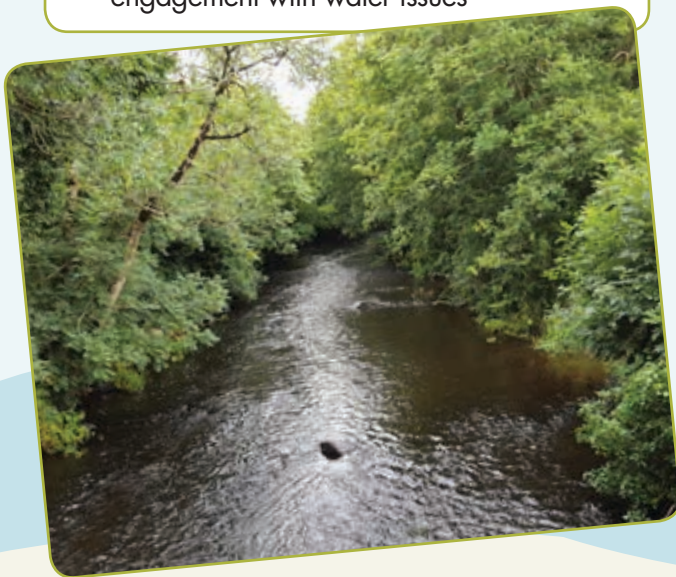


## What results should we see by 2021?

Our population is increasing, as is agricultural and economic production. This makes protecting and improving our water quality a big challenge.

There will need