

English rivers in 'desperate' state: report

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Campaigners say pollution caused by chicken manure has harmed the water quality of England's River Wye.

English rivers are in a "desperate condition", campaigners warned on Monday in a report highlighting the growing impact of pollution on nation's waterways.

The report by the Rivers Trust, based on official data, found that no stretches of river in England were classed as being in a good or high overall condition.

Nearly a quarter—23 percent—were classed as being in a poor or bad overall condition in 2022, it found, adding that the study "doesn't paint a very positive picture".

"Very little has changed—let alone improved—since the last data from 2019," it said.

Of 3,553 river stretches for which data was available, only 151 had improved and the number of stretches tested had fallen.

Leading causes of poor water quality were pollution from fertiliser or landstock and the discharge of sewage, the study found.

Rivers Trust chief executive Mark Lloyd said the report's findings were "dispiritingly similar" to the first study it released for England in 2021 using the 2019 data. Data is published every three years.

"For all the announcements, initiatives, [press releases](#), changes of ministers and everything, we haven't seen any shifting of the needle on the dial on a measure of health, which is showing our rivers are in a desperate condition," he said.

Chicken manure

He called for more investment in monitoring to find the sources of pollution and stronger regulation to hold polluters to account.

"There's a lot of money being spent around water and the environment but it's being spent incredibly badly," he added.

One anti-pollution charity, River Action, took the government's Environment Agency to court this month over the condition of one of Britain's most important waterways, the River Wye.

The charity claims the agency is allowing the [agriculture sector](#) to release highly damaging levels of nutrients from chicken manure into the river.

Large amounts of manure are spread over farmland surrounding the Wye to help crop growth but an overabundance can lead to an increase of phosphorus and nitrogen in the soil.

When washed into the river by rain, the excess nutrients can cause prolonged [algal blooms](#) which turn the water an opaque green, harming plant and fish life.

The River Wye, the fourth longest river in Britain, partly forms the border between England and Wales.

Campaigners have in recent years taken to testing river quality themselves in an attempt get authorities to address the decline of the Wye.

They say their study of planning applications on both sides of the England-Wales border show that a vast number of poultry units has sprung up along the river in recent years.

UK water companies are facing criticism over privatized [water](#) firms pumping raw sewage into waterways.

Last year, a court fined Thames Water, the nation's biggest supplier, £3.3 million (\$4.18 million) for polluting rivers.

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