

RIVER ITCHEN

WEED CUTTING DATES 2026

SECTOR A: ABOVE DURNGATE SLUICE (WINCHESTER)

<i>Sector A Cutting Dates</i>	<i>Sector A Clearing Off Dates</i>
Sat 2nd May – Wed 6th May	Thu 7 th May
Fri 5 th June – Fri 12 th June	Sat 13 th June – Sun 14 th June
Fri 3rd July – Thu 9th July	Fri 10 th July – Sat 11 th July
Fri 14 August – Thu 20 th August	Fri 21 st August – Sat 22 nd August

SECTOR B: BELOW DURNGATE SLUICE (WINCHESTER)

<i>Sector B Cutting Dates</i>	<i>Sector B Clearing Off Dates</i>
Sun 3 rd May – Thu 7 th May	Fri 8 th May
Sat 6 th June - Sat 13 th June	Sun 14 th June – Mon 15 th June
Sun 5 th July – Sat 11 th July	Sun 12 th July – Mon 13 th July
Sat 15 th August – Fri 21 st August	Sat 22 nd August – Sun 23 rd Aug

WINTER OPEN PERIOD

Weed may be cut any time after 2nd October 2025 until 15th April 2026. Owners are asked to ensure that cutting is completed before trout spawning begins and that cut bank side vegetation is not allowed to fall in the river.

Please read the important notes overleaf

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Cutting should start at the beginning of the dates allowed. You must inform your downstream neighbour when you have finished clearing off and of any subsequent problems. Regular communication with your neighbours upstream and downstream is essential to ensure trouble-free weed cutting and clearing down. Weed cutting boats should finish one day before the end of each cutting period
2. The Environment Agency has granted consent for the general cutting of weed on the River Itchen. In the event of low river flows (and high water temperatures) the Environment Agency may request that weed cuts are postponed or reduced in extent in order to maintain water levels and quality. Cutting of weed outside of the authorised dates, without the Agency's consent, constitutes an offence under Section 90 of the Water Resources Act 1991
3. Grass cuttings and bank trimmings must **NEVER** be put into the river. Depositing any form of solid waste in the river, including bankside vegetation, is strictly prohibited under Sections 85 and 90 of the Water Resources Act 1991
4. Riparian owners are asked to carry out bank maintenance and other works likely to cause displacement of silt before Christmas, to avoid damage to spawning. The advice of the Agency should be sought before the commencement of any work and the necessary land drainage consents obtained.
5. Weed cutting should be undertaken in a manner which is sensitive to the needs of the river habitat. Overzealous or indiscriminate cutting of river weed or marginal vegetation can negatively impact habitat for healthy fly life, fish and other wildlife.
6. Above all else, be considerate and use your common sense. Do not send downstream what you would not want to receive from upstream.

CONTACT POINTS IN CASE OF DIFFICULTIES

Please report any weed cut problems in the first instance to the Test & Itchen Association (Paul Vignaux) on 07340 865 502 or by email to: director@testanditchen.co.uk. Anything you can do to investigate the cause of the problem will help the Association respond effectively.

Test & Itchen Association
Kimbridge Lane
Kimbridge
Romsey
Hampshire SO51 0LE
Paul Vignaux: 07340 865 502

Environment Manager Solent
Environment Agency Romsey Depot
Canal Walk
Romsey
Hampshire SO51 7LP
Tel. 03708 506 506

**Environment Agency
Emergency Hot Line
0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)**
(Mobile Phone Users must
prefix 0800 number with a *)

FURTHER GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE 2026

1. **Weed cutting.**

A few words of background may assist in appreciating the context and the role that weed plays in our streams.

Preserving and enhancing the growth of *Ranunculus* (water crowfoot) and other submerged vegetation provides an essential refuge for invertebrates and fish, including juvenile salmonids, known as parr. On chalk streams, *Ranunculus* is primary habitat for salmon parr and for other small fish, and studies have shown the more of it there is, the greater number of parr it supports. Whilst excessive buildup of any weed can cause an accumulation of silt, *Ranunculus* does help to retain organic material, which can provide mayfly and other larvae with habitat whilst assisting keeping gravel runs between beds of submerged weed clean and healthy.

Ranunculus acts to increase water depths during summer months by up to 80 cm, helping to keep the river cool in hot periods. Cutting should be put on hold, if possible, or certainly applied with discretion particularly during times of drought or low flows.

Weed cutting should always be restricted to what is deemed necessary, be selective and where possible carried out by hand. Mechanical cutting has the potential to remove significant amounts of weed and damage riverine habitat. The use of devices, such as weed cutting boats, should be avoided unless absolutely essential.

