

UK BAP STEERING GROUP FOR CHALK RIVERS MEETING

Wednesday 23rd July 2008
Old Town Hall in Amersham High Street

MINUTES

1. The UK BAP Chalk Rivers Steering Group

The UK BAP priorities for chalk rivers are:

1. Maintain the characteristic plants and animals of chalk rivers, including their winterbourne stretches;
2. Restore water quality, flows and habitat diversity;
3. Identify cost-effective means of restoring damaged river reaches.

The UK BAP Steering Group’s vision for chalk rivers is:

‘Chalk rivers should be protected or restored to a quality which sustains the high conservation value of their wildlife, healthy water supplies, recreation opportunities and their place in the character and cultural history of the landscape.’

2. Chilterns Chalk Streams

2.1 A decade on: The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project

Allen Beechey the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Officer, gave an excellent presentation on a decade of work to protect and enhance the Chilterns’ chalk rivers. Particularly impressive is the project’s work with local communities to give voice to the concerns facing the Chilterns chalk rivers and carrying out work to protect some of England’s most pressured chalk rivers.

MAP (1) The Chilterns Chalk Rivers



Partners in the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project



Chalk Streams Project

Objectives



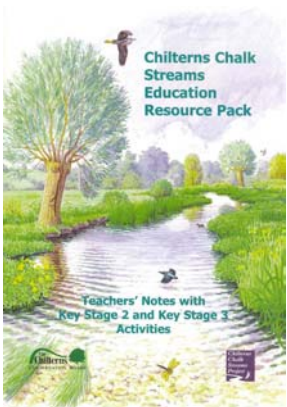
- **Practical Conservation.**
- **Provide advice to landowners on riverside management.**
- **Improving access to chalk streams for the general public.**
- **Education.**



Some successes and ongoing work

- R. Misbourne Low Flow Alleviation scheme
- Public education
- Riparian management work
- Appointment of a dedicated Project Officer (2000)
- Chilterns water festival
- Water vole recovery project R. Chess
- Revive the Wye
- Misbourne at Chalfont St. Peter
- Impress the Chess
- Canal and Rivers Partnership
- Habitat enhancement schemes

Education, access and community involvement



Chalk river habitat enhancement



An example of habitat enhancement: Meades Water Gardens, R. Chess, Chesham

- £62K Project
- Part of 'Impress the Chess' initiative
- Restore chalk stream habitat along a heavily modified section of river
- Riparian management
- Improve access

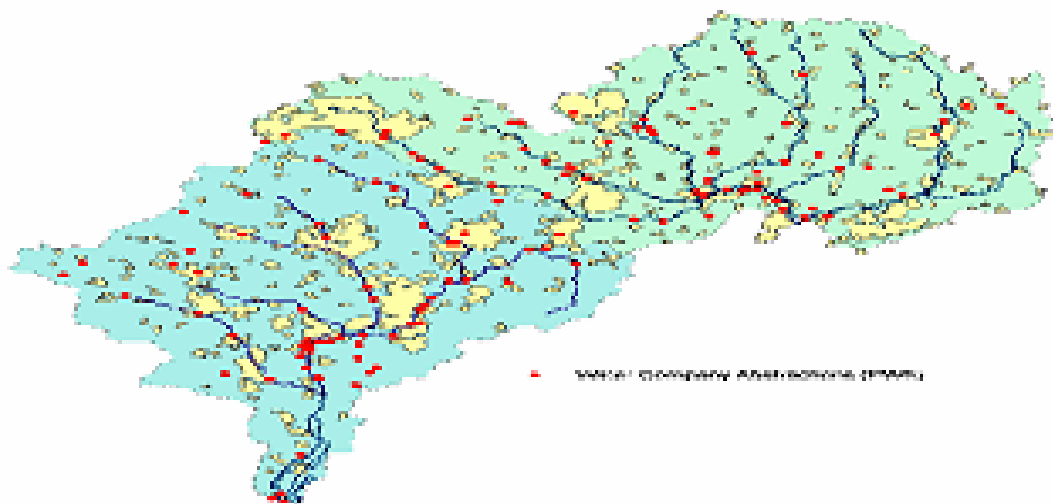
2.2 Low flow issues in the Chilterns

John Norris of the Chilterns Society and Miles Morgan & Judy England of the Environment Agency gave two fascinating presentations on low flows in the Chilterns and efforts to restore flows to the Misbourne.

