



Know Your River – River Aeron Salmon and Sea Trout Catchment Summary

Introduction

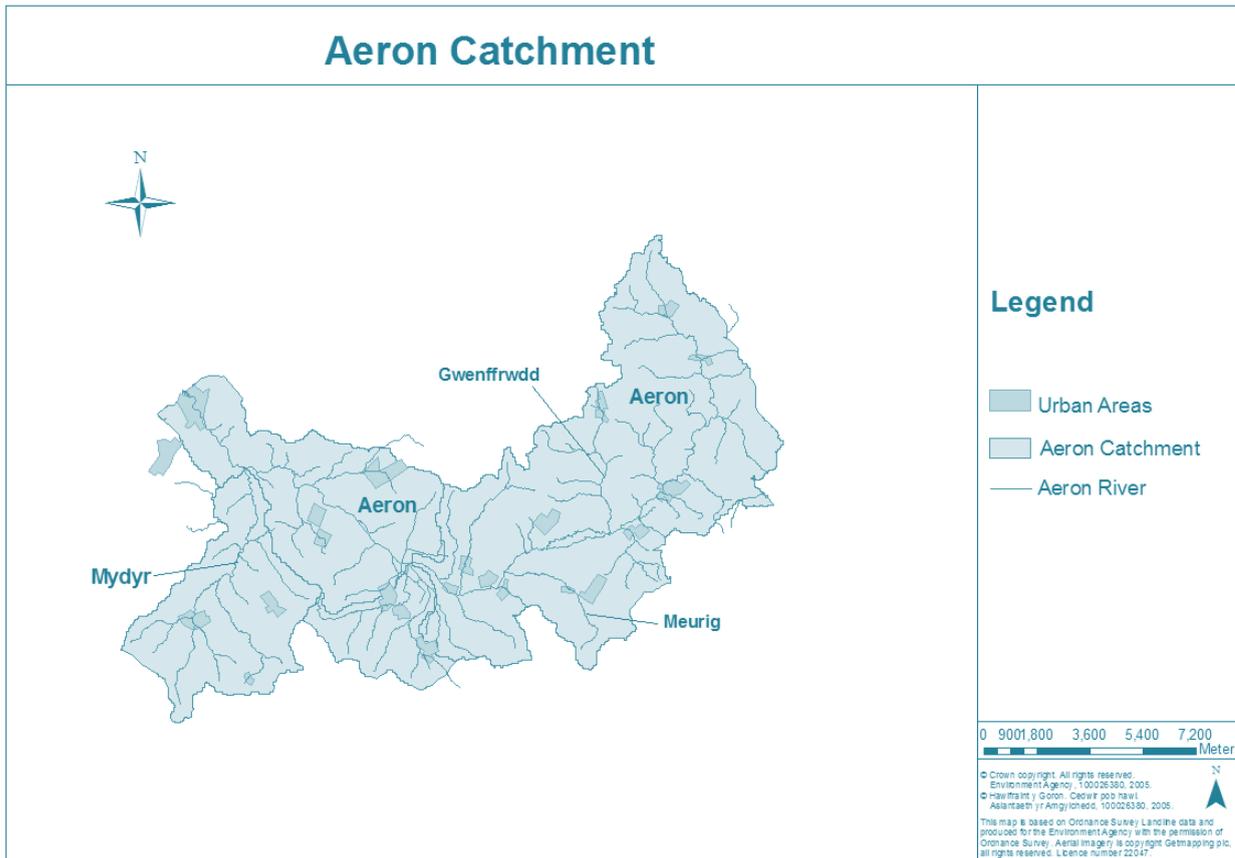
This report describes the status of the salmon and sea trout populations in the Aeron catchments. Bringing together data from rod catches, stock assessments and juvenile monitoring, it will describe the factors limiting the populations and set out the challenges faced in the catchment.

Action tables set out habitat improvements to restore freshwater productivity of salmon and sea trout populations. These tables also include some work which will be carried out by our partner organisations, not just Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

NRW has a duty, defined in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to have Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) at the core of everything that we do. By applying the principles of SMNR in all of our activities - from agriculture, forestry and flood defence to development planning - we are undertaking catchment-wide initiatives that will deliver for fish stock improvements. Our reports highlight the importance of considering the whole catchment when identifying and addressing fisheries issues; and of working with partners.

