

CONSERVATION

AND

RECREATION

ANNUAL REPORT 1995/1996

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CONSERVATION AND RECREATION ANNUAL REPORT 1995/1996

1. INTRODUCTION

1995/6 was the final year in the life of the NRA before incorporation into the Environment Agency which came into existence under new legislation (The Environment Act 1995) on 1st April 1996 and is expected to widen the remit of Conservation and Recreation.

The NRA has statutory duties under the Water Resources Act 1991 in relation to both conservation and recreation. In summary, they are to:

- conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape and archaeological features associated with inland and coastal waters of England and Wales and
- to develop the amenity and recreational potential of inland and coastal waters and associated lands.

These duties are outlined in detail in Appendix I.

1995 was the second year of operations to implement the National Conservation and Recreation Strategies published in 1993 which detail how the NRA aims to fulfill the duties outlined above.

This is to be achieved through the following six strategic objectives.

CONSERVATION

- To assess and monitor the conservation interest of inland and coastal waters and associated lands
- To ensure that the NRA's regulatory, operational and advisory activities take full account of the need to sustain and further conservation
- To promote conservation to enhance the quality of the aquatic and related environment for the benefit of wildlife and people

RECREATION

- To maintain, develop and improve recreational use of NRA sites
- To take account of recreation in proposals relating to any NRA function
- To promote the use of water and associated land for recreation purposes.

These objectives are delivered in Southern Region by a small Conservation and Recreation department in each of the three Areas with Regional co-ordination.

While the staff structure remained unchanged in two of the three Areas, with an additional post in the third, there have been several personnel changes during the year.

Caryl Hart left the NRA in April and Phil Griffiths was promoted to Sussex Area Conservation and Recreation Officer. Mark Elliott was appointed in July as Assistant Conservation and Recreation Officer in Sussex.

Mat Carter, Hampshire Conservation and Recreation Officer, was appointed Regional Catchment Planning Co-ordinator in July, and Tim Sykes was subsequently appointed as Hampshire Conservation and Recreation Officer in December. Hampshire was therefore without a Conservation and Recreation Officer for a substantial part of the year. Karen Hills from the consultants W S Atkins was seconded to Hampshire as a temporary Conservation Assistant for the period January - March 1996.

Andrea Buckley was appointed to the new post of FRCN Technical Assistant in Kent.

Tony Owen, Regional FRCN Manager, was seconded to Sussex as Acting Area Manager in September, and was subsequently appointed to Bristol as National Head of Fisheries effective from 1st April 1996.

Ian Johnson was seconded as Acting FRCN Manager to replace Tony Owen and Lawrence Talks (Hampshire Fisheries Officer) was seconded to the post of Hampshire FRCN Manager.

The staff structure as at 31st March 1996 is outlined in full in Appendix II.

The total conservation revenue expenditure for the Region in 1995/96 was £548,000: the split between the Region and Areas is detailed below in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CONSERVATION REVENUE EXPENDITURE IN 1995/6

AREA	ACTUAL EXPENDITURE £k
HAMPSHIRE / IoW	125
SUSSEX	162
KENT	120
REGIONAL	47
SUPPORT COSTS	94
TOTAL	548
LESS RECHARGE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	278
TOTAL REVENUE CHARGE TO CONSERVATION	270

An opportunity arose during the year to bid for additional Grant in Aid funding to carry out environmental enhancement schemes: An additional £25k was spent in Hampshire and £38k in Sussex. This is included in the expenditure indicated above.

Table 2 shows the recreation revenue expenditure in 1995/6

TABLE 2: RECREATION EXPENDITURE IN 1995/6

AREA	ACTUAL EXPENDITURE £k
KENT	91
REGIONAL	38
SUPPORT COSTS	40
TOTAL REVENUE CHARGE TO RECREATION	169

Although not recognised in the budget figures, contributions of £71k are received from external organisations towards the cost of recreation projects

This report details how the budget has been spent and how progress has been made towards

achieving the above objectives within Southern Region NRA over the period April 1995 to March 1996.

2. CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OBJECTIVES

2.1 To assess and monitor the conservation interest of inland and coastal waters and associated lands

An essential pre-requisite to this objective was to develop standard methods to describe, classify and monitor the conservation interest of rivers and wetlands. To record the conservation interest of rivers, the NRA uses a standard River Corridor Survey Methodology which was developed by a national Working Group set up in 1989. The methodology has since been published as the Conservation Technical Handbook No.1, River Corridor Surveys and is nationally recognised.