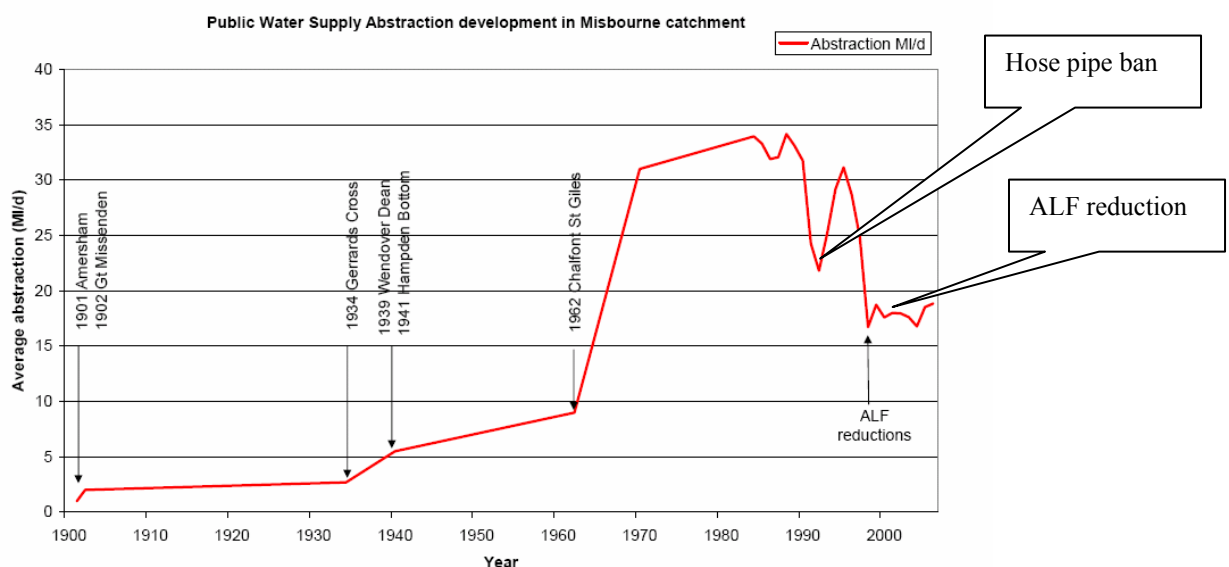
In 1997 23.5km out of 27km of the River Misbourne were dry. The Misbourne was being significantly affected by abstraction. In 1998 under an Alleviation of Low Flow scheme abstraction was reduced by 15Ml/d. This has been a significant help towards restoring flows however the pressure of abstraction remains intense and there are concerns that it will increase with forecast development growth.

More needs to be done to protect the ecology and habitat of the Misbourne. The river continues to remain dry throughout its middle reach. Although abstraction reduction has been shown to improve groundwater levels, the river is still vulnerable to drying out over a 8.5km stretch between Amersham and Chalfont St. Peter. The initial ALF scheme suggested that if abstraction reductions did not improve the situation significantly then a phase 2 would need to be considered.