NRW is committed to reporting on the status of salmon stocks in all of our principal salmon rivers for the Salmon Action Plans and condition assessments under the Habitats Directive in SAC rivers; all fish species in all of our rivers are reported for the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This report will fulfil these commitments and provide an informative and useful summary of stock status and remedial work planned, for our customers, specifically anglers, fishery and land owners; as well as our partners.

River Aeron



The River

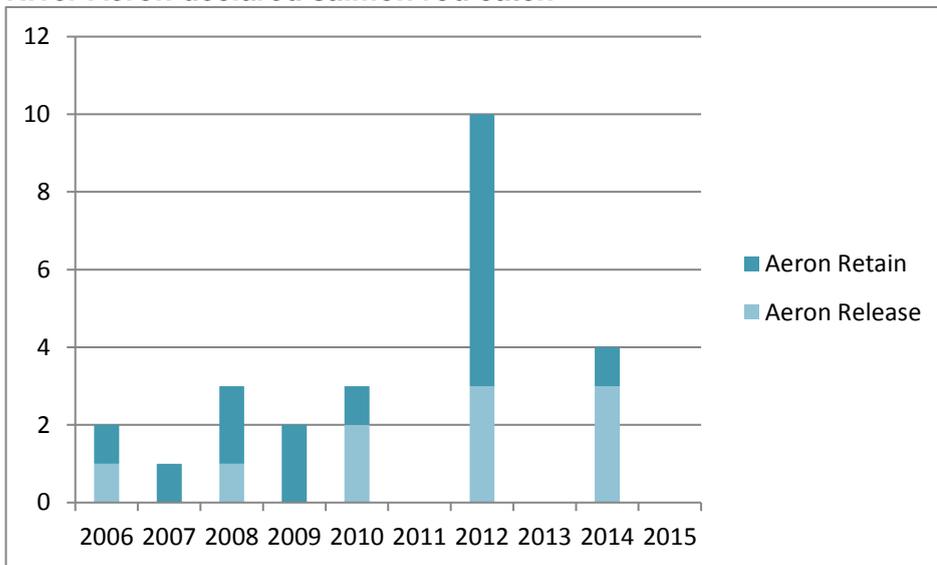
The River Aeron rises from its source in Llyn Eiddwen in the Mynydd Bach hills and then flows in a westerly direction to Cardigan Bay. The catchment area is predominantly rural in nature, with the main centres of population concentrated around Felinfach and Aberaeron. The Aeron supports a locally important sea trout (sewin) fishery. Sea trout are the principal salmonid, with a limited number of salmon also present.

Rod Catches

The following graphs show the total declared rod catches, including numbers released or killed for salmon and salmon and sea trout on the Aeron.

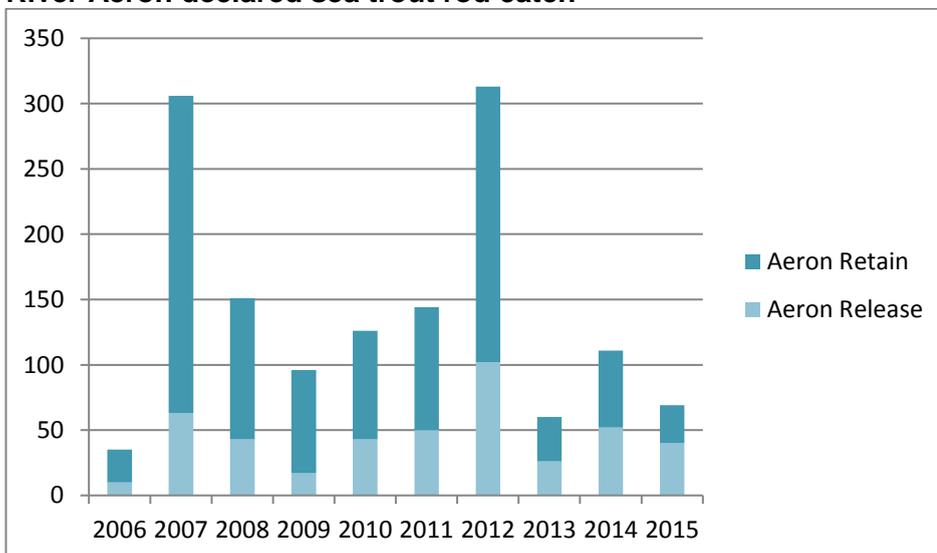
Declared salmon rod catches are variable over the 10 year period, with no salmon reported in 2011, 2013 and 2015. The highest catches were recorded in 2014 and 2012. The average proportion of salmon catch returned alive for the period shown is 32%. There were no salmon reported in 2015.