In the Regional Plan 1991, Southern Region planned to survey all its main rivers using this methodology within five years. There are 2748 kilometres of main river in Southern Region and to date almost 2040 kilometres have been completed including the Isle of Wight rivers, Rivers Arun, Medway, Beult, Eden and many of the main river channels in the Romney Marsh area. The water courses and lengths completed this year are shown below. The survey work during 1995/6 was carried out by contract consultants. The surveys, when complete, will provide the Region with information on the conservation interest of all the rivers and streams for which the NRA has responsibilities. This will prove invaluable when responding to planning applications, NRA licences and consents; for guiding operational work such as dredging and weed cutting and for targeting enhancement works

TABLE 3 STRATEGIC RIVER CORRIDOR SURVEYS COMPLETED 1995/96

AREA	WATERCOURSE	Km
Hampshire	Rivers Yar, Medina and minor Isle of Wight catchments	102
		<hr/> 102
Sussex	River Ems	14.86
	Chichester Rifes	152.86
	River Arun and tribs.	70.0
	Bulverhythe streams	23.10
	Pevensey streams	82.85
	Willingdon streams	28.37
	<hr/> 372.04	
Kent	River Medway	56.74
	River Medway Navigation	32.93
	River Eden	35.27
	River Beult	42.75
	Romney, Denge and Southbrook marshes	104.64
	Walland Marsh	43.36
	<hr/> 315.69	
TOTAL		<hr/> 789.73

The Region continued to assist the development of River Habitat Survey (RHS). A further 80 random sites across the Region were surveyed in 1995 as part of the R&D project: 30 by Sussex Conservation staff and 25 each by biologists from Canterbury and Waterlooville. Results for these sites were fed into the National database. RHS were carried out on a further 100 sites on the Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere during strategic RCS and a further 153 sites were surveyed on the Rivers Medway, Eden and Beult, Romney Denge and Southbrook marshes during strategic RCS.

Three training days were held to ensure that operatives were familiar with the RHS system.

2.2 To ensure that the NRA's regulatory, operational and advisory activities take full account of recreation and the need to sustain and further conservation.

2.2.1 Regulatory Activities.

The NRA issues consents for a number of activities including:

- Water Resources Licences for the abstraction of water from both surface and groundwater sources and the impoundment of watercourses.
- Discharge Consents for discharges to all controlled waters, including ground and surface waters.
- Fisheries Consents for the stocking and movement of fish.
- Land Drainage consents for works to the bed or banks of a watercourse and any land within 8m of a main river.

In addition, the NRA is a statutory consultee of planning authorities and therefore has an input to the planning process and development control. In order to fulfill the objectives set out above, the Conservation and Recreation staff screen proposals for their impact upon conservation and recreation and seek to secure enhancement work where appropriate.

Table 4 details the number of consents and applications screened by the function during 1994/95 and for 1995/96.

Regionally the total number of applications screened by the Conservation and Recreation Function fell from 1160 in 1994/5 to 937 in 1995/6. The largest changes were decreases in the number of planning applications and fish stocking applications in Kent. The former was the result of a review of priorities and better targeting of those applications needing conservation and recreation input.

Hampshire was without a Conservation and Recreation Officer for six months, during which very few applications were screened for conservation impact. However, a temporary assistant was in place for the final three months of the year when the majority of applications were screened, partly masking the earlier deficit in the annual total.

An MSc student, Andrea Buckley, from Kings College London carried out an assessment of conservation input into the planning system during a summer placement.

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of responses made by NRA conservation to planning applications and whether these comments were considered in determination by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). The project also aimed to identify differences in applications screened and responses made between Sussex and Kent Areas. No attempt was made to determine the effect

of the significant time input to this work.

Significant results include:

- (i) Conservation comments made on planning applications were largely included by Planning Liaison in responses to the Local Planning Authorities: 80 and 70 % in Kent and Sussex respectively.

Types of responses made to 296 applications referred to Conservation were categorised. Most applications (189) had a response including only informatives. Smaller numbers had objections (12), conditions (50) or No Comment (45)

17 case studies were investigated to try to assess the inclusion of comments into the decision of the LPA. 14 of these had NRA comments included at negotiation stage, incorporated into amended plans, conditions made or considered in refusals made. However, three cases highlighted areas where NRA Conservation comments had not been included.

The case studies represented a small sample of the total number of applications processed by Conservation and general conclusions cannot be drawn due to the individual nature of the applications.

- (ii) A higher percentage of applications received by Planning Liaison were screened in Kent than Sussex. This is largely thought to be the types of applications sent to Conservation for screening.

The assessment carried out has assisted with the rationalisation of the types of application screened in Kent

It must also be noted that standard conservation comments are included by Planning Liaison responses to many of the applications not referred to Conservation and Recreation for detailed comment in the Sussex Area.

TABLE 4 APPLICATIONS SCREENED

ACTIVITY	KENT		SUSSEX		HANTS	
	94/5	95/6	94/5	95/6	94/5	95/6
Total number of Planning Applications	359	242	79	67	94	69
Planning Applications which were accompanied by some form of Environmental Assessment	66	29	2	10	44	4
Structure and Local Plans included in planning figures	58	49	17	10	9	5
Discharge Consents	12	5	6	17	9	6
Abstraction/Impoundment Licences	22	48	11	29	20	25
Land Drainage Consents	157	123	9	25	27	32
Fisheries Consents	330	213	2	2	22	2
Herbicide consents		21		11		0
TOTAL NUMBER SCREENED	880	652	107	151	173	134

2.2.2 Operational Activities

These are the activities that the NRA itself carries out and are in the main the responsibility of the Flood Defence Function. These operations include the maintenance of watercourses, sea and tidal defences and larger capital projects which cover all functions such as the construction of flood alleviation schemes, gauging weirs and fish passes.

