



Diffuse Pollution Management

Following rainfall, nutrients, chemicals, bacteria and soil often wash off golf courses and end up in the local water environment such as watercourses and lochs. This is known as ‘diffuse pollution’. Individually this runoff may be of little risk to water quality but when combined with other land use runoff across a river catchment, they can impact on ecology, drinking and bathing water quality.

Rural land use activities are covered by the Water Environment (Diffuse Pollution) (Scotland) Regulations 2008, referred to as the Diffuse Pollution General Binding Rules (DP GBRs). All rural land users have a responsibility to ensure they are working in line with the DP GBRs. Visit the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA’s) [Diffuse pollution in the rural environment page](#) for more information on the general binding rules and for further information on how to ‘Reduce the risk of water pollution’ see the attached General Binding Rule (GBR) leaflet.

(SEPA) has identified ‘diffuse pollution’ as a major problem to water quality in Scotland. Fourteen priority catchments throughout Scotland have been identified as the highest priority for action in the Scotland’s river basin management plans. These catchments include water bodies or protected areas that are significantly failing standards due to rural diffuse pollution. These catchments will be visited by SEPA staff to assess the impact of diffuse pollution.

To find out if you are in a priority catchment by visiting the Scotland’s priority catchment website: <http://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/river-basin-management-planning/actions-to-deliver-rbmp/priority-catchments/>

If your club is to be part of a survey, you will be contacted directly by SEPA informing you of the date for the catchment walkthrough.

In conjunction with this work a national water quality target has been introduced into the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which gives added scoring to funding applications, from within the priority catchments, which include measures to improve water quality.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP>

Key pollutants

- Losses of nutrients to watercourses from fertilisers applied to land can result in the proliferation of aquatic plant growth. This can smother rivers and estuaries, while in lochs and coastal waters plankton reduces light penetration and affects oxygen levels.
- Organic matter from animal manures, slurries and silage depletes oxygen levels in rivers.
- Soil erosion can have a direct physical impact by smothering gravels in rivers and lochs and reducing light penetration in estuaries and coastal waters. It is also important in the transport of other pollutants such as pesticides, nutrients and faecal pathogens attached to soil particles.
- Faecal bacteria from livestock manures and slurries or livestock access to watercourses can impact on bathing and shellfish waters. This also affects the amenity value of the water environment and poses a risk to human health.
- Losses of pesticides and sheep dip during handling, use and washdown can cause severe impacts on plants and animals in rivers and can affect the quality of drinking water.

What is SEARS?

SEARS is a partnership delivering rural and environmental services on behalf of the Scottish Government. SEARS provides:

- a streamlined service
- easy access to information and advice
- a consistent and responsive service
- a customer focused service.

Further information

Specific guidance on the Diffuse Pollution GBRs is contained in this series of information leaflets.

Controlled Activities Regulations: A practical guide

Specific regulatory advice about the activities you carry out.
www.sepa.org.uk/water/water_publications.aspx

Diffuse Pollution GBRs

More detailed information on the DP GBRs.
www.sepa.org.uk/wfd
www.sears.scotland.gov.uk

Guidance on best management practices

Practical advice for farmers on reducing the risk of pollution from agricultural activities.
www.sepa.org.uk/bmp

NetRegs

Up-to-date advice on environmental regulations for small and medium size businesses.
www.netregs.gov.uk

Prevention of environmental pollution from agricultural activity (PEPFAA) code guides

www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0014235.pdf
www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/46729/0024251.pdf

4 Point plan

The Scottish Agricultural College guidance on reducing diffuse pollution risk and protecting water quality.
www.sac.ac.uk/mainrep/pdfs/fourpointplan.pdf

Tibre

A Scottish Natural Heritage initiative showing how technology in farming can benefit the environment.
www.snh.org.uk/tibre

For further information on the Diffuse Pollution GBRs please get in touch with your local office or contact SEARS:

Tel: 0845 30 20 50

Email: info@sears.scotland.gov.uk

www.sears.scotland.gov.uk

Reducing the risk of water pollution

Diffuse Pollution General Binding Rules (DP GBRs): explained



What is diffuse water pollution?

Often driven by rainfall, water pollution from diffuse sources arises from the loss of potential pollutants such as nutrients, chemicals, bacteria and soil, into the local water environment. Individually, losses from land use may be of little risk to water quality, but when combined across a river catchment they can impact on ecology, drinking and bathing water quality.

What do the DP GBRs control?

Both what you do on the land and how you manage run-off are key to controlling diffuse pollution.

Introduced in 2008 under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (as amended), the Diffuse Pollution GBRs aim to reduce the risk of diffuse pollution from rural land use activities and help to protect and improve water quality.

The DP GBRs focus on land and water run-off management, covering a range of activities such as cultivation of land to the operation of sheep dipping facilities.

They are based on existing codes of good practice such as the PEPFAA Code, 4 Point plan and The Forests and Water Guidelines. As such, most land managers should already comply. The DP GBRs are split into specific activities, each explaining the steps you must take to protect the water environment.

Some examples:

- **Fertiliser storage and application**
Make sure fertilisers, slurry and manures are not stored or spread in poor conditions or too close to watercourses, and that nutrient application matches crop requirements.
- **Keeping livestock**
Keep livestock feeding areas away from watercourses and reduce poaching at livestock access points to water.
- **Land cultivation**
Keep a two-metre buffer between in-field cultivation and watercourses.
- **Pesticide application**
Prepare, clean and maintain sprayers in conditions that prevent spills, run-off and washings from entering the water environment.
- **Operating sheep dip facilities**
Make sure sheep dip facilities are emptied within 24 hours of completion of dipping, and that sheep do not have access to the water environment while there is a risk of transferring sheep dip fluid from their fleece.

Why are these requirements necessary?

Diffuse pollution is the largest pollution pressure on the water environment in Scotland. Due to its varied nature, it has a range of impacts, from faecal contamination of bathing waters and excess nutrients causing algal blooms in lochs, to toxic substances affecting drinking water quality. Changes in water chemistry also affect species such as salmon, pearl mussels and water voles in and around rivers, lochs and coastal waters.

The impacts from diffuse pollution depend on several factors, including rainfall, slope, soil type, geology and both the sensitivity and the use of the receiving water body. This coupled with the overall pattern of land use, means that the impacts of diffuse pollution may vary between geographic regions.