River Aeron declared salmon rod catch



Declared rod catch for sea trout are also variable over the 10 year period, but reported sea trout catches exceed those of salmon in all years. The lowest recorded catches are in 2006 and 2013. The average proportion of sea trout catch returned alive for the period shown is 33%. The release rate in 2015 was 58% which is below the average figure for Wales of 72%. This needs to improve to conserve fish stocks.

River Aeron declared sea trout rod catch



Stock Status

Conservation of Salmon

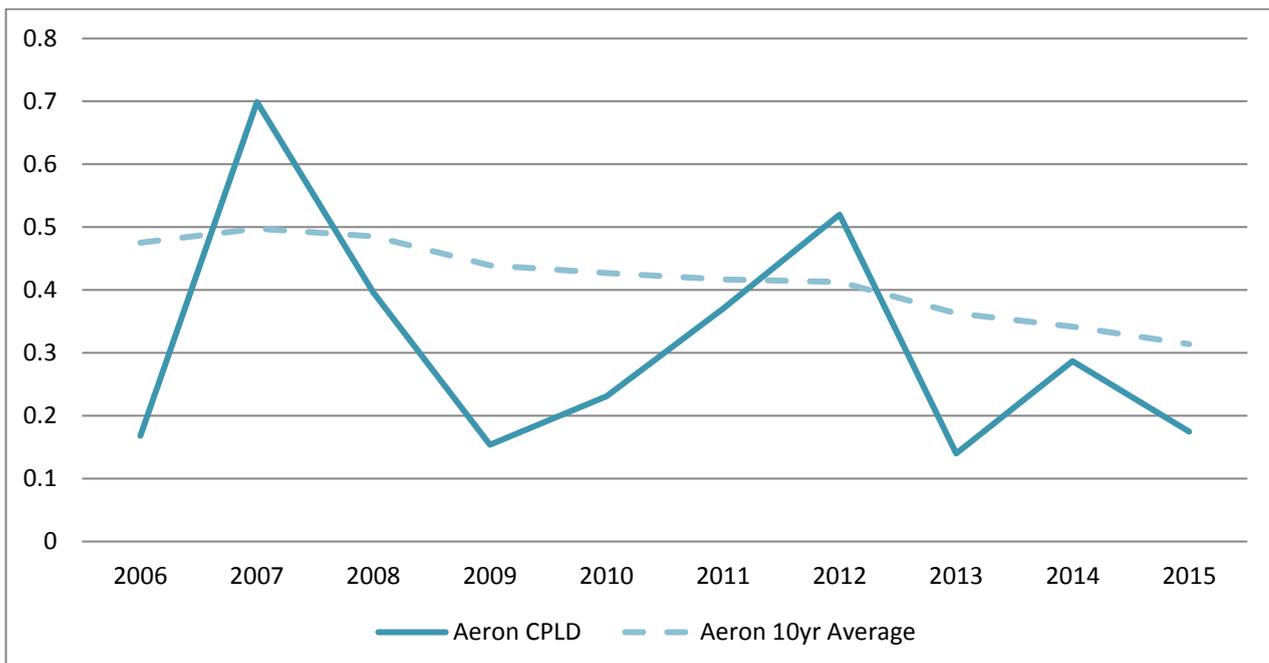
Salmon stock status is assessed through the use of 'Conservation Limits' which provide an objective reference point against which to assess the status of salmon stocks in individual rivers. The numbers of salmon a river can produce (and consequently the catches that the stocks support) are a function of the quality and quantity of accessible spawning and rearing area. This is why, in general, big rivers have larger catches and have correspondingly bigger total spawning requirements than small rivers. Thus, for any given rivers there should be an optimum level of stock which the CL seeks to protect. The conservation limit represents the number of eggs that must be deposited each year within a given catchment in order to conserve salmon stocks in the future.