2.2.2.1 Flood Defence Maintenance Work

Annual meetings were once again held across the region to present the coming year's maintenance programme to organisations representing conservation, recreation and archaeological interests. As a result of these meetings, watercourses where potential conflicts could arise from the proposed maintenance works were highlighted and River Corridor Surveys undertaken. The results of the survey are used to draw up a working plan to guide the work. Table 5 illustrates the amount of survey work carried out during 1995/6. The majority of the reaches surveyed are drainage channels subject to desilting and weedcutting, an activity which rarely occurs in

Hampshire.

TABLE 5

LENGTH OF SURVEY IN METRES		
Area	Reactive Surveys	Audit Surveys
Kent	34,440	-
Sussex	15,000	-
Hampshire & IOW	0	0

2.2.2.2 Capital Works, All Functions

The Capital Works programme was also presented to the Annual Conservation Liaison Meetings for comment. The Capital Works listed below are all Flood Defence schemes unless otherwise stated. Most Capital Works are screened for potential impacts upon conservation and recreation.

Kent Area

In the Kent Area 19 Capital Works schemes were started or major studies commissioned during 1995, 15 of which involved significant conservation and recreation input.

Sussex Area

In Sussex there were 15 Flood Defence, Water Resources and Fisheries Capital Work schemes where either work was carried in out 95/96 or a major study was commissioned. All were screened for C & R interest, and in several cases significant conservation and recreation input was provided.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Area

Within the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Area 5 Capital Works schemes were either started or major studies commissioned, two of which were studies promoted principally for conservation gain. Significant conservation and recreation input was required for all of these.

The two studies promoted by Conservation are working towards restoration of urban channels heavily engineered for Flood defence purposes to a more natural form to enhance the conservation and amenity value of the watercourses.

The schemes commented on are identified in Tables 6.(Kent); 7 (Sussex) and 8 (Hampshire).

TABLE 6: CAPITAL SCHEMES WITH CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INPUT - KENT

SCHEME	CONSERVATION INPUT
Northern Sea Wall	Ongoing advice as scheme progresses .
Robertsbridge Flood Alleviation Scheme	Review of options report and recommendations for conservation enhancement works to be incorporated as part of the scheme
Smarden Flood Alleviation Scheme	Input to preliminary Environmental Assessment
River Medway Area 6A	Ongoing advice as scheme progresses
River Medway Area 3	Ongoing advice as scheme progresses
Rye Beach management operations	Conservation advice given
West Hythe Dam	Ongoing advice as scheme progresses
Mocketts Sluice weir	Input to preparation of scheme design and Water Level Management Plan
Medway regime Study	Input to steering committee
Darent Augmentation Boreholes (Resources) (six separate schemes)	Review of six proposed borehole locations. Recommendations for planting at Eynsford Augmentation Well

TABLE 7: CAPITAL SCHEMES WITH CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INPUT - SUSSEX

SCHEME	CONSERVATION INPUT
Chichester Flood Relief study.	Input to study. Provision of RCS and RHS survey information Advice on C&R benefit
Southeast Sea Defences.	Ongoing liaison, possibility of salt marsh creation being investigated. Discussion over protection of SSSI
Shoreham - Lancing.	Liaison with consultants. Identified SSSI and SNCI. Working practices altered to protect vegetated shingle
Aldingbourne Rife Outfall.	Ongoing liaison. Enhancements suggested. SSSI safeguarded during construction
Bulverhythe Sea Defences.	Wreck of Amsterdam identified and safeguarded. SNCI, vegetated shingle and archaeological interest identified.
Selsea-Bracklesham Sea Defences.	Initial liaison with regard to SSSI started.
Anchor weir refurbishment.	Conservation input into study
Pevensey Bay sea defences.	Will serve to protect Pevensey Levels SSSI. C&R input ongoing.
Pallingham. (Resources).	Enhancements suggested e.g chamber holt and planting.
Ardingly GS. (Resources)	Owl box incorporated into roof space during refurbishment.
Gibbons Mill fish pass. (Fisheries)	Acceptable from Conservation viewpoint.
Arundel Town Quay refurbishment.	Orientation of steps changed to provide better recreational access to the Arun.
Felpham sea defences.	EA screened in detail by Region / Area C&R staff. Suggestions included recycling timber, SSSI safeguards and improved beach access.

TABLE 8: CAPITAL SCHEMES WITH CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INPUT - HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT

SCHEME	CONSERVATION INPUT
Hayling Island Sea Defences	Conservation advice
Hermitage Stream restoration (Conservation)	Management of Feasibility Study, Public presentation and consultation.
Alre River Narrowing scheme (Fisheries)	Conservation advice and input.
Monks Brook restoration (Conservation)	Management of feasibility Study and associated surveys.
Upper Shide Gauging Station (Resources)	Conservation and Recreation input and advice. Enhancements incorporated into final scheme.

