

Upstream Thinking Newsletter

for the

Tavy Catchment



Upstream Thinking in the Tavy Catchment

We are pleased to announce that the Tavy catchment is now receiving support from the Upstream Thinking Project (UST Tavy).

UST Tavy aims to support farmers to reduce diffuse pollution while maintaining, restoring, creating and connecting semi-natural habitat in the Tavy catchment and additional areas of the Dartmoor National Park.

Please check out the back page for our contact details.

Upstream Thinking in the Tavy Catchment - What's On Offer

UST Tavy offers free and confidential advice to farmers and landowners to identify areas of support both in the farmyard and in the field. Grants are available to improve compliant farmyard infrastructure to reduce any risk of pollution to rivers and watercourses.

Additionally, UST Tavy promotes Nature Based Solutions to alleviate flood risk on farm e.g., increase storage capacity (wetlands/ ponds), run-off management (rough ploughing, deviators, leaky dams), slow the flow, tree planting (including productive tree planting), reduce soil and sediment erosion by improving natural drainage and reducing compaction, and identifying new areas for water storage in high rainfall events and to combat droughts from heatwaves.

UST Tavy also promotes regenerative farming practises such as herbal leys.

Soil Compaction

Winter is often the season where soil compaction is at its most visible. If you notice any of the following in your fields, then your soils may be suffering: surface water run-off, standing water or poached ground.

Soil compaction is caused by livestock and heavy machinery, with damp soils being at greatest risk of damage. Gateways, drinking and feeding stations, and headlands are particularly at risk.

These risks can be reduced by locating feeders away from wet areas and moving them regularly and removing livestock from fields when poaching occurs.

Soil aerators can relieve soil compaction and increase soil health. Benefits to farmers include:

- Reduced soil erosion
- Increased productivity through better plant growth and root development
- Reduced artificial fertiliser bills as plants become more efficient at nutrient uptake
- Reduced flood risk and mud on roads.

A Fleming AR10 slitter aerator is available for loan free of charge throughout the Tavy catchment. Contact Rachel or Dave for further information

Getting the basics right: Soil Samples and Soil Health Pits

Know your land...have a plan...revisit your plan yearly. Good land management equals a productive, sustainable, and long-term investment, but also provides the best and most effective use of **nature-based solutions** for water quality and biodiversity. To encourage you to see the benefits, Westcountry Rivers Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust have the following offers available through the UST Tavy project:

Westcountry Rivers Trust are offering:

- **Free soil samples** for 6 fields, this includes pH, P, K, Mg and Soil Organic Matter.
- **Free soil health pit analysis** limited to 2-3 fields per farm, if you would like to ascertain if you have any compaction issues on the farm.
- **Free bespoke Nutrient Management Plan** prepared by our FACTS qualified advisors to help you prepare for the year ahead.
- **Assistance with Sustainable Farming Incentive applications including soil management plans.**

Please contact rafael@wrt.org.uk or johnhunt@wrt.org.uk if you would like to book in for this, we are carrying out this work between autumn 2022 and spring 2023.

Benefits of Nutrient Management Plans

Westcountry Rivers Trust Upstream Thinking advisors are well placed to assist you 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 £160.00. 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.

NEW Soil offer from Devon Wildlife Trust.

The service will provide **in-depth soil tests** that will meet and **exceed statutory requirements and meet the SFI Standards**. A total of 20 field parcels can be entered by any single farm business, at a cost of £10 per field (this represents a circa £20 per field subsidy).

The soil offer includes:

- Collection of soil sample.
- A soil survey across the selected fields, including a visual inspection of the soil (VESS analysis) and identification of areas of compaction
- A full laboratory analysis including:
 - P, K and pH (meeting the statutory requirements)
 - Ca, Mg, S, B, Cu, Fe, Mn, Mo, Zn, Na
 - Soil Texture Classification
 - Soil Organic Matter / Soil Organic Carbon
 - Cation Exchange Capacity

A bespoke soil management plan, including advice and recommendations on soil management. **If soil compaction is identified, soil aeration equipment can be provided free of charge.**

If you would like to take up the offer, please contact Rachel Kaleta rkaleta@devonwildlifetrust.org or David Thomas dthomas@devonwildlifetrust.org

Pesticide Amnesty

Through the UST Tavy project we provide a free of charge service for collection of non-compliant or out of date pesticides. [Please do get in touch with Rafael rafael@wrt.org.uk](mailto:rafael@wrt.org.uk) or call 07939 827040 to arrange collection.