In the case of the Aeron, the low reported rod catches of salmon mean that it is not possible to obtain an accurate estimation of egg deposition for the river, due to the potential errors involved. Assessment of compliance against the conservation limit has therefore not been attempted.

Conservation of Sea Trout

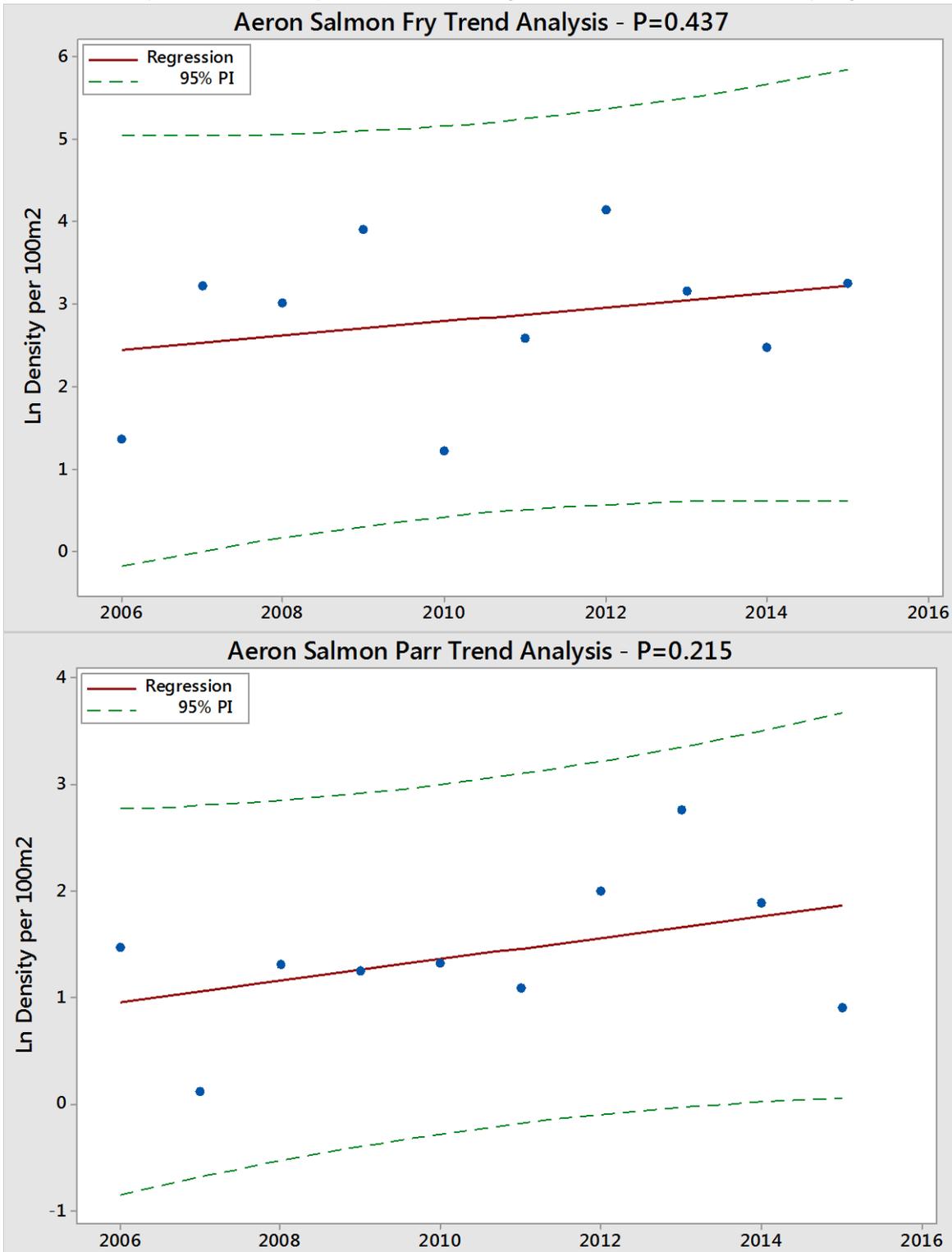
Our approach to assessing sea trout stock performance is still under development. It is based on catch trends in the last three years compared with those in the previous ten. The assessment gives an early warning about potential problems and assists with considering whether any further management actions are required. It provides an indication of changes in fishery performance, though this is not always a reflection of stock performance.