2.2.2.3 WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLANS

Development of Water Level Management Plans by the Operating Authority for designated sites dependant on water is required by MAFF in conjunction with English Nature. During 1994/5 an initial list of sites requiring WLMP's was proposed by English Nature. Liaison meetings have since identified both amendments to this list and priorities. Responsibility for delivery of WLMP's lies with the Operating Function - often Flood Defence - who require input from all other Functions, including a significant input from Conservation. Progress is shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9: WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLANS.

AREA	SITE	PLAN STATUS	IMPLEMENTATION
HAMPSHIRE	Mill Pond , Wooton Bridge	3rd draft written	Structural repairs identified
	Lymington River Reedbeds	1st draft written	Completion of new sluices awaited
	Farlington Marshes	Interim Statement	Remedial works proposed
	Pennington & Keyhaven Marshes Eastern Yar	Nil - Interim statement by end 96 Draft written	response from EN pending
SUSSEX	Amberley Wildbrooks	1st plan written	2 inch rise over 1978 Code of Practice level to be implemented in summer '96
	Pevensey Levels	1st plan written	MAFF consultation pending
KENT	Dungeness	Interim statement	Full plans are programmed for completion by April 1998.
	Sandwich Bay & Hacklinge Marshes	Interim statement	
	Stodmarsh	Interim statement	
	Walland	Interim statement	
	Pett Level	Interim statement	
	Rye Harbour	Interim statement	
	Swale (Seasalter)	Interim statement	
	Preston Marshes	Interim statement	
	River Beult	Interim statement	
	Romney Warren	Interim statement	
South Thames Estuary	Interim statement		
Ruxley Pits	Interim statement + 1st draft plan written		

2.3 Promote conservation to enhance the quality of the aquatic and related environment for the benefit of wildlife and people

The promotion of conservation can be achieved in a variety of ways. The main way that NRA Southern Region enhances the conservation interest of rivers and wetland areas is through collaborative projects which may include the provision of financial assistance to other groups and organisations. By collaborating with other organisations, the value of the work achieved is far higher than the NRA's financial contribution and can result in projects being completed which would otherwise not be undertaken. In total the Region contributed £114,417 from the conservation budget in 1995/96 to a wide range of projects including surveys, educational projects, conservation management projects and community projects costing a total of £398,080. These projects not only result in enhancements to the environment and an increase in our understanding, but also promote the NRA as Guardian of the Water Environment. The projects undertaken during 1995/6 are shown in table 9.

Additionally conservation staff attend a variety of events and give talks to external organisations. Included in these are the County Shows and Catchment Management Plan launch meetings.

Particular events in Sussex during the year included:

- Barn Owl Project launch
- Waterwise Awards Ceremony
- Stand and fieldwork at 1st International Children's Conference, Eastbourne
- Stand at Littlehampton & Rustington Urban Wildlife Trust
- Talk to West Lavington Cof E School
- Otter Launch Night

TABLE 10 COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

AREA	PROJECT	NRA CONTRIB'N (£)	TOTAL PROJECT COST (£)
K	KCC pond and wetland enhancement	6000	12,000
K	Rye Harbour Nature Reserve Management	6,200	36,963
K	Barn Owl Project	4,950	5,750
K	North Kent Marshes ditch survey	2,250	5,500
K	High Weald FWAG Officer	2,000	22,000
K	Barn Owl boxes, Reed Court farm	125	125
K	East Sussex CC SSCI Survey (Kent Area contribution)	1,500	39,500 (Total project cost)
K	Contribution to Medway River Project for school pond	50	—
K	KCC Habitat Evaluation	500	500
K	Enhancement to R Beult SSSI*	1,500	3,000
K	Enhancement to Pett Level SSSI*	2,742	2,742
		<u>28,217</u>	<u>140,580</u>
S	Giant Hogweed Project	600	2,000
S	Sussex Avifauna	500	4,000
S	Southover School conservation area	700	2,000
S	East Sussex SSCI project (Sussex Area contribution)	1,500	see above
S	Marine SSCI project	750	4,500
S	Sussex Seasearch	2,000	10,000
S	Chichester toad ponds	500	1,000
S	Arun Valley Project Officer	7,180	17,000
S	Blakehurst Pond restoration	1,000	2,000
S	Gurstan Farm pond restoration	500	1,000
S	Storrington Pond desilting	2,000	16,000
S	Pulborough Brooks fencing	1,500	3,000
S	Filsham ditch restoration	600	1,200
S	Waterwise, Schools competition	15,000	15,000
S	Orfold Aqueduct planting	1,000	1,000
S	Conservation interpretation and improvement at Ardingly reservoir	1,000	50,000
S	Shopham Canal Bridge restoration	1,000	8,000
		<u>37,330</u>	<u>137,000</u>

H	Hampshire Habitat Survey	5,548	32,000
H	River Itchen crayfish project	1,227	6,000
H	Weeke Pond enhancement	212	500
H	Hampshire Wildlife Trust wetland reserves initiative	5,000	10,000
H	Afton Marsh reedbed restoration	950	2,000
H	Barn Owl Project	6,500	7,000
H	Water vole captive breeding project	975	2,000
H	Itchen Valley Project	5,000	5,000
H	Solent Project Officer	5,000	25,000
		<u>30,412</u>	<u>89,500</u>
Region	Otters and Rivers Project	22,700	27,000
TOTAL		118,659	394,080

* Cost met by Flood Defence

In addition to providing financial assistance the NRA also promotes conservation through partnerships with other conservation and recreation organisations, including English Nature, the county Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and the Countryside Commission.

