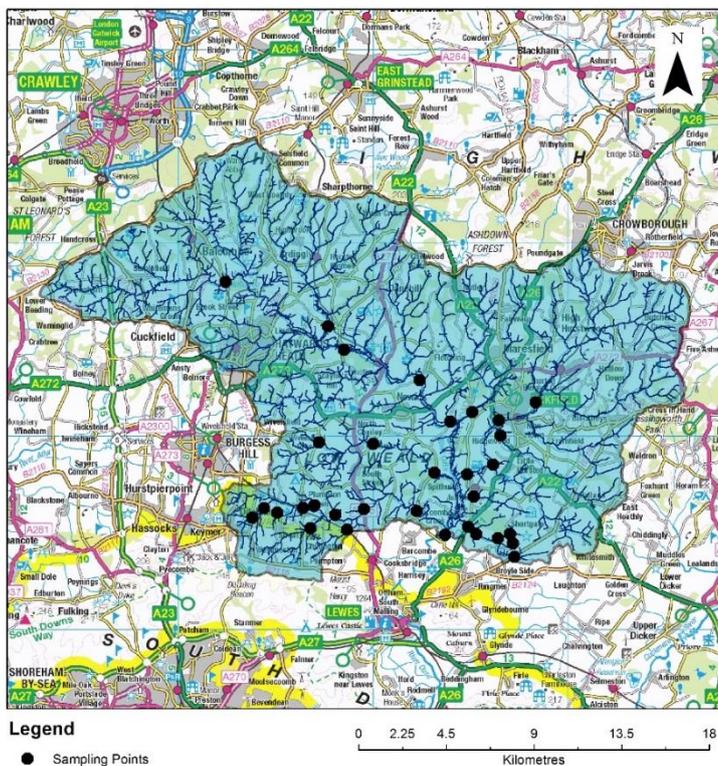


River Ouse

Catchment information



This is a summary document about the River Ouse catchment. Please get in touch if you need any more information.

Overview

The River Ouse is the second largest river in Sussex, draining a catchment of approximately 430 km² to the point where it breaches the chalk escarpment of the South Downs at Lewes. The main river is approximately 62 kilometres long (extended to some 257km including its tributaries), with an estimated tidal length of 21 km.

The river rises from a number of tributaries draining the woodland and heathland associated with the hills of the High Weald in the north and flows across the undulating slopes in the Vale of Sussex. The headwaters are characterised by deeply cut wooded stream channels flowing over sandstones and clay that respond quickly to rainfall events. The middle reaches can be similar in character although some reaches are more characteristic of lower reaches, flowing more slowly over clays and alluvium.

Two of the tributaries, the Bevern Stream and Northend Stream are derived from spring fed chalk parts of the catchment.

Contact us for more information about free training and advice:

Anne Blokhus
 Catchment Adviser
 E: anne.blokhus@southeastwater.co.uk

In partnership with:



Whilst much of the catchment is characterised by semi-natural features such as riffles and glides, there are a number of artificial features that modify the functioning of the river including flow, sediment transport and other geomorphological processes, as well as the movement of some faunal species (notably fish). These include weirs and sluices, bridges, bypass channels, sections of re-sectioning and re-alignment, originating from the 18th century when the river was modified for navigation and other industrial uses.

Flows are also modified as a result of the river's importance as a vital drinking water resource for approximately 65,000 people as well as other uses of water by people and businesses. Parts of the headwaters are intercepted by Ardingly Reservoir that is also supported by limited abstraction from the River Ouse to the reservoir. In addition, flow in the main channel can be augmented by flow released from the reservoir for abstraction and treatment at Barcombe Mills. The urban and suburban areas of the catchment include south Haywards Heath, East Grinstead, Balcombe, Maresfield and Uckfield.

Water quality monitoring

There are 32 catchment sample points across the River Ouse. The abstraction point at Barcombe Water Treatment Works (WTW) includes monitoring for National Environment Programme (NEP) data. Of the 32 catchment points 13 collect NEP and metaldehyde data, two collect NEP only data and the remainder collect metaldehyde only. The majority of sites are located along the Bevern Stream and Iron River as these sub-catchments were deemed higher risk to the WTW.

Support available

Metaldehyde is the active ingredient in slug pellets. High levels of metaldehyde have been seen across the catchment, with the majority of sample sites breaching the drinking water standard (0.1 microgram per litre ($\mu\text{g/l}$)). Metaldehyde levels tend to peak during October, November and December, depending on the rainfall. This coincides with autumn applications of slug pellets on arable crops.

Although we use complex water treatment processes to keep drinking water clean, metaldehyde is particularly difficult to remove. Within the River Ouse catchment, we are currently running a metaldehyde mitigation scheme and Capital Grant Scheme, as well as various sampling and monitoring trials which are designed to support farmers in reducing the amount of metaldehyde and sediment reaching watercourses. This includes:

- *free 1-1 Catchment Adviser visit*
- *events*
- *PA1 training*
- *PA4s Training*
- *slug pelleting calibrations*
- *Maize Management Scheme*
- *specialist advice services*
- *Countryside Stewardship advice and support*
- *Capital Grants Scheme*

If you would like more information about the advice and support we offer please contact our River Ouse Catchment Adviser, Anne Blokhuis.

Designations

The Environment Agency identifies Safeguard Zones for Drinking Water Protection Areas 'at risk' of not meeting Water Framework Directive (WFD) drinking water objectives. Safeguard Zones are non-statutory areas where land use, management practices and other activities may affect the quality of the raw water. Measures to prevent pollution are targeted within these zones.

In August 2015 South East Water and the Environment Agency agreed the Drinking Water Protected Area Safeguard Zone (DWPASZ) designation for the River Ouse.

DWPASZ ID: SWSGZ4008

River Basin District: South East

Management Catchment: Adur and Ouse

The current active of concern is metaldehyde.

If you want to find out if an area is situated in a Safeguard Zone, enter the postcode in either of the following links:

Environment Agency: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/farmers/>

DEFRA: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>