Catch Per License Day (CPLD) is the average number of fish caught for each day fished on the river and as such accounts for the variability in the amount of fishing effort between years. These statistics can be a better guide than simply looking at the total catch. The CPLD figures for the Aeron for the period 2006 to 2015 are shown below. Catch per Licence Day on the Aeron shows a downward trend, and the Aeron sea trout fishery is currently classified as **'at Risk'**.

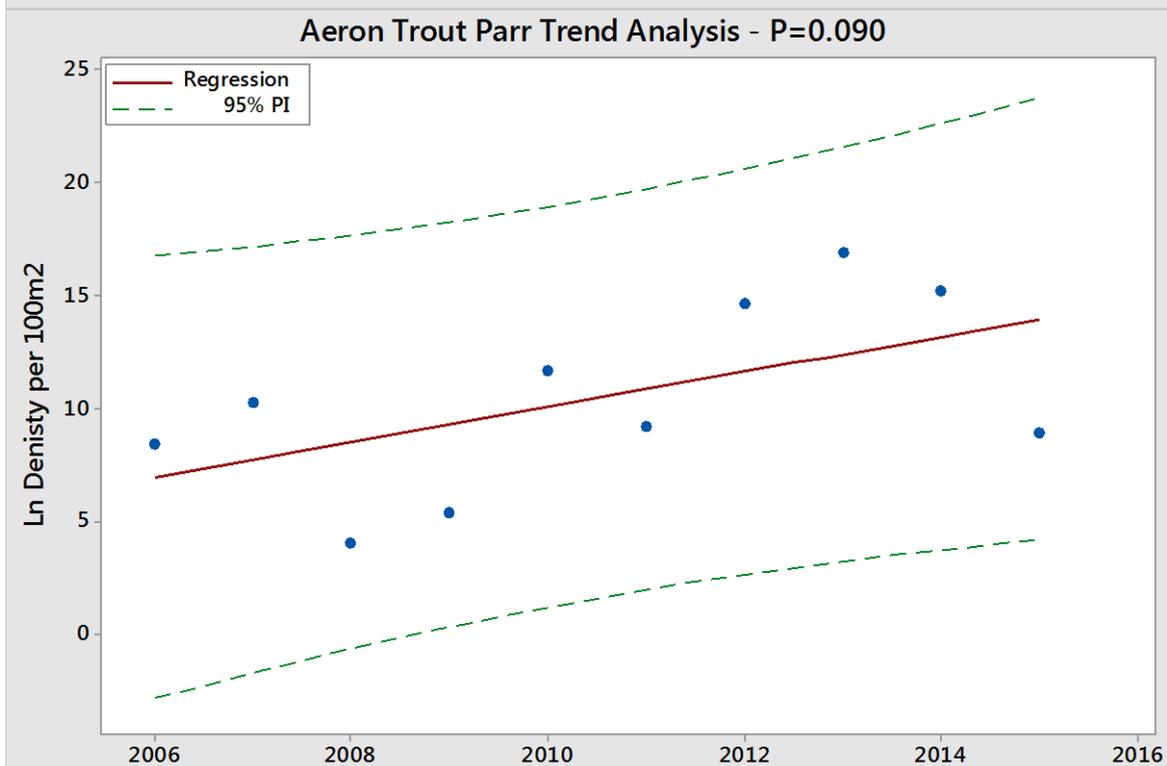
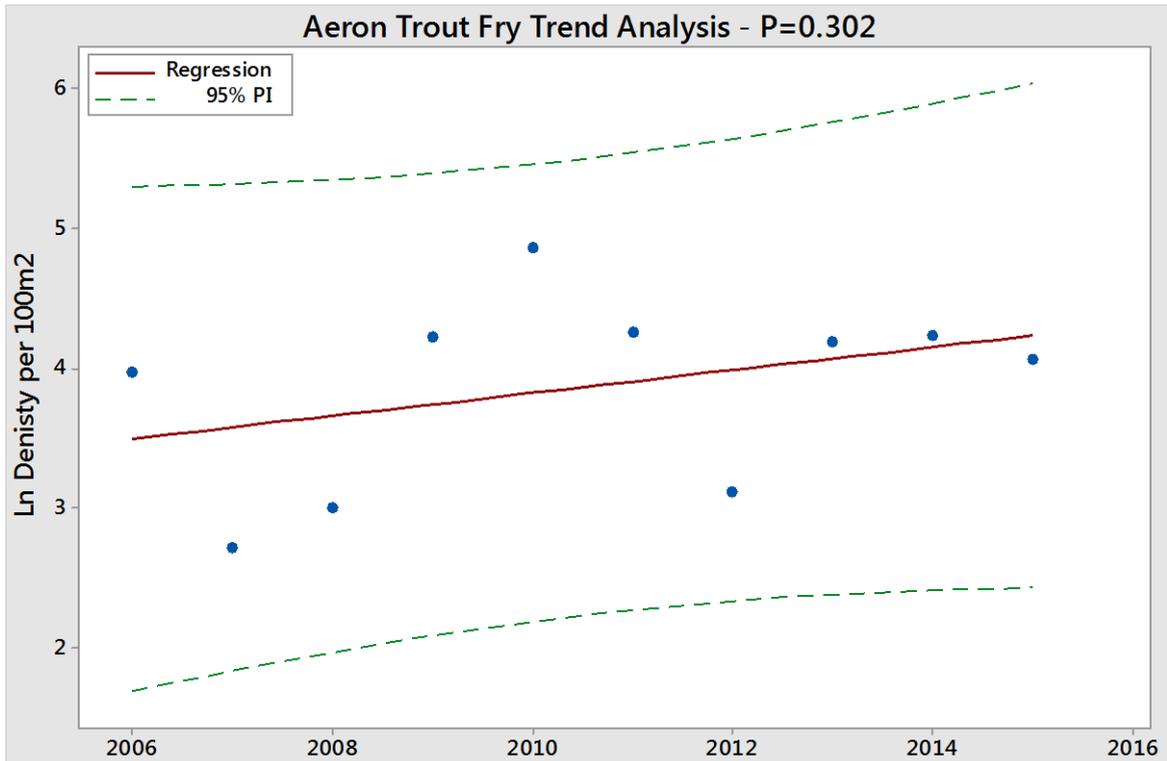