In Hampshire, contact with the Project Officer for the Countryside Stewardship scheme has been successfully maintained, largely through the Otter Project Officer. The NRA has liaised with landowners in several areas in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Kent to promote Stewardship Schemes.

2.3.1 SOUTH-EAST OTTERS AND RIVERS PROJECT

Progress continues to be made by the Region's Otters and Rivers Project. Funding was again provided for a Project Officer employed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, and PAB approval to continue the project to March 1998 obtained. The Project is financially supported by Regional Conservation; direct management and administration is provided by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust and individual habitat enhancement schemes are undertaken by the Areas.

During 1995/6, further work was carried out in Hampshire, with the provision of fourteen artificial holts; 1km of roadside fencing; 50 roadside reflectors; 7 areas of scrub planting; creation of two ponds and one length of bank restoration at a total cost of £21,000.

80 road crossings have been examined and six have been identified for work to be carried out with consent from the Highways Authority as funds become available. Evidence of otters is now apparent throughout the River Itchen catchment, indicating that the release of captive-bred otters in 1993 has been highly successful, adding urgency to the need to improve safety and reduce the risk of road casualty.

A greater proportion of the year was given to promoting and developing the Project in Sussex and, to a lesser extent, in Kent than in previous years.

Habitat maps have now been completed for the Itchen, Arun and Rother catchments. Contacts have been made with a number of landowners on the Arun and Rother, and this culminated in a high profile, well attended, Otter Project Launch held at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust centre in Arundel chaired by Lord Blakenham..

As a result of new contacts, the following enhancement schemes have been undertaken:

- Scrub planting and fencing on the Scrase's land at Pallingham £1,000
- Scrub planting and fencing on the Osmaston's land at Pallingham £1,000
- Planting of scrub and erection of fences at a farm near Liss £1500
- Purchase of materials to construct chamber holts £500
- Two holts constructed on the Rother

Road crossings through the Arun catchment have been examined and none identified as posing a particular risk to otters.

A series of nine landowner seminars and volunteer training days have been held across the Region.

Substantial press, radio and television coverage has featured this work.\

2.3.2. BARN OWL PROJECTS

Each of the Areas supported a Barn Owl Project, which stems from the duty to promote conservation of fauna dependant on an aquatic environment. Barn owl populations have suffered from loss of the rough, tussocky grassland required by voles - the owl's main prey species - and loss of breeding sites. River corridors and wetlands now provide a major part of the residual habitat and the project, promoted by NRA and supported by a number of outside bodies has had three aims:

- a survey of barn owl distribution
- education of riparian landowners to manage habitats in a more sensitive manner to benefit a range of wildlife including voles
- to provide nest boxes to redress the loss of breeding sites.

Across the region, but particularly in Kent, there has been marked success. It has proved necessary to erect nest boxes, which are placed on poles, in fairly closely placed pairs since boxes are readily colonised by the more common kestrel. A single box would be unlikely to remain available to owls for long, but the second box placed in a kestrel's territory remains available. The occupancy rate of these nest boxes by barn owls has been high.

2.3.3 WATERWISE

WaterWise is an education award scheme introduced in Sussex in 1994 in partnership with

Sussex Wildlife Trust and Southern FM, solely funded by NRA, to promote conservation and awareness of the water environment. Primary schools are invited to submit plans for conservation projects to a panel of judges supplied by the scheme promoters. Awards of up to £2,000 towards the cost of undertaking their conservation project were made to the 20 schools submitting the best entries. Its evident success led to a repeat event in 1995/6, when 18 awards totalling £13,000 were made.

Part of the Conservation and Recreation Officers' role includes providing advice on conservation matters to other organisations and to the public. Over the year, the function dealt with nearly 800 requests for advice covering a wide range of topics including pond restoration and construction; weed problems; otter and mink sightings; river management and student projects. 98% of the requests were dealt with within the target times (acknowledge requests for conservation advice within 5 working days and provide a considered response or site visits within 20 working days).

2.4. To maintain, develop and improve conservation interest and recreational use of NRA sites

Previous reports refer to over 700 sites in NRA ownership across the region. This number refers to land holdings: in several cases there are adjacent land holdings which can be considered as single sites for management purposes. A review was carried out during the year and where appropriate, land holding information was amalgamated to form a database of discrete sites. This identified sites meeting the National Site Database criteria of sites of > 0.5 ha area or > 0.5 km length for linear sites e.g. flood banks, with recreation or conservation interest and will assist Areas in prioritising site management plan development and implementation.

