

Taw River Improvement Project – Newsletter Feb 2013

The North Devon Biosphere Reserve is a partner in the **Taw River improvement Project**. The project is funded through the Catchment Restoration Fund to deliver improvements in Ecological Status across the Taw catchment under the Water Framework Directive.

Project Outline

The total project budget is **£1.86 million** and is co-run between the NDBR and the Westcountry Rivers Trust and covers the Taw catchment (Figure 1). It includes a large partnership including paid partners (Farming and Advisory Wildlife Group and Silvanus, Devon Wildlife Trust) and supporting partners (River Taw Fisheries Association, Tarka Country Trust, Natural England, Mole Valley Farmers, Environment Agency, South West Water, North Devon District Council, Communities Living Sustainably and Exeter University).

The **timeline** for the project is **2.5 years**, ending on the **31st of March 2015**. The Project is split into four sub-committees and the following summarises their achievements to date:

Data & Surveying – A research partnership has been formed and contracted between North Wyke, the University of Plymouth and ADAS staff to improve the evidence behind the reasons for failure database. PSYCHIC modelling of sediment and phosphate showed the majority of the pressures were emanating from the upper catchment. Phosphate and Sediment apportioning work is underway on the upper Taw assessing both empirical and model derived data (Figure 2). The research partnership has also set up a diatom monitoring framework that compliments the Environment Agency's programme. Alongside this the group is setting up fisheries and habitat walkover surveys for all the water bodies failing for fish (Figure 3). This work includes the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel survey.

Fisheries – Permissions for all weir access work are in place and design work is underway so that when the weather window permits work can be carried out in the summer/autumn 2013 season. Other in river work scheduled for 2012 were delayed due to high river levels (this included gravel augmentation).

Agriculture – The farming advisors from both Westcountry Rivers Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group are working in the upper catchments, currently failing for Phosphate, to exclude livestock from rivers through fencing. Whilst many contracts are in place and more being written works have been delayed due to wet ground conditions. These contracts have a completion deadline of December 2013 and will be delivered as soon as the ground conditions permit machinery movement.

Biodiversity – The biodiversity advisors are mapping habitat, through the work of Silvanus, and prioritising woodland management and planting that can reduce phosphate whilst co-delivering flooding problems on the catchment. Alongside this Devon Wildlife Trust are working with Westcountry Rivers Trust to identify wetlands and wet woodlands in the upper catchment that could be invested in to reduce phosphate and sediment run off, thus reducing the pressures on fish populations and phosphate loading.





Westcountry Rivers Trust
Taw Catchment CRF Waterbodies



Fig 1 – Taw Catchment with the underlying TRIP water bodies. The Upper Taw (red) is being assessed by Hazel Kendall at WRT, the Dalch, Lapford Yeo and Ash Brook cluster (green) are being assessed by Richard Haliwell at FWAG SW, the Little Dart, Sturcombe River and Huntacott Water (blue) will be assessed by DWT along with representatives from WRT in the short term. The rest of the TRIP water bodies are being reviewed by Silvanus Trust in terms of woodland management and planting and NDBR in terms of Freshwater Pearl Mussel surveys.