The timing, amount, and pattern of weed cutting are vital factors affecting weed growth and in managing any potential adverse effects on the riverine environment. Further information can be found at [Management of Riparian and Instream Vegetation](#).

2. **Catch and release of fish caught.**

A full Angler's Guide to Catch and Release can be found at [Catch and Release for Salmon, but much applies to the return of all game fish](#). Fish should always be returned quickly and carefully, and preferably not taken out of the water for photos or unhooking. Any handling of fish should be avoided.

Beaching of fish can cause injury and dislodge scales and should be stopped. Please use knotless meshed nets with care.

Although primarily directed to the salmon angler, the following top 3 "rules" have a wide application.

- Keep fish in the water.
- Avoid fishing in high water temperatures.
- Play fish hard and keep the fight short.

3. **Methods of catching fish.**

Only fly should be used to target salmon and sea trout, preferably using a single barbless or debarbed hook with a hook gape of no more than 13 mm (1/2 an inch).

Spinning or bait fishing should be avoided due to the increased chances of deep hooking and fatal injury. Studies have shown both methods result in a higher post catch and release mortality.

4. **Enhancement of riverine habitat and Salmon Sanctuaries**

Owners are encouraged to adopt policies designed to improve water velocity, manage bankside vegetation to provide cover/shelter and create areas with minimal human disturbance wherever possible. Simple and easy measures might include interventions to help keep spawning gravels clean or designating areas as salmon sanctuary areas where no fishing or recreational activity takes place. The Environment Agency is looking to work with riparian owners to create a network of salmon sanctuaries areas where disturbance is limited, and refuge areas are improved. The information note on salmon sanctuaries can be found [Here](#). Advice on habitat restoration is available, as is part-funding for projects requiring consent. For more information, please email SSDEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

5. **Hatch control**

Smolts. Studies have shown that in-river mortality of sea-going juvenile salmonids, known as smolts, is significant and greater above man-made barriers such as weirs. Smolts hesitate or rest before going over a weir which means they are often held up, making them vulnerable to predation.

In absence of removing a structure, hatch operation can be optimised to aid smolt egress by applying a number of simple principles during the smolt migration period, which runs from mid-March to the end of May:

- Smolts will typically take the last possible exit with the most dominant flow, so flow should be focused via one route which is located the furthest downstream.

- Where there is sufficient water available, uninterrupted flow should be maintained through the most downstream hatch (i.e. open as far as possible).
- Spreading flow across the structure should be avoided i.e. by opening lots of hatches a small amount, particularly at low flows.
- To avoid the likelihood of harm, the preference is for smolts to go under a hatch rather than over it. Where a hatch or set of hatches are bottom-opening they should be operated as such.
- To avoid the likelihood of harm, if smolts must go over a structure rather than under it, there should be a sufficient depth of water downstream (at least 0.9 m wherever possible).
- Smolts will hesitate if there is a shallow depth of water going over a sill or fixed weir. If possible, upstream water levels should be managed to allow for a greater depth (a minimum of 0.2 m wherever possible).

Upstream Adult Migration Upstream adult salmonid migration can occur all year round, but timing largely depends on distance from the tidal limit. In the lower river, adults are likely to be present all year round. There are peaks in migration at certain times of year and in the lower river, this is namely June to July and October through to December. The further up the river you go the later in the year you are likely to see adult salmonids. Significant migration can occur from May through to January, so fish passage should be optimised during this period by applying the following principles, some of which mirror those for downstream smolt migration.

- Flow should be concentrated to attract fish at one point and along one channel (where the channel divides).
- Uninterrupted flow should be maintained through at least one hatch. Spreading flow across the structure should be avoided.
- There should be no obstruction at the point of flow. If flows allow, the bottom of the hatch should be clear of the water surface so there is a visible air space and kept clear of debris. The hatch should be 0.5 metres clear of the water surface wherever possible. If flow does not allow a hatch to be fully opened, a minimum gap of 0.3m should be maintained. This is the body depth a multi sea winter salmon can reach. If the gap is any smaller, there is a risk of damage to the fish.
- The head difference (the difference between upstream and downstream water surface level i.e. above and below the sluice) at the weir structures should be kept as low as possible. A head difference exceeding 0.6m may cause an obstruction

6. **EA hotline**

Report any incidents of poaching, illegal fishing or suspected pollution to the Environment Agency 24/7 hotline on 0800 807060. It would be good to put this number in your mobile phone now!

Jonathan Durrant
T&I Chairman