This review reduced the total number of landholding to 620 discrete sites, of which 76 have been forwarded for inclusion into the National Site database.

The sites range from very small plots of land around boreholes and gauging stations to quite large lengths of river bank, beach and sea wall. A number of the sites are of high conservation interest: 67 sites lie partly or wholly within SSSI's including:

- Land owned by the NRA at Stodmarsh near Canterbury is further designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EU Birds Directive and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar site)
- The Royal Military Canal in Kent, some of which is leased to the NRA on a 999 year lease, is partly designated as an SSSI and has also been scheduled as an Ancient Monument.
- Pagham Harbour in Sussex also has further designations as an SPA, Ramsar site and is a local nature reserve.

Park Wood in Sussex, although not designated, is a large area (over 58 ha) of semi-natural ancient woodland.

Provision for recreation on NRA land includes car parking, picnic sites, fishing, canoeing,

allotment gardening and boat mooring. Public access to NRA land includes public footpaths, bridleways, cycle ways and permissive paths.

As part of the refurbishment of navigation structures on the Medway, consultation took place on the provision of a canoe pass at Sluice Weir. Construction of this is scheduled to take place during 1996.

No large sites were acquired or sold during the year.

The NRA has an obligation under the Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation to produce integrated management plans especially for sites which may be subject to conflicting uses and pressures.

Prior to this year, the NRA concentrated on the management of the larger sites which have conservation interest, existing recreational use or both. These sites are listed in Table 12.

During the year site management plans have been written for all gauging sites in Sussex and proposals to enhance conservation included in the maintenance contracts prepared and let by Water Resources for these sites.

A management agreement has been reached for Park Wood with East Sussex County Council who are providing a part time countryside warden for the wood under contract, the cost of which is met by Flood Defence.

Management plans have been prepared and implemented for Barcombe Mills, R Ouse, Sussex and Rowner Mill, R Arun, Sussex.

TABLE 11: NRA OWNED SITES

AREA	NRA SITES	EXISTING USE	STATUS
K	Warden Bay	Public Open Space Picnic Site	None
K	Dymchurch Sea Wall	Public Open Space Car Parking	None
K	Land at Leigh	Fishing, Footpath	SNCI
K	Ruxley Gravel Pits	Fishing, Education	SSSI, KTNC Reserve
K	Royal Military Canal	Fishing, Footpath Canoeing	SSSI, SAM, SNCI
K	Stoneham Lock	Fishing, Towpath	
K	Lydden Valley	Fishing, Towpath	SNCI
K	Land at Aldington	Footpath	None
K	Stodmarsh	Footpath	SPA/RAMSAR SSSI
K	Rye Harbour	Sailing, Access	SSSI, LNR
K	Milton Ranges	Wildfowling	SSSI
K	Pett Pools	Fishing, Nature Reserve	SSSI, SWT Reserve
S	Pagham Harbour	Open Access, Nature Reserve	SPA/RAMSAR, SSSI, LNR
S	Blackwell North Pumping Station	Fishing, Sussex Border Path	None
S	Ferring Rife	Footpath	SNCI
S	Rowner Mill	Bridleway, Footpath	SNCI
S	Barcombe Mills	Car Parking, fishing footpath, picnic site.	None
S	Isfield Gauging Station	Fishing	None
S	North Mill	Fishing, Access	None
S	Park Wood	Car parking, walking, restricted horseriding	Ancient Woodland
H	Disused Railway Line (Isle of Wight)	Cycle Way, Access	Partly SSSI, AONB
H	Romsey depot	Allotment gardens	none

TABLE 12: SPEND ON NRA SITES

AREA	NRA OWNED SITE	NRA SPEND (£)
K	Rye Harbour Nature Reserve: warden / management work	5,200
K	Pett Pools : faggoting to stabilise bank	2,750*
K	Stilling basin, Dymchurch: planting	500*
S	BTCV at Rowner Mill	100
S	Survey at Rowner Mill	100
S	Hedge planting at 7 sites	1,000
S	Management contract for Park Wood	3,500*
S	Park Wood (prior to contract): Provision of boardwalk; signing / waymark posts; culvert crossing of stream and path improvements	12,500
S	Bryophyte survey	100
S	Bat / bird boxes for 9 sites	500
S	Grey wagtail nest boxes	300
S	Survey at Barcombe Mills	250
TOTAL		26,750

* Funded by Flood Defence. The Parkwood contract was in place for three months: the full year cost will be £15,000.

Rye Harbour is managed as a Local Nature Reserve and the NRA contributes on an annual basis towards the costs of wardening the site and undertaking management work. The Reserve management produces its own annual report.

Pagham Harbour is managed by WSCC as a local Nature Reserve and the NRA sits on two steering committees. The Reserve produces regular warden's reports.

2.5. To promote the use of water and associated land for recreation purposes

There are a number of organisations with responsibilities and aims which are relevant to the recreation duties of the NRA. They include the Sports Councils, Countryside Commission and Local Authorities. NRA Southern Region has taken the same approach to promoting recreation as it has to conservation by providing financial assistance and by liaising and forming partnerships with these other organisations.