Juvenile Trend Analysis

Juvenile salmon numbers recorded at 2 annual monitoring sites in the River Aeron have shown an upward trend over the last 10 years for both fry and parr, although neither trend is statistically significant.



The numbers of juvenile trout recorded at 2 annual monitoring sites on the Aeron are more variable but show an upward trend for both fry and parr. However neither of these trends are statistically significant.



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Fisheries Mitigation Plan

Site	Mitigation action	Benefits	Lead	Partner(s)	Timescales for delivery
Aeron	Habitat improvements: We will investigate where there is opportunity to improve habitat for fish through improving access over barriers, restoration of riparian and instream habitat, including control of invasive species	More natural river system, reduced siltation, increased flow diversity, improved spawning gravels and juvenile habitat. Improved fish numbers.	NRW		Ongoing
	Water Framework Directive: We will continue to work to ensure no deterioration, monitor the status of the environment and investigate the causes of failures. Together with our partners we will look to put in place measures that protect and improve the status of the water environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterbodies protected and improved WFD waterbodies achieving Good Status/Potential 	NRW	NRW Wildlife trusts Local Authorities Landowners DCWW	Ongoing
	Enforcement: Action to reduce illegal activity on information provided and investigations.	Reduce illegal activity, more fish remain in the system.	NRW	Stakeholders SW Wales Police	Ongoing