

Natural England advice on the conservation status of Atlantic salmon and sea trout in the Southern IFCA district

Conservation status

The Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) is listed as a species of Community interest under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Within the SIFCA district, this species is a designated feature of the following European sites:

1. River Avon SAC
2. River Itchen SAC

For both of these sites, the Conservation Objectives are as follows:

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Atlantic salmon is a notified feature of the River Avon System SSSI and River Itchen SSSI - both of which underpin the respective SACs. The Atlantic salmon is also referenced within the citations of the River Test SSSI and River Frome SSSI. However, it is not a notified feature in its own right but instead receives consideration as a faunal component of the 'Rivers and Streams' feature. In addition to the above, the Atlantic salmon was identified as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and subsequently listed as a Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

In contrast to salmon, the brown/sea trout (*Salmo trutta*) is not a designated SAC feature, nor a notified feature of any SSSI within the SIFCA district. However, it is referenced within the citations of the following SSSIs (and therefore receives consideration as a faunal component of the 'Rivers and Streams' feature):

1. River Avon System
2. River Itchen
3. River Test
4. River Frome
5. Lymington River

The brown/sea trout was also identified as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and subsequently listed as a Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Additional considerations

Salmon is an Annex II species only in freshwaters throughout the EU, and therefore marine and estuarine sites are excluded from selection. This is noteworthy because the EA's netting review identifies Christchurch Harbour and Poole Harbour as the key sites where salmon may be impacted - neither of which are designated as a SAC. In the case of Christchurch Harbour, there is a clear case

that the site is functionally-linked to the River Avon SAC and as such it should be treated as 'supporting habitat' for the purposes of the Regulations. Natural England's advice, in this instance would be to ensure that migratory routes for salmon are maintained, safeguarding passage from poor water quality, exploitation and development which may pose a barrier to migration. (This does not mean that the entirety of the migratory route need be protected in the same manner as the SAC).

Poole Harbour is slightly different because the destination of migratory salmon (River Frome) is a SSSI not a SAC, therefore in this scenario it may be more appropriate to consider potential impacts in the context of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. However, in relation to migratory passage, Natural England advise the same approach to that of within and outside of European sites.

¹ <http://ncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/species.asp?FeatureIntCode=s1106>