TABLE 13: RECREATION PROJECTS WHICH HAVE BEEN PROMOTED BY THE NRA DURING 1995/96.

AREA	PROJECTS	NRA SPEND (£)	PROJECT COST (£)
K	Medway River Project	27,430	82,390
K	Kentish Stour Project	13,980	97,271
K	North - West Kent Project	50,000*	120,420
K	Medway Estuary and Swale initiative	2,000	33,000
K	Maidstone River Festival	600	
K	Bank revetment, Barden Lake	1,500	4,509
K	Interpretive panels, Stodmarsh SSSI	4,866	14,366
K	Camber Sands signs	1,000**	2,000
K	East Sussex CC European Year of Environment commemorative booklet (Kent Area contribution)	400	12,500
K	East Swale landscape assessment	1,000	1,000
S	Cobnor Point Footpath - improvements for wheelchair access	2,000**	10,000
S	Seven Sisters Country Park disabled access and canoe access	4,000**	8,000
S	Low Tide Day	1,500**	19,000
S	Flat Dossers Bridge, R Adur trib.	1,000	4,000
S	Wey and Arun Canal cost benefit study	1,000	8,000
S	Kingston University exhibition at Chichester Museum	500	1,000
H	Scotchells Brook footpath	4,000	5,000
H	River Alre footpath	3,165	3,665
H	Woodmill canoe course feasibility study	2,600	2,600
TOTAL		117,641	420,221

* Funded by Water Resources

** Includes funding from Regional Recreation Project - total £6,500

The Medway, Kentish Stour and North - West Kent Countryside Projects have been extremely successful and have involved partnerships with the Countryside Commission, County Councils, District and Borough Councils, the private sector as well as large numbers of volunteers. All three projects have a strong community base to involve local people in enhancement and management of local environments, for both recreation and conservation. The Countryside Projects produce their own annual reports which detail their activities and the achievements that they have made during the year.

During the year, Sussex has joined in partnership with Arun DC, WSCC, South Downs Conservation Board and Countryside Commission to support the Arun Valley Countryside Project

Part of the promotion of recreation includes the provision of advice to other organisations as well as to the public. The function dealt with almost 250 requests for recreation advice during the year. These included subjects such as where to fish or canoe as well as student projects. 99% of the requests were dealt within the target times (acknowledge requests for recreation advice within 5 working days and provide a considered response or site visit within 20 working days.)

2.5.1 RECREATION PROJECT

In January 1995, a Recreation Project Officer was appointed to a three year joint NRA / Sports Council funded project to develop a recreation strategy for the Region. The objectives of the project are:

- To identify demand for watersports and water related recreation and relate this information to National trends
- Compile a database of all waterbodies in the region which may be used for watersports and water related recreation. The database is to be compatible with NRA and Sports Council national databases.
- To review NRA sites using information supplied for the National Recreation and Conservation database and identify opportunities for increasing provision and promoting recreational use.
- To promote recreation within Southern Region and support Area Conservation and recreation Officers in identifying and facilitating recreation projects.
- To advise on issues and potential conflicts relating to recreational use of sites.
- To develop a joint recreational strategy.

Establishment of the database and the data collection process has been a major element of the year's work. A limited amount of site data was collected, but this will gather pace during the

forthcoming year.

The Project Officer supported Hampshire during the absence of a Conservation / Recreation Officer by direct management of the Woodmill Canoe Course Feasibility Study and input to the Upper Shide Gauging Weir reconstruction.

Financial support to Kent and Sussex Area Recreational projects was also given.

3. CONCLUSIONS

During 1995/96 the Conservation and Recreation functions in Southern Region overall continued to make good progress towards the achievement of the national conservation and recreation objectives, but the lack of a Conservation and Recreation Officer in Hampshire for six months seriously limited the amount and quality of work undertaken in that Area during that period.

Looking forward to 1996/7, identifying and implementing changes required to meet the Environment Agency's wider role is the principle priority.

Additional priorities are:

- Train and accredit all users of River Habitat Survey Methodology, including all contractors.
- Complete Strategic River Corridor Surveys
- Implement Post Project Appraisal for conservation projects
- Develop the Otter Project in Kent and build on the start made in Sussex.
- Improve Conservation and Recreation specifications in Flood Defence Maintenance contracts .
- Continue the Hermitage Stream River Restoration Project.
- Continued input into Water Level Management Plans for sites agreed and prioritised with Flood Defence, English Nature and MAFF.
- Progress recreational site data collection and database to develop the Strategy in 1997/8

APPENDIX I

NRA DUTIES AND POWERS

Duty to further Conservation

Under Section 16 of the Water Resources Act 1991, and Section 12 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, the NRA is obliged, in formulating or considering any proposals relating to any of its functions, to:

further the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological and physiographical (landform) features of special interest;

have regard to the desirability of protecting and conserving buildings, sites and objects of archaeological, architectural and historic interest;

take into account the effect which the proposals would have on the beauty or amenity of any rural or urban area or on any such flora, fauna, features, buildings, sites or objects.