Public water supply abstractions in the Chilterns

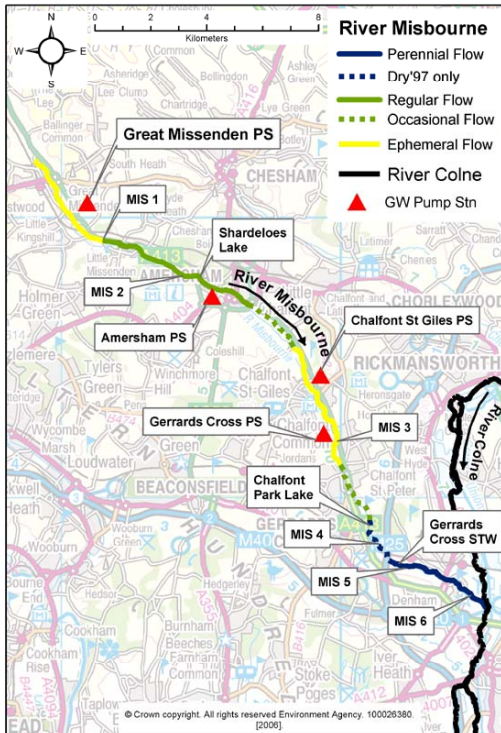


Abstraction in the Misbourne catchment

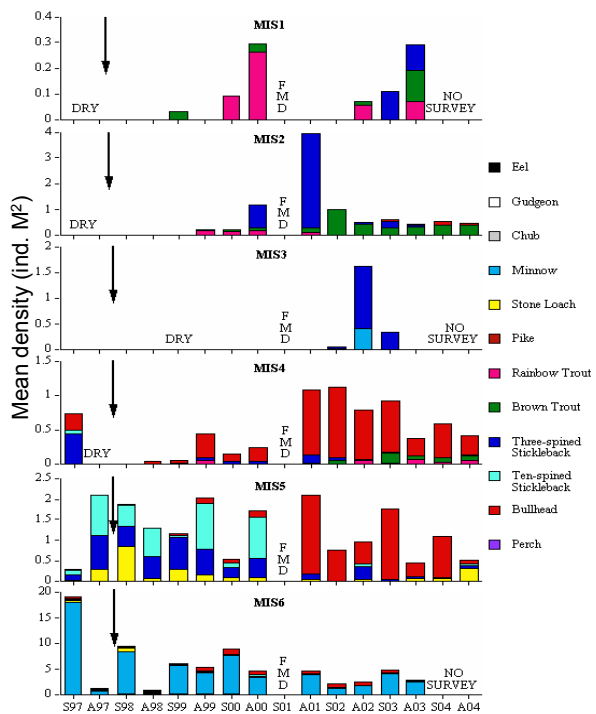


Ecology (Fish and macro-invertebrates) of the Misbourne

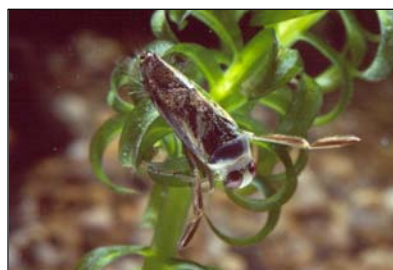
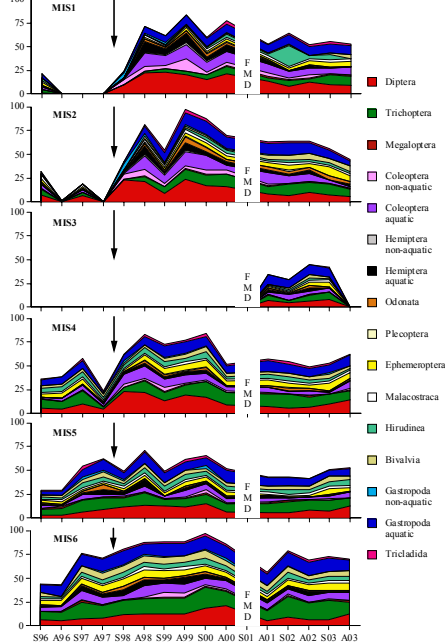
Misbourne survey 1997-2004



Fish population



Invertebrates



3. UK BAP Reporting 2008 – the status of England’s chalk rivers

Under the quinquennial review of the status of the UK BAP habitats and species a report is being compiled on the status of England’s chalk rivers. This will be available in the New Year.

