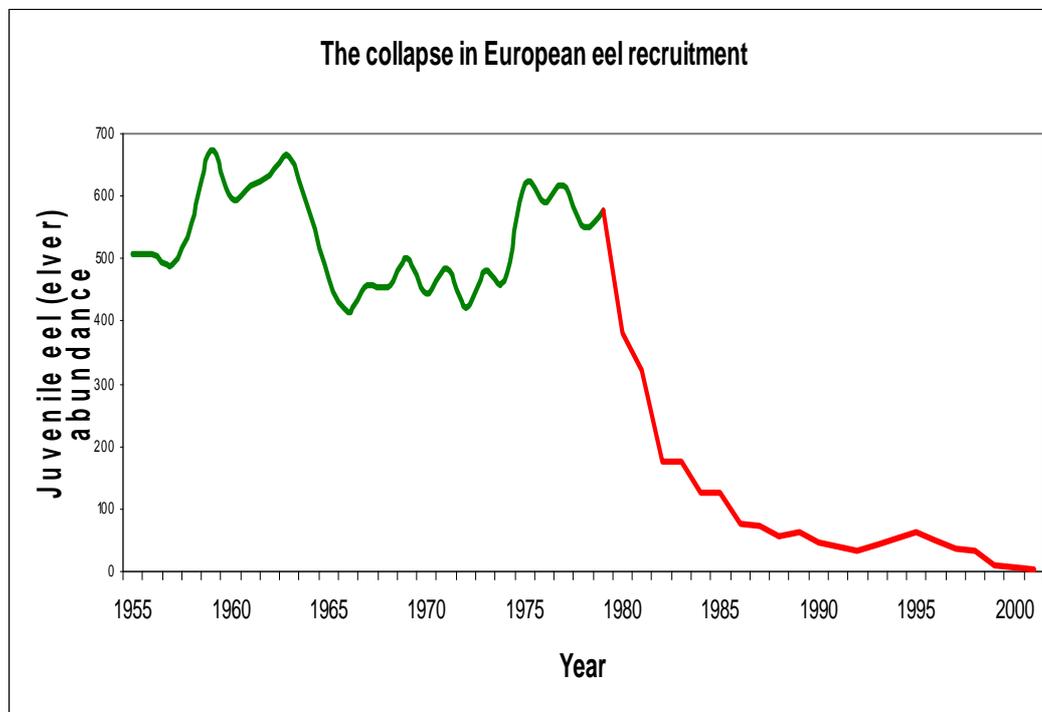


The plight of the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Scientists estimate that, across Europe, glass eel numbers have now fallen to less than 5% of their 1980s levels. For this reason action is being taken throughout Europe to fulfil the goals of the European Union recovery plan for eel.



European Commission Council Regulation 1100/2007 was published in September 2007, “establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel”.

This regulation requires EU Member States to put in place Eel Management Plans (EMPs). These plans aim to deliver an increase in escapement of adult (silver) eel. The target is 40% of pristine escapement levels in the long term.

We have produced 11 EMPs that address the causes of the decline by implementing management actions which are achievable. The EMPs are based on the 11 River Basin Districts in England and Wales.

A further piece of legislation came into force in January 2010. The 'Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 Statutory Instrument No. 3344' will, amongst other things, improve access for migrating eels.

The causes of decline

The main causes of decline in eel recruitment are widely considered to be:

- access/migration barriers leading to a reduction in available habitat
- entrainment
- exploitation
- predation
- water quality/pollution problems
- pathogens and parasites
- climatic/oceanic changes.

Measures to address the decline, identified in the EMPs for England and Wales include:

- ensuring safe passage for eels up and down rivers by installing eel passes at barriers and screening at water intakes
- targeted stocking of glass eel to boost silver eel escapement in the short term
- monitoring eel populations to measure progress towards the escapement target.

Developing the Eel Manual

To support the EMPs we recognised that we needed to gather our knowledge and expertise. A workshop was held in October 2009, bringing together experienced practitioners. This document is the result of that workshop.

This Eel Manual presents best practice guidance on carrying out management actions in four eel disciplines. It brings together the expertise, shared practical experiences and lessons that have so far been learnt. The manual comprises four documents:

- Eel and Elver Passes
- Screening at Intakes and Outfalls: measures to protect eel
- Stocking European Eels
- Monitoring Elver and Eel Populations

customer service line
08708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

The Eel Manual provides guidance on eel management and has been produced using the best current available information. Undoubtedly new developments will continue to arise and we welcome feedback, updates, new research and developments. Future revisions of the Eel Manual will be made as appropriate.

List of Contacts

The Eel Manual:

Ayesha Taylor: ayesha.taylor@environment-agency.gov.uk

Passes:

Jim Gregory: jim.gregory@environment-agency.gov.uk

Screening:

Steve Sheridan steven.sheridan@environment-agency.gov.uk

Monitoring:

Liz Baldwin liz.baldwin1@environment-agency.gov.uk

Stocking:

John Taylor john.taylor@environment-agency.gov.uk

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