Lune Rivers Trust

callofnature.info

Geographical location:
South Lancaster near the Cocker

The challenge:
The Cocker tributary absolutely stank and the owners of the farm/holiday cottages contacted us at The Lune Rivers Trust to help find the cause. The farmer had carried out extensive repairs to the farmyard infrastructure but with no improvement.

The solution:
LRT visited and identified two potential sources of the problem:

1. Septic tank overloaded/insufficient for holiday cottages.
2. Misconnections for a large holiday complex nearby.

The local CSF officer was asked to use dyes to identify which properties/tanks were the issue. As a result, the septic tank for the holiday cottages has been cleaned and extended and the holiday resort is carrying out extensive investigations to their system. The stench in the beck is now significantly reduced.

Lessons learnt:
By working together with our Catchment Partners a solution to suit all can usually be found. Looking after the septic tanks and misconnections proved to be a cost effective approach as the alternative would be massive loss in earnings from tourism.

Contact point or location of extra information:
www.luneriverstrust.org.uk
www.callofnature.info
www.untitedutilties.com

Case Study Ribble

callofnature.info

Geographical location:
Lower Ribble

The challenge:
Poorly functioning private sewage treatment systems were causing regular pollution incidents on the River Ribble, originating from a community of houses and businesses close to a main road. Since these properties were reasonably close together, it was thought that first time rural sewerage might be a good solution to the problem.

The solution:
Working through the catchment partnership, the residents were engaged by the Environment Agency and the Rivers Trust and an application was made for rural mains sewerage connection. Unfortunately, it was not thought to be cost-beneficial. However, through this process, the residents learnt about how their sewage systems worked and how to maintain them. Householders had their septic tanks emptied and a new soak-away system was installed. Business premises also had a new package sewage treatment plant installed, which could cope with the volume being produced. Since then, there haven't been any new pollution incidents in that area.

Lessons learnt:
Maintaining your existing system should always be the first priority. However, connection to mains sewage treatment might be a good option if you and your neighbours are currently all on private sewage treatment. Your local catchment partnership may be able to help with the application process. There may also be other ways in which a community may improve their off-mains sewerage management, e.g. combined service contracts or shared package treatment plants.

Contact point or location of extra information:
www.callofnature.info
www.untitedutilties.com

South Cumbria Rivers Trust

callofnature.info

Geographical location:
South Cumbria

The challenge:
An outdated and underperforming septic tank was being run at overcapacity resulting in the pollution of a nearby beck. The septic tank discharge was milky white with solids and was encouraging the growth of sewage fungus for approx. 10m of the watercourse. An unpleasant odour was associated with the discharge. A neighboring property was experiencing similar but less serious problems. Both properties were polluting a sensitive beck and lake.

The solution:
Advice and assistance was given to the property owners to work in partnership to establish a permanent connection to the nearby main sewerage system. By combining funds, the property owners were able to have separate sewer pipes installed in the same trench, thus reducing the costs of installation and maintaining individual responsibility for each sewer. The works came in cheaper than replacing both the septic tank systems and will provide worry free sewerage for both parties.

Lessons learnt:
Partnership mains sewerage projects can save costs for property owners and eliminate the ongoing maintenance and liability of private treatment systems. This can reduce costs and prevent future pollution of the local watercourses.

Contact point or location of extra information:
South Cumbria Rivers Trust
The Clock Tower Business Centre
Low Wood, Ulverston
Cumbria, LA12 8LY

Tel: 01539 530047

Case Study Wyre

callofnature.info

Geographical location:
Wyre Catchment

The challenge:
During regular walkover surveys, which are undertaken with the support of our partners, we often identify issues relating to faulty private sewage treatment works that are leaking or discharging into surface waters or surface water drains. These issues are easily identifiable through the growth of species such as sewage fungus (Sphaerotilus spp) in affected watercourses. The impacts of faecal contamination on watercourses can be catastrophic and in some cases can kill fish.

The solution:
The issues were reported to the Environment Agency Incident Hotline, which led to site visits by an Environment Officer who assessed the issue and contacted the owner of the faulty treatment works. The Environment Officer recommended a series of remedial actions, which helped to resolve the issue and reduce the impact of pollution on watercourses and the organisms that live within them. This is particularly important with respect to bathing waters, which are now subject to more stringent assessment. Improvements to water quality through a reduction in faecal contamination in the watercourses of the Wyre Catchment will contribute to an improvement in the standard of the bathing waters at the Fylde Coast.

Lessons learnt:
It is often the case that the owner of a faulty treatment works is unaware of the issue and the impact that it has on the environment. Education on the impacts is very important as it can help to avoid any future problems with septic tanks. In most cases it's simply about having the correct septic tank maintenance regime in place. Owner awareness of septic tanks in rural areas is crucial to reduce the impact of faulty systems on the environment – it is especially important where septic tank infrastructure may be ageing and in need of maintenance. Helpful information on this subject can be found using websites and materials provided by initiatives such as Call of Nature.

Contact point or location of extra information:
www.callofnature.info
www.untitedutilties.com
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

West Cumbria Rivers Trust

callofnature.info

Geographical location:
Cumbria

The challenge:
A focus group highlighted a number of properties owned by a housing association that were linked to an independent sewage treatment plant. The residents had not been made aware of this and no information had been provided. It wasn't until a problem arose that residents realised they had an off-mains system.

The solution:
The residents were given sound advice from a maintenance company who made repairs. They then contacted their local borough council who provided a checklist for the properties.

The housing association was contacted and agreed to provide information in residential properties with independent sewage treatment plants. The company also agreed to include information in their biannual newsletter.

Lessons learnt:
People are keen to manage their septic tank/ treatment plant properly but the main issues preventing this are:

a) Knowing whether they have an off-mains system in the first place

b) Knowing that the system needs to be looked after differently

c) Having the knowledge on how to look after and maintain the system.

The 'Call of Nature' campaign has already helped raise the profile and the toolkit and publicity are critical in helping to spread the word across the region, both to individual households and to other organisations.

The contacts we have gained through this process will now help us to reach a wider audience and improve knowledge within organisations that have the ability to influence others.

Contact point or location of extra information:
www.callofnature.info