4. **Chalk Rivers news in brief**

4.1 **River Avon STREAM Project**

For their latest newsletter go to: <http://www.streamlife.org.uk/>

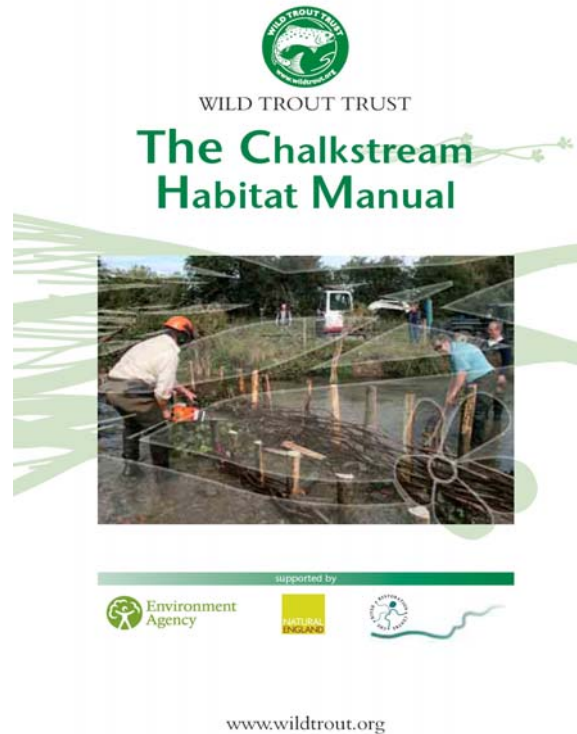
4.2 **River restoration on chalk river SSSI**

National programme is being developed. For more information contact Chris Mainstone of Natural England: chris.mainstone@naturalengalnd.org.uk

4.3 **Chalk River Habitat Enhancement Guidelines**

A manual on chalk river habitat enhancement is due to be launched this autumn by the Wild Trout Trust. It has been developed by the Wild Trout trust working in partnership with the Environment Agency, River Restoration Centre and Natural England.

They will be available as PDFs downloadable from the web: <http://www.wildtrout.org/>



4.4 **Progress on developing an Anglo-French Chalk Rivers Project**

Good contact has been made with the French Fisheries department and it is hoped that a fact finding trip will be held in the autumn.

5. **Site visit to River Misbourne**





Dr Nigel Holmes pays homage to the Misbourne

6. Attendees

Members Chalk Rivers Steering Group	Lawrence Talks (Chair)	Environment Agency (Chair)
	Allan Frake	Environment Agency
	Graham Lightfoot	Environment Agency
	Chris Mainstone	Natural England
	Steve Tapper	Game Conservancy Trust
	Tim Hoggarth	Countryside Alliance
	Graham Roberts	Wildlife Trusts
	John Slader	Salmon and Trout Association
	Dr Nigel Holmes	Consultant
Invitees	John Norris	Chilterns Society
	Judy England	Environment Agency
	Miles Morgan	Environment Agency
	Alistair Wilson	Environment Agency
	Richard Tyner/Phil Belfield	Environment Agency
	Allen Beechey + Steering Group	Chilterns Chalk Streams Steering Group
	Tony Langford	Friends of the River Mimram
	Dave Stimpson	River Beane Restoration Association
	Andy Webb	Ver Valley Society
	Roger Hands	River Gade Restoration
	Mike Heylin	Colne Valley Anglers
		Impress the Chess
	Sir John Johnson	Chairman Chilterns Conservation Board
	Peter Hinde	Chairman CCSP
	Roger Lerry	Chiltern Society
	Sarah Wright	Natural England
	Mel Challis	Environment Agency
	Clive Phillips	Environment Agency
	Alex Back	Three Valleys Water