

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	06/07/2015
Subject: Epping Forest Fisheries Management update.	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest (SEF 32/15)	For Information

Summary

The Epping Forest Fisheries Management Policy and Plan were introduced in January 2011. The Management Plan was written to manage 13 of the 25 lakes, ponds where Fishing is permitted.

The majority of the water bodies that contain fish require some form of habitat management and since the introduction of the Fisheries Management Plan some major habitat restorations have occurred on some of the major lakes, like Connaught Water, The Jubilee Pond, Eagle Pond and Hollow Pond.

Improvements have been made to some of the lakes, ponds which have accessible car parking to facilitate disabled Anglers to partake in their hobby. Disabled Angling platforms have been built on Connaught Water, Hollow Pond and Earls Path.

This report details work undertaken at each of these ponds since the introduction of the Epping Forest Fisheries Management Policy

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Fisheries Management Plan was agreed and implemented in 2011. This plan focused on direct management of 13 of the 25 fishing lakes and ponds over a five year period. The lakes that the Fisheries Management Plan agreed to focus on are;

Baldwin's Pond
Connaught Water*
Earl's Path Pond*

Knighton Wood Lake*
Lower Forest Lake*
Ornamental Waters*

Wake Valley Pond*
Warren Pond*
Wood Yard Pond

Highams Park Lake*
Hollow Pond*

Perch Pond*
Theydon Green Pond

2. Population checks are carried out on all 42 lakes and ponds that contain fish. Forest staff and contractors carry out population checks on the 10 core Forest ponds (indicated with asterisk) annually and an additional eight ponds on average per annum on a rotating basis.

Work carried out

3. Work has been carried out in around Epping Forest's ponds and lakes by volunteer groups and the Maintenance Team according to the Fisheries Management Plan. Detail of these activities and future planned work for the thirteen mentioned above and some others is tabulated in Appendix 1.

Fish surveys

4. Fish Surveys are carried out using electro fishing; enabling a sample of fish to be removed to establish the variety species, age ranges and general health of each species. This information is used to establish the overall health of the water body.
5. The surveys are carried out using the recognised and approved method of electro fishing; small amperage current is passed into the water using a probe which temporarily stuns the fish, enabling them to be caught easily. The fish are then placed into a container of water and brought to the bank where they are measured, identified and weighed depending on size. Once this has been done they are put back into the pond without suffering any long term harm. Any hybridised or non-native fish are removed. Any Common or Mirror Carp removed are taken by the contractor in return for stocking ponds with approved species. Other species such as Goldfish and the hybridised Brown Goldfish are euthanized and can be used as dead bait. The results of the 2014 surveys have established that the general health of the fish populations and the waters surveyed is very good.
6. The survey carried out Knighton Pond has established that it has the best and largest population of pure Crucian Carp in the forest and local area. The Crucian Carp in this pond will be used to stock other waters on the forest.
7. Country-wide eels are under threat and the Environment Agency (EA) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) are starting a research paper on the decline of eels in the UK. This work will be carried out in conjunction with Bedwell Fish Farms, our approved contractor. Part of the research will be done at Ornamental Waters, Wanstead Park as it has an extremely healthy population of eels. As part of a national study all costs will be borne by CEFAS (Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science)

8. Surveys carried out 10 years ago had established a decline in Tench on forest ponds. 2014/15 surveys has established that the Tench are making a comeback.
9. A summary of the 2014 fish survey findings is included in Appendix 2

Invasive Plant Species

10. There are two main plant species that have taken hold in a large quantity of the Forest's water bodies. These are New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) and Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*). In 2015 Forest staff and volunteers will be trying out different techniques to eradicate these plants from two of the most badly affected water bodies, Alexandra Lake and the Perch Pond.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. Works detailed in the Fisheries Management Plan will enhance the selected lakes and ponds within Epping Forest.

DO5 (People) to 'Develop volunteering opportunities at all sites' with a target increase of 3% in volunteers per annum.

DO2 (Inclusion) and DO4 (Promotion) 'The City encourages volunteers to get involved in the management of its sites and the Open Spaces continue to benefit from their valuable support'.

12. The above meets the **City Together** vision of a *World Class City* and, specifically, four of its five themes for 'A world class City that supports our communities; protects, promotes and enhances our environment; is competitive and promotes opportunity; and is vibrant and culturally rich'.
13. The **Equalities Impact Assessment** shows a positive impact on the majority of target groups and no negative impacts.

Implications

14. **Financial Implications** - Up to 2012/13 financial year we were able to claim a grant of £10,000 per annum from the Environment Agency (EA) which was used to make habitat improvements. Due to financial restrictions this grant is no longer available.
15. A fisheries budget of £8,000 is available from local risk. £4,500 on fish surveys and £3,500 is used on habitat improvements and materials.
16. Due to pressure on Local Risk it may be necessary to introduce a charge for fishing on Epping Forest Lakes and ponds, in order to cover these costs and continue to maintain to preferred standards. This will be considered in a future Produce and Charges report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Detail of activities at individual lakes and ponds in Epping Forest.

Appendix 2 – Summary of 2014 Fish Survey findings

Background Papers

Epping Forest Fisheries Policy and Management Plan 2011

Martin Whitfield

Volunteer Development Officer Open Spaces Department Epping Forest

T: 020 8532 5335

E: Martin.Whitfield@cityoflondon.gov.uk