The process is easy and straightforward!

80 litres of pesticides collected and disposed accordingly to reduce risk of pollution in watercourses.

Updates / things to think about:

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 onsite 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.
- It is essential to get early support from the Environment Agency.



Slurry Infrastructure Grant Cont.

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, this will mean some farmers will need to upgrade their slurry storage.

Consider Slurry Infrastructure Grant and other means of support from Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Upstream Thinking (UST Tavy).

There is free advice under the UST Tavy 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 and assistance with other funding opportunities. Contact your WRT Catchment Advisor to discuss this scheme.

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)

UST Tavy farm 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

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

Increase water availability

Rainwater harvesting could significantly reduce costs in water bills at a rate of £1.92/m³ plus the added benefit of keeping clean and dirty water separated and providing a backup supply of water during periods of drought. This free clean water may be suitable to use for several tasks around the farm such as yard washing, instead of wasting potable water supplies.

As an example, Tavistock has an average annual rainfall of nearly 1200mm per year. Capturing this rainwater could capture up to 600m³/tonnes of water every year bring cost saving potentials of over £1,150 per year.

Discuss options with your farm advisor, we can support you to explore **bespoke water storage solutions.**

Woodland creation

An additional option to plant trees in your farmland while increasing your revenue is the English Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO). This offer can attract up to £8,500/ha for woodland creation in areas that fall within the biodiversity priority habitat network and that aggregate to more than 1ha. Payments of £300 per ha per year, for 10 years are available towards maintenance, as well as additional payments of £500 per ha for areas that mitigate flood risks.

Your farm advisor can visit your farm to discuss options of woodland establishment in priority areas, or sections of the farm with low productivity but high environmental scores. Westcountry Rivers Trust can provide support in the EWCO application though a personalised advice from one of our Woodland Creation Officers.

UST Tavy farm advisors are offering FREE native tree species to those in the catchment. If you are interested in receiving some **free trees for the 2023-2024 planting season**, please contact your advisor. These can be for new areas of woodland, or 'gapping' up hedges.

Plastic Pollution Prevention

Good plastic waste management is easier and potentially cheaper than you think. Keeping waste as clean as possible can also reduce collection costs and increase value or money. But remember to keep your waste secure and remove it from your farm within 12 months.

The following suggestions could save time and money, as well as protect the environment:

- Collect up the waste after it has been used and store it securely.
- Take plastic straight off the bale and into a bag.
- Re use bags made from wove polypropylene e.g. seed, feed or dumpy bags.
- Ensure they are not cut in any way and have pallet loops
- Have dedicated bins or bags near the locations where plastics are used
- Shake it after use and store inside or on a hardstanding
- Hang over door for over 24 hours to let moisture drip off

We are currently gauging interest amongst farmers to organise a **plastic collection day** in the Tamar (including Tavy) area. **We want to hear from you!** Please fill this form, it takes less than 2 min. <https://forms.gle/J5XoXMWWHLfbAYCa6>

Does money grow on trees?

Tree planting is a feasible alternative to capture atmospheric carbon and mitigate some of the effects of climate change. Integrating trees in farms could help to stabilise soils, reduce soil erosion and degradation, and intercept surface runoff increasing infiltration to the deeper layers.

However, planting trees could also diversify your farm business as it provides an additional crop that you can cultivate in the same area. Farming with trees could be seen as a tridimensional crop production system with the trees exploiting the vertical section of the farm and the crop the horizontal section. Having trees in your farm could also create a more resilient business as there is less dependency on one success of single crop at a given time.

Get in touch with your farm advisor would you wish to discuss options to integrate trees in your farm business.

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



Tavy

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