

Soil and Water Protection Event

Wear Rivers Trust's Rural Diffuse Pollution Project provides expertise to local farming businesses located above 'vulnerable' groundwater source.

Summary: Bowburn Hall, Co. Durham, 13/03/18; the Rural Diffuse Pollution Project has been developed to provide farming businesses within the Magnesian Limestone aquifer region advice and guidance to help them protect valuable surface and groundwater resources. Several presentations were given during the 5-hour event pertaining to soil and water protection, as well as funding opportunities to help finance these interventions.

Details of the event: Steve Hudson of the Wear Rivers Trust kicked off the event with an overview of the project and set the hydrological and hydrogeological scene of the area. The Magnesian Limestone Rural Diffuse Project (MLRDP) seeks to provide advisory visits to farms that reside upon thin, porous superficial deposits.



With the aid of the Environment Agency's Groundwater Vulnerability maps, the Wear Rivers Trust has initially identified 7 farms which lie on land classified as 'at risk' of rapid surface water / groundwater interactivity. Identification of zones where valuable nutrients can be retained in the topsoil and better utilised around the farm instead of being lost through percolation to groundwater or runoff to rivers. This both will provide long term benefits to the farming business while protecting the environment.

Edwin Taylor (a farmer from Consett) discussed the process of 'min till' farming, having practiced the method for over 10 years. The process reduces the usage of the plough which creates large fractures in the sub surface, allowing nutrients to leach down towards the groundwaters, resulting in rising nitrate levels in our aquifers and increasing farming costs. Fraser Hugill from the CFE discussed the recent changes to farming-based grants, highlighting new avenues for farmers to take advantage of these schemes while helping the environment.