

But why is it in our wastewater in the first place?

Some is added to the food that we consume, such as dairy and meat products, and so ends up in wastewater. This can be difficult to avoid. But every householder CAN make a difference:

Use no-phosphate or low-phosphate (under 5%) cleaning products where possible:

- Phosphates used in domestic cleaning products account for nearly a fifth of the phosphate from our homes, being selective in your shopping can help to protect our local rivers
- The Government has taken action to reduce the amount of phosphate in laundry detergents, but many other products still have a high content
- Dishwasher detergents are a particular culprit with some containing over a third by weight, but a number of manufacturers don't use phosphate at all

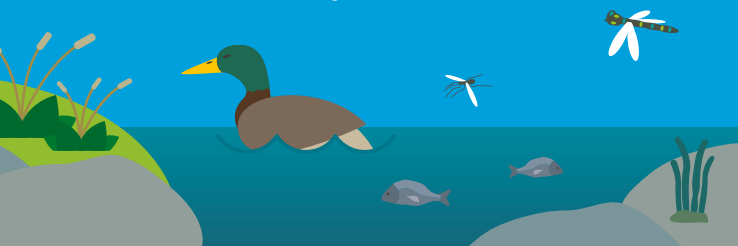
Brands with no phosphate include:



Check for misconceptions:

- Wastewater pipes from your property should not be linked to surface water drains as they lead directly to watercourses.

Reducing the amount of phosphate that each household contributes in their wastewater will see conditions improve for our Rivers. Fewer algal blooms, healthy populations of aquatic insects, and thriving fish communities are what we'd like to see for the entire Arun and Rother catchment. Reducing the amount of phosphate going into wastewater reduces the amount of energy and chemicals used to remove it, benefitting the environment further.



Arun & Western Streams Partnership

A healthier future for our catchment

In 2011 Defra commissioned a pilot initiative to develop new techniques to help deliver the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership was established, hosted by the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust. The partnership is tasked with:

- Better understanding our water environment
- Sharing knowledge and evidence to improve our water environment
- Sharing priorities and collaborating together
- Delivering integrated actions to improve the water environment

The Arun and Western Streams Catchment Partnership refreshed their Catchment Management Plan in 2018, this can be found at:

www.arunwesternstreams.org.uk/catchment-management-plan

This leaflet is supported by the following partnership members:



Arun & Western Streams Partnership

A healthier future for our catchment

A clean home shouldn't mean a dirty river

Help improve the waters of the Arun and Rother catchment



What is the problem?

Naturally-occurring nutrients feed the diverse range of flora found in our water environment. But in excess, man-made phosphorus acts as a pollutant. It can't be seen in the water, but its presence is clear by disrupting ecosystems, allowing nutrient-hungry algae to out-compete aquatic plants, and in extreme cases, triggering algal blooms. When algae dies it is deposited as sediment which can smother plants, as the algae decomposes, oxygen is used up, suffocating aquatic insects and fish. As well as threatening our wildlife, these processes can prevent us from using and enjoying our waterways, by polluting rivers, threatening angling, water sports and shellfish fisheries and contributing to flood risk.

Stopping this pollution isn't easy, because phosphorus, in the form of phosphate, enters rivers from a number of different sources, from agricultural land, via wastewater and from naturally occurring sources.

From farmland

Around a quarter comes from agricultural sources such as soil and nutrient runoff, yard drainage and organic manure. This contribution has been decreasing due to better nutrient management – but there are still significant reductions to be made. Government schemes such as 'Catchment Sensitive Farming' provide further advice and support to help farmers reduce the loss of phosphate-rich fertilisers and soils from their land.

From wastewater

The remainder comes from wastewater from homes and businesses. The waste from washing machines, dishwashers, sinks and toilets drains to wastewater treatment works if connected to the main sewer network, where it is treated and released back into rivers or groundwater. For properties not connected to mains drainage, wastewater drains to private treatment works and discharged either to ground or the local watercourse. Since the 1990s there has been significant water company investment to upgrade many wastewater treatment works, providing an additional level of treatment to strip out phosphates. By 2010, phosphate released from wastewater treatment works had reduced by more than half, and further investment and research in a bid to reduce this further, will be delivered over the coming years.

Up to fifty thousand tonnes of phosphorus per year end up in England's rivers

Despite these improvements 21 of 27 watercourses in the Arun and Rother catchment are still exceeding agreed phosphate standards. Technically achievable limits have now been set nationally and the water industry is undertaking proactive strategies to address the issue. Meanwhile, phosphate from private systems like septic tanks (which don't actively remove the chemical), as well as residual phosphate from treatment works which don't have phosphate stripping, continues to be released directly into the environment.