Duty to promote Conservation and Recreation

In addition to the above, Section 2(2) of the Water Resources Act 1991 makes it a duty of the NRA, to such extent as it considers desirable, generally to promote:

The conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of inland and coastal waters and of land associated with such waters;

The conservation of flora and fauna which are dependent on an aquatic environment.

The use of such waters and land for recreational purposes.

Duty to consult with respect to sites of special interest

Under Section 17 of the Water Resources Act 1991, English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales are obliged to inform the NRA of any land which, in their opinion :

Is of special interest by reason of its flora, fauna or geographical or physiological features, and:

may be affected by activities carried out or authorised by the NRA.

There is a similar obligation on National Parks Authorities and the Broads Authority in respect of land which they consider to be of special interest.

In turn, the NRA must consult the above bodies before carrying out or authorising any activities which appear likely to damage the special interest of the land in question.

Code of Practice

Section 18 of the Water Resources Act 1991 refers to a Code of Practice giving practical guidance on conservation to the NRA and water and sewage undertakers.

The Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation was issued under the provisions of the Water Act 1989.

Establishing Nature Reserves

The NRA is able to establish nature reserves on suitable land that it owns.

Recovering Costs

The NRA is able to charge visitors to nature reserves it has established.

Recreational Duties Relating to all Functions of the NRA

The NRA has a duty to take account of recreation in the performance of all its functions. Specifically:

the preservation and maintenance of access for the public to places of natural beauty and to buildings, sites and other objects of archaeological, architectural or historic interest;

to ensure that water and land under the NRA's control is made available for recreational purposes, and that in doing so the needs of persons who are chronically sick or disabled are taken into account.

Duty to Promote Recreation

The NRA will generally promote the use of inland and coastal waters, and land associated with them for the purpose of recreation to the extent that it deems desirable.

Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation

This code of practice issued by the Secretary of State gives practical guidance to the NRA and promotes desirable practices with respect to the NRA's environmental and recreational duties.

The Code requires the NRA:

to have full and up to date information on conservation and recreation whilst fulfilling its duties;

to seek advice from regional advisory committees;

to prepare catchment and management plans particularly for NRA owned sites;

to consult and liaise with other appropriate organisations and individuals;

to recognise the social importance of sport and recreation;

to incorporate where possible recreation facilities into programmes resulting from the requirements of the other NRA functions.

Powers to Raise Charges

The NRA is able to fix and recover charges for recreational services and facilities provided in the course of carrying out its functions.

Powers to Make Byelaws

The NRA is able to make byelaws to regulate or prohibit boating and recreational activity on land and waters that it owns or manages and also on inland water where a right of navigation exists but where there is no controlling authority.

APPENDIX II

STAFF STRUCTURES AS AT 31ST MARCH 1996

REGIONAL HEAD OFFICE, WORTHING

REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER (NRA): DAVID JORDAN
|
ACTING REGIONAL TECHNICAL MANAGER: PETER MIDGLEY
|
ACTING REGIONAL FRCN MANAGER: IAN JOHNSON
|
REGIONAL CONSERVATION RECREATION & NAVIGATION CO-ORDINATOR: ROBIN CRAWSHAW
|
REGIONAL RECREATION PROJECT OFFICER: ALLISON THORPE

KENT AREA OFFICE, EAST MALLING

ACTING AREA MANAGER: GRAHAM WARREN
|
AREA FRCN MANAGER: JOHN MORGAN
|
AREA CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OFFICER: ROB PILCHER
|
ASSISTANT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OFFICERS:
JASON CHAMBERS, SACHA ROGERS
|
FRCN TECHNICAL ASSISTANT: ANDREA BUCKLEY

SUSSEX AREA OFFICE, WORTHING

ACTING AREA MANAGER: TONY OWEN
|
AREA FRCN MANAGER: JANE CECIL
|
AREA CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OFFICER: PHIL GRIFFITHS
|
ASSISTANT CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OFFICER: MARK ELLIOTT
|
TEMPORARY SITE ASSESSMENT ASSISTANT: LESLEY MACDOUGALL

**HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT AREA OFFICE,
WINCHESTER**

AREA MANAGER: MIKE BEARD
|
ACTING AREA FRCN MANAGER: LAWRENCE TALKS
|
AREA CONSERVATION AND RECREATION OFFICER: TIM SYKES

NOTE: Several of the Senior Managers above were in post in a caretaker capacity, pending the formation of the Environment Agency. From 1st April 1996, the following Senior appointments within the Agency apply :

Regional General Manager : Kevin Whiteman

Kent Area Manager: Binnie Buckley

Sussex Area Manager: Peter Midgley

Hampshire Area Manager: David Jordan.

The post of Regional Water Manager replaces Regional Technical Manager: Gary Lane (formerly Regional Flood Defence Manager) has been appointed to this post.

In addition, Ian Johnson and Lawrence Talks have been confirmed as Regional and Hampshire FRCN Managers respectively.

July 19, 1996