



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



drought

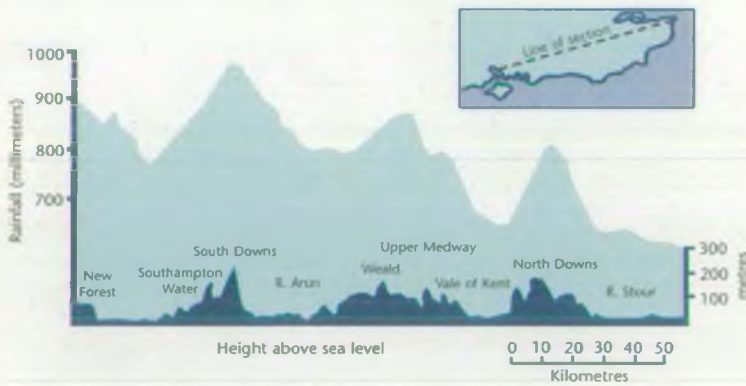
-the dry facts

Since 1990 Southern England has suffered some of the severest droughts this century. Parts of East Sussex and Kent have experienced one of the driest periods since records began. Across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent and Sussex the last two years from April 1995 to 1997 have been the driest for 200 years!

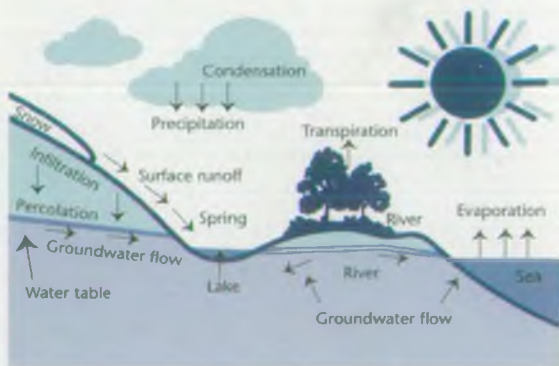


rain

-how it falls and why we need it



Decrease in rainfall from West to East across Southern Region



The water cycle

Westerly winds from the Atlantic bring most of the region's rainfall. Generally speaking the further to the east you travel across Southern England, the less the annual rainfall.

Water is vital to all of us and the environment, however it is something we tend to take for granted. Rainfall boosts groundwater levels in winter and supplies the rivers which feed the reservoirs. But only five of the last 24 months until March 1997 have had average rainfall.

In the Southern Region 75 per cent of water used for public supplies comes from natural underground reservoirs called aquifers. Many of these aquifers are now the lowest on record.

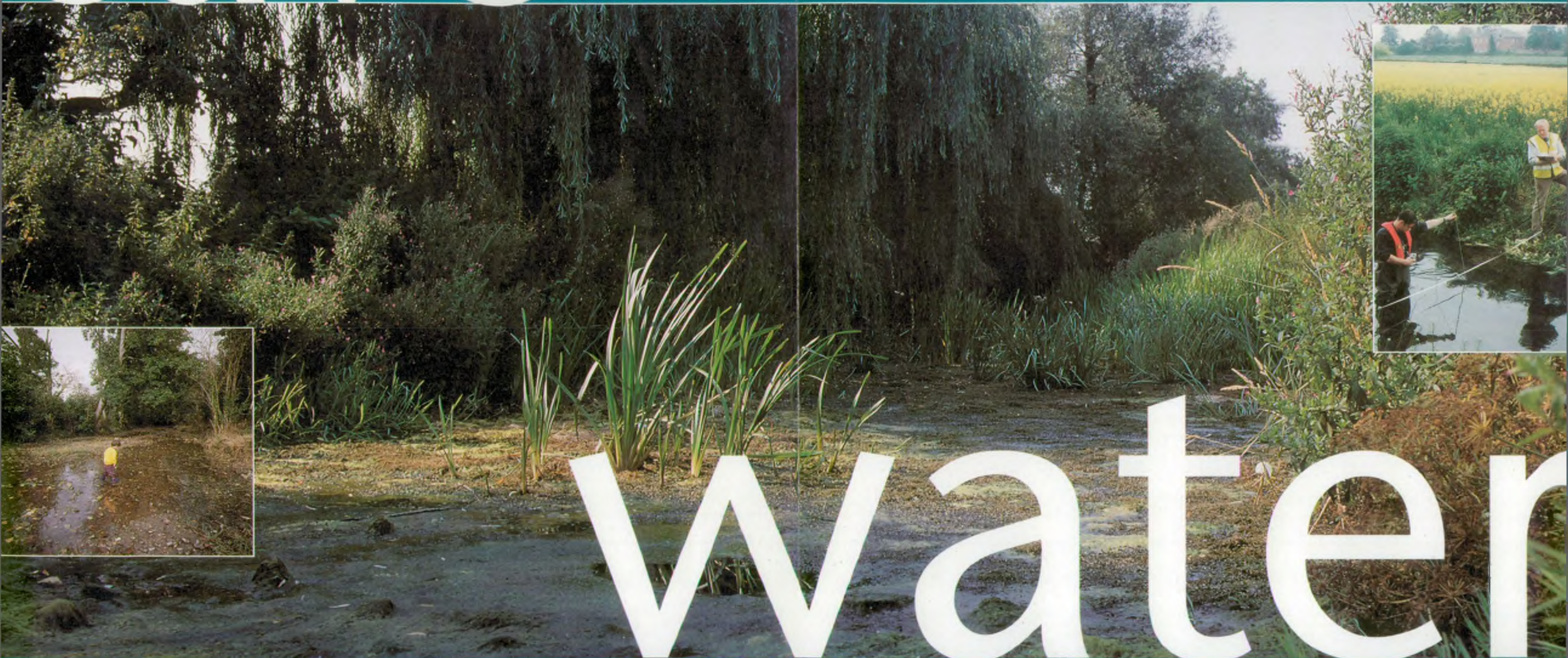
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save



Water must not be taken for granted. It is a finite resource, and must be used wisely and efficiently. The Environment Agency aims to ensure a proper use of water and strike a balance between conserving water for the environment and making water available for use.

Everyone can play their part in helping to minimise the effects of the drought. The Environment Agency seeks the support of all water users, whether in the home, in the garden, on farms or in industry to save water and to help our rivers and the aquatic environment to survive.



water

save a river



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how the drought is harming the environment



Fish and wildlife need water in our rivers, streams, lakes and ponds to survive. When levels drop fish can become trapped in small stretches of water where oxygen levels are low and can make them distressed and die. Fish spawning is also affected leading to lower numbers in future years.

Water quality drops as there is less to dilute sewage and other effluent discharged into the rivers. This affects many animals such as otters, barn owls, voles and crayfish which need clean water to survive.

what the agency is doing

- Pressurising the water companies to meet leakage targets, launch public awareness campaigns, install water meters in selected areas, impose supply restrictions where necessary
- Holding regular meetings with the water companies to ensure they are following the best environmental options
- Using Drought Permits during the winter months to ensure there is minimum damage to the water environment
- Enforcing licence restrictions on abstractors where river and groundwater levels are below normal
- Policing and tightening the controls on sewage works and other dischargers to prevent river quality falling and affecting wildlife
- Spearheading innovative schemes to bring new life to low flow rivers
- Rescuing fish where water falls below an acceptable level
- Issuing weekly "Droughtwatch" reports on the state of the region's resources
- Promoting and educating industry in the recycling and efficient use of water



what you can do

For general enquiries please call your local Environment Agency office. If you are unsure who to contact, or which is your local office, please call our general enquiry line.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
GENERAL ENQUIRY LINE**

0645 333 111

The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
EMERGENCY HOTLINE**

0800 80 70 60

The Environment Agency
Public Relations Department
Guildbourne House
Chatsworth Road Worthing
West Sussex BN11 1LD
Tel: 01903 832041 Fax: 01903 214298

- Fix dripping taps - these can waste up to **30 litres** of water a day (enough to operate a shower for 3-4 minutes)
- Only water the garden if absolutely necessary - most gardening experts agree that too much watering can be bad for both lawns and plants. A sprinkler left on for just **one hour uses as much water as a family of four uses in a day**
- When brushing your teeth, don't let the tap run continuously
- Use a bucket rather than a hosepipe to wash the car. On average, washing your car with a hosepipe uses the equivalent to **33 buckets** of water!
- Only use washing machines and dishwashers when they are full. Use the half-load button for smaller washes
- Buy **drought-tolerant** plants - garden centres will be able to advise on which plants need less water. Add a water butt to collect rainwater which can be used on the garden
- A shower can use **less than half the water** needed for a bath. Water efficient models use even less. Power showers, however, can use **more** water than a bath if they run for more than 5 minutes
- Low flush toilets - new models use **as little as 6 litres** per flush compared to older models which can use up to 13 litres per flush



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