significant risk of pollution



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Incentives, schemes and offers

Southern Water's Farm Capital Grant Scheme available across the Upper Arun and Western Rother catchments

Southern Water is now offering capital grants of up to £10,000 per holding per year, for infrastructure improvements and other initiatives, which reduce the risk of pesticides reaching surface waters and so help protect and improve water quality in the Western Rother and Upper Arun catchments.

Set funding is available for a range of items including sprayer or applicator filling and washdown areas:

- Sprayer filling & washdown area £1,875
- Biobed £3,375
- Biofilter £1,485
- Roofing up to 50% of costs, as agreed

Farmers / land managers can suggest alternative ideas for reducing pesticide pollution risk (up to 50% of costs, as agreed). Examples of items which could be eligible for funding include GPS and other equipment to apply pesticides more accurately, inter-row hoes or other equipment to facilitate mechanical weed control or monitoring equipment to reduce reliance on routine application of pesticides.

For more information, please contact your Southern Water CRMO: Zoë Fothergill 07919 487534
Zoe.Fothergill@southernwater.co.uk

Slug control incentives

Southern Water is continuing to offer farmers currently using metaldehyde-based slug control the opportunity to substitute this for ferric phosphate-based control for the 2019-20 cropping year, offering a contribution of £1 per kg towards ferric phosphate pellets purchased. Free slug peller calibration and PA4s training is also available to those taking up this offer. Contact your local CSFO for more details.

Upcoming events

Petworth Monitor Farm meeting:

Focusing on the Yield Enhancement Network and understanding how this assists farmers developing robust cropping strategies to achieve good yield consistency

14th November 2019

10:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Medhone Barn, Blackhouse Lane, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 9NZ

Book your free place online:

<https://cereals.ahdb.org.uk/get-involved/monitorfarms/petworth-monitor-farm.aspx>



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