

Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan

# River Blackwater

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An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**  
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Northern Ireland  
**Environment**  
Agency

**Neagh Bann River Basin District  
Upper Neagh Bann Catchment Stakeholder Group  
River Blackwater River Basin Management Area**

The River Blackwater is the largest of the management areas in Northern Ireland. It covers an area of 1103 km<sup>2</sup>.

The main towns are Armagh and Dungannon with significant smaller towns of Augher, Clogher, Aughnacloy and Richhill.

The main Landuse in the area is Improved Grassland, utilising 59% of the land in the management area. Significant Landuse categories also include Arable horticulture and Acid grass which cover 9% and 8% of land area respectively.

**Map of River Blackwater management area**



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**Protected Areas**

A large number of water features within the area have been designated under various European Directives and require special protection. The Oonagh water is designated as Salmonid under the Freshwater Fish Directive and has complied with this directive in 2007. The River Blackwater is also designated as Salmonid but only stretches this river have complied with the Directive.

The management area contains the Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding natural Beauty and there are a total of thirty three Areas of Special Scientific Interest, including; Annacramph Meadow, Fardross stream, Black Lough and Cranny

bogs.

Cranny Bogs represents a series of three inter- drumlin lowland raised bogs which are remarkably intact and are among the best remaining examples in the west of Northern Ireland. Typical of the inter-drumlin hollows the bogs are irregular in shape and are surrounded by intensively managed land. The intact surfaces of the three closely associated bogs exhibit well defined dome formation with characteristic vegetation and structural features, including small shallow pools. Notable species include rare Sphagnum hummock forming mosses.

Lough Neagh Islands and Mullenakill & Annagarriff Nature Reserves are located in the River Blackwater management area and also four RAMSAR sites, these are; Lough Neagh & Lough Beg, Slieve Beagh, Upper Lough Erne and Magheraveeley.

There are six Special Areas of Conservation intersecting the River Blackwater management area. They are; Peatlands park, Slieve Beagh, Magheraveeley Marl Loughs, Upper Lough Erne, Cranny Bogs and Tonnagh Beg bog.

Tonnagh Beg Bog is among the best remaining examples of a lowland raised bog in the west of Northern Ireland. Typical of western bogs, the site is rather irregular in shape, with deep peat encircling a small drumlin of grassland on mineral soil. The uncut surface consists of a pool complex interspersed by well-formed hummocks, wet lawns and a soakway.

Three Specially Protected Areas are present in the area; Lough Neagh, Lough Beg, and part of Upper Lough Erne and Slieve Beagh.

Upper Lough Erne provides a core protected area for Whooper Swans in Northern Ireland.

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Further information is available on the **Protected Areas** section of the website.

### **River Waterbodies**

The 2008 assessment of ecological status determined that 16% of river water bodies in the River Blackwater management area are at good classification. This is proposed to rise to 45% by 2015, with 93% by 2021 and 100% by 2027. These water bodies include the Oona Water, the River Blackwater, the tall River and the River Rhone.

The Blackwater management area is part of the Upper Neagh Bann catchment Stakeholder Group area and demonstrated a high percentage of water bodies failing to achieve good status due to benthic invertebrates 69% and this is accompanied by a significant level of downgrading due to other elements that

