

Upstream Thinking Newsletter

for the

Tamar & Roadford Catchments



Upstream Thinking in the Tamar & Roadford Catchments

Welcome to the latest update from the Upstream Thinking Project (UST) in the Tamar and Roadford catchments. Since 2020, Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) and Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) have, in combination, worked with 100s of farms in the area on projects which have both assisted the farm business and its infrastructure leading to improvements in water quality and biodiversity. We will continue to work with farmers and landowners in bespoke ways to best help them achieve these improvements, and you can find out more of what is available on the following pages.

Please check out the back page for our contact details.

Visit wrt.org.uk/project/upstream-thinking-3/

Visit devonwildlifetrust.org/what-we-do/our-projects//working-wetlands-project

What's On Offer

Confidential farm advice and farm plans — free visit from a farm advisor to offer advice on management of nutrients, soil, pesticides, yard infrastructure, watercourse management and habitats.

Free Soil Samples and Soil Health Pits

As in previous years, WRT are offering free soil samples for 6 fields, this includes pH, P, K, & Mg. We can also offer some soil health pit analysis, if you would like to ascertain if you have any compaction issues on the farm. [Please contact \[simonwhite@wrt.org.uk\]\(mailto:simonwhite@wrt.org.uk\)](mailto:simonwhite@wrt.org.uk) if you would like to book in for this.

Devon Wildlife Trust have a new soils offer testing up to 20 fields at £10/field. Analysis will include P, K and pH (meeting the statutory requirements).

Additionally, analysis will include – Micronutrients for soil, plant and animal health, Soil Texture Classification, Soil Organic Matter, Soil Organic Carbon and Cation Exchange Capacity. [For more information contact our DWT advisor.](#)

Free use of the Catchment Aerator and Soil Health Analysis

If you find you have compaction in the top layer of your soil (<15cm/6 inches), aerating and then resting the field can significantly improve soil health. The action of aerating damaged soils can improve infiltration, access to nutrients, water and oxygen, and in turn, improving crop yields. [If you would like to use the catchment aerator please contact us.](#)

Free Fertiliser Spreader Calibration

WRT are offering a free calibration of your fertiliser spreader under the Upstream Thinking Project. You will need to bring your machinery to a specified location (TBC) where there will be a calibration contractor carrying out the service.

Once we know attendance numbers we will send out an email with dates and the location. [Please get in touch with \[SimonWhite@wrt.org.uk\]\(mailto:SimonWhite@wrt.org.uk\)](mailto:SimonWhite@wrt.org.uk) to let us know if you would like to participate in the event.

Capital Grants

The application window is now open. Previous successful applications have funded for scrub removal, ditch and pond restoration, natural flood management measures, water course fencing, guttering and tanks, tracks, gateway resurfacing, mire and habitat restoration for example. Typically grants are up to £10,000 with a 50% landowner contribution.

DWT & WRT also offer revenue grants for trials and innovations that can lead to improved water/ soil management and quality. [Please get in touch with your ideas.](#)

Post-Harvest Scheme

Free advice on identifying areas on farm that could benefit from rough ploughing/cultivating fields that are going to be left bare during the winter with no post-harvest plan.

Advice and Support Towards Agri-Environment Applications

For infrastructure and land management improvements, such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive and Slurry Investment Scheme.



Maintaining, Restoring, Creating and Connecting Semi-Natural Habitats

We have lost 97% of our nations hay meadows which is having a huge impact on the numbers of pollinators and water quality. If you are interested in restoring or creating a wildflower meadow, however big or small, please get in touch with the UST team.

Pesticide Amnesties

Find out if you are eligible for our free and confidential farm Pesticide Amnesty scheme in the Dart, Exe, Fowey, Otter, Roadford, Tamar & Tavy Upstream Thinking catchments.

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Updates / things to think about:

Farming Rules for Water – Update

In order to prevent manures, fertilisers and soil getting into water courses, please follow the **Farming Rules for Water**, which have been in place since 2018. Many of you will be aware the restrictions that were in place for **autumn/winter 2021 have been amended**. The details of which can be found at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-for-farmers-and-land-managers-to-prevent-water-pollution#environmental-benefits> and
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water>

Please be aware most dirty water and parlour washings are now considered as slurry. All farm waste applications will require a crop need justification.

In summary, the rules are based on the following:

1. You must take steps to prevent manure, fertiliser and soil getting into watercourses
2. Assess pollution risk (ground cover, slope angle, soil type and condition, land drains and distance from watercourses/coastal waters/springs, wells, boreholes)
3. Soil test every 5 years
4. Adhere to rules about:
 - a. Applying fertiliser and reducing associated pollution, particularly on fields with high phosphate indices.
 - b. Using and storing manure
 - c. Preventing erosion – managing livestock and soil

ELMS – Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) Improved Grassland Soil Standard

The SFI (Sustainable Farming Incentive) scheme is now open to applications. SFI is the first of 3 new environmental schemes being introduced under the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). SFI aims to help farmers manage land in a way that improves food production and is more environmentally sustainable. In 2022, SFI aims to encourage actions that improve soil health, and for the new SFI Improved Grassland Standard payments will be made at either an Introductory level of £28 per hectare, or £58 per hectare for those joining the Intermediate level.



As part of the scheme you are expected to:

- Complete a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- Test soil for organic matter
- Minimise bare ground over winter
- Establish and maintain herbal leys (Intermediate level)

Upstream Thinking Catchment Advisors can help with:

- Assist with SFI applications
- Help with completing a soil assessment
- Help with producing a soil management plan
- Assist with soil organic matter testing
- Advise on herbal ley establishment and management
- Calculate the % of BPS reductions that can be made up by joining the current SFI standard

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Slurry Infrastructure Grant

DEFRA have recently announced that they will be accepting applications to the **Slurry Investment Scheme this Autumn (2022) as part of the Farming Investment Fund**. This is for farmers interested in providing six months of slurry storage to improve the use of manures on agricultural land and to reduce the risk to watercourses from dilapidated storage facilities or being applied when conditions are poor such as when fields are saturated, or before heavy rain. Improved storage should reduce the use of artificial fertilisers.

Current Silage Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil regulations (SSAFO) require all stores to have a minimum of 4 months storage. There are exemptions to those store built before 1991 and so the Slurry Investment Fund is for an increase in storage capacity. **Grants will be available at 50% of costs for projects between £25,000 and £250,000**. The grant can be for new stores, extensions i.e. extra rings on a tank, lagoons and can be combined with on-site SAAFO compliant stores to ensure 6 months storage. Non-compliant or exempt stores must be decommissioned. All grant funded stores must also be fitted with an impermeable cover. This to prevent rainfall entering stores increasing storage capacity and to reduce air pollution.

Farmers can apply through a 2-stage process, starting with an online eligibility checker (opening in the autumn) followed by a full application (over the winter), but **demand is likely to be very high, so early planning is paramount**.

It is recommended that you:

- Start planning your storage capacity need.
- Thinking about what sort of store you might build.
- Choosing where on the farm to put your store.
- Checking if you need to apply for planning permission.
- And essentially to get early support from the Environment Agency.



Recent catchment inspections by the EA have shown an infrastructure failure rate of up to 95% in some catchments in the SW and combined with pressure from Red Tractor will mean some farmers will need to upgrade their slurry storage. Consider this scheme and other means of support from Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Upstream Thinking (UST).

There is free advice under the Upstream Thinking Project offering guidance on slurry storage including full infrastructure audits, calculating on farm slurry storage requirements, help with the Slurry Investment Scheme, CS Capital Grants and signposting to advice funding opportunities.

Contact your Upstream Thinking Catchment Advisor to discuss this scheme.

Value of Manures & Slurries to Farm Input Costs

The economic climate for farming at the moment appears to change on an almost daily basis, with the effects of inflation and increased energy costs impacting all businesses. Farms in the Tamar and Roadford catchments are particularly being impacted by the unprecedented rise in fertiliser prices we are currently seeing.

This is forcing many farms to reevaluate how they manage their crops and land in the coming years, and Westcountry Rivers Trust Upstream Thinking advisors are well placed to assist them with soil test analysis, nutrient management planning, and manure management planning. As an example, at current fertiliser prices the nutrients in just 10 tonnes of cattle farmyard manure can be valued at over £160.

This highlights the importance of using these livestock manures in the right place and at the right times to maximise the efficient use of the nutrient available in the manures for the growing crop. Achieving this this will bring a win-win situation which both reduces farm business input costs and improves water quality in the areas rivers.

We look forward to working with you over the coming years, and please feel free to get in touch.

Upstream Thinking 3 is delivered by Westcountry Rivers Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust in your area. The project will run until 2025.

Its purpose is to improve water quality across the catchment and the team work with farmers in different ways to achieve this.

Tamar & Roadford

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