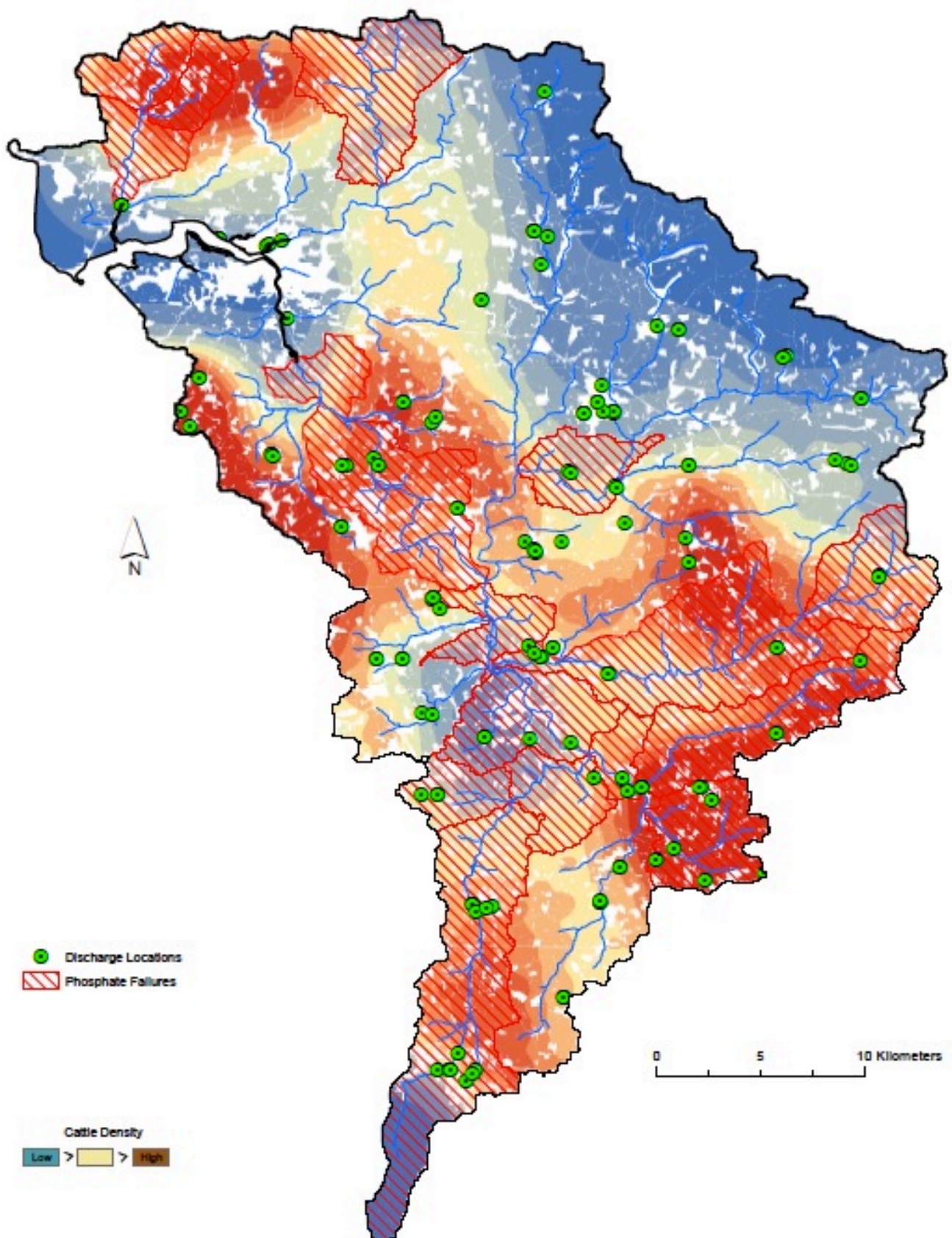


Fig. 2 – Phosphate failures on the Taw against cattle density and Sewerage Treatment Works

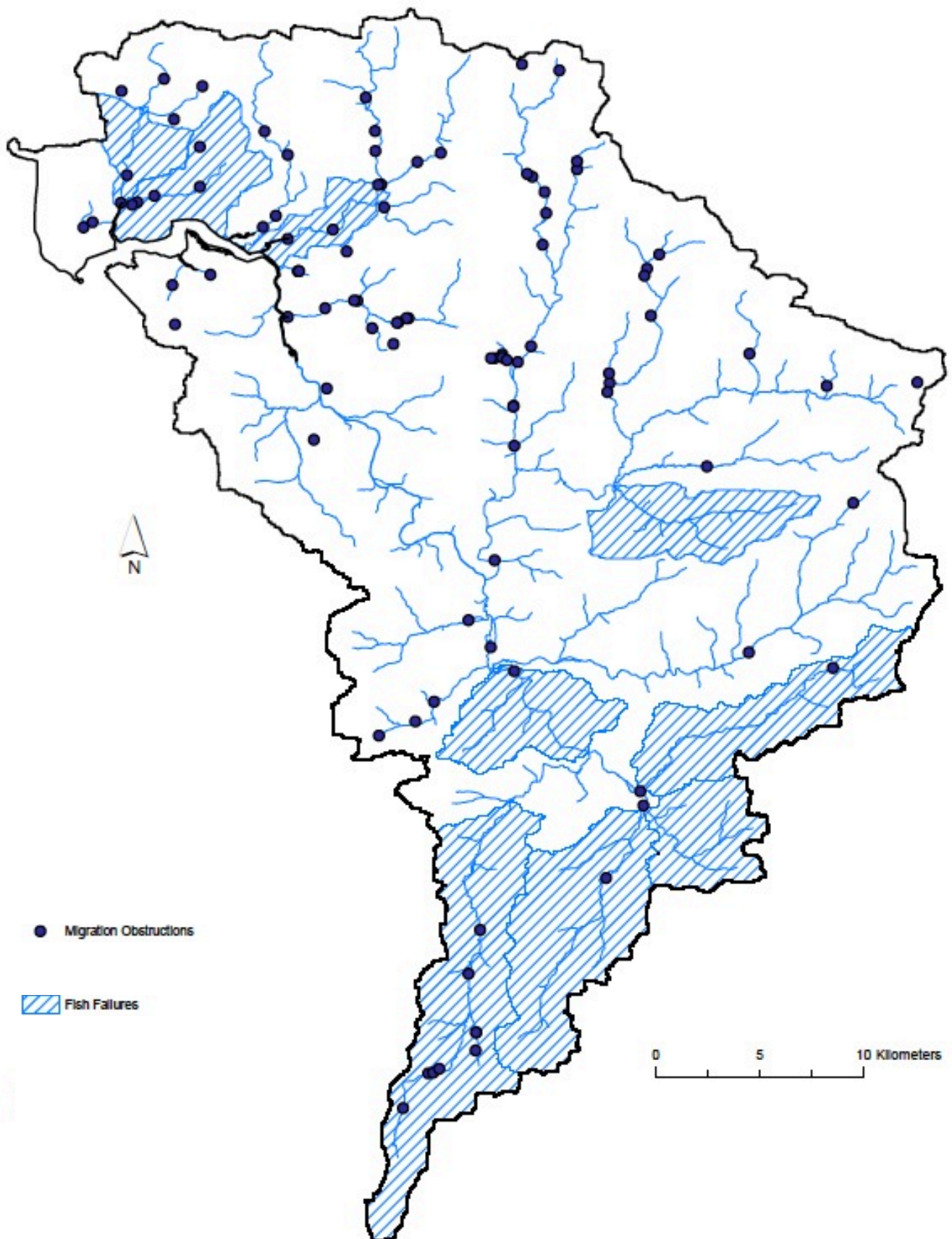


Fig. 3 – Fish failures on the Taw as well as migration obstructions