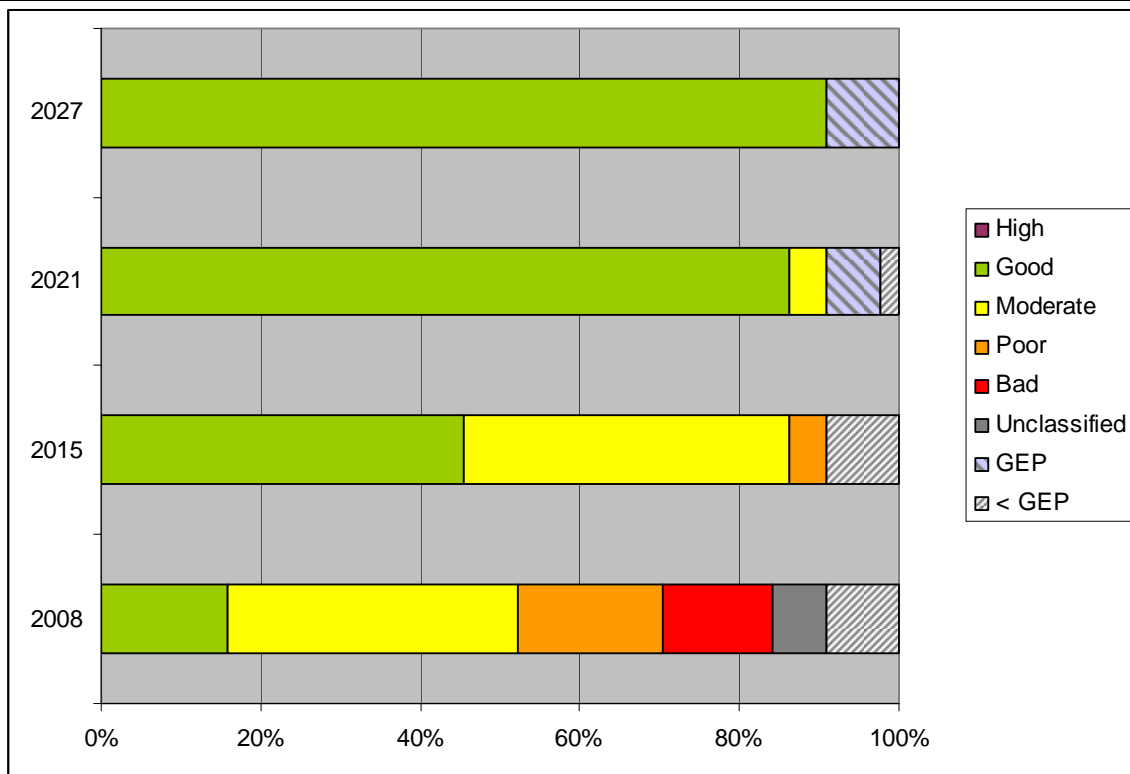
may be indicative of a high level of enrichment within the catchment. These are DO 34%, SRP 31%, BOD 25% and Macrophytes 25% the range of elements emphasises the numerous pressures influencing water quality in this catchment.

Morphology also has a large influence on quality in the catchment with 37% of river water bodies affected by morphological changes. Ammonia and metals both recorded as affecting 6 % of water bodies only have a minor influence.

Four of the waterbodies are designated as Heavily Modified, the Butter Water, Clay River, River Rhone and Killeen Water. The River Rhone and Killeen water have been modified for purposes of flood risk management while the Butter water and Clay River have been modified to deal with drinking water supply.

None of the waterbodies in the area are considered Artificial. All four of these waterbodies have been proposed to reach Good Ecological Potential by 2021.

**Current status and proposed objectives for river water bodies in the River Blackwater management area 2008-2027**



**Groundwater**

There are nine Groundwater bodies whose areas cross over into the River

<p>Blackwater management area. They are; Aughnacloy, Tandragee, Keady, Monaghan Town, Knockatallon, Lough, Neagh, Cookstown and Moygashel. All nine groundwater bodies are classified as good status for both quantitative and chemical status.</p>	
i	<p>Further information on how water bodies were classified can be read in the <b>Assessing the Quality of Our Water Environment</b> section of the website. The quality of individual water bodies and their objectives can be viewed on the <b>interactive web map</b>.</p>
<p>The improvements in water quality proposed above will be delivered through a programme of measures coordinated by the Department of the Environment. A number of these measures are already being carried out in the River Blackwater area.</p> <p>Supporting the programme of measures are a number of projects and initiatives run, for example, by local communities, angling groups and voluntary environmental organisations that will contribute to achieving the objectives we have set for our waters. Some of those happening in the River Blackwater management area are provided below.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Bann Action Group</li> <li>• Ballysaggart Environmental Group</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ballysaggart Environmental Group</b></p> <p>This project focuses on the Ballysaggart Lough which is known locally as the Black Lough and is near Dungannon. The group's mission is to engage the community and local council to stimulate interest and debate and ensure that the habitat is developed in a sustainable manner preserving it for future generations. Local councilors, landowners, schools and the general public are involved in the project. The group has produced plans for a proposed new education and environmental community centre and is currently engaging the community to raise support and funding for the centre.</p>	
i	<p>Further information is available in the <b>Programme of Measures</b> section of the website. The key pressures and associated sectors impacting on water bodies can be viewed on the <b>interactive web map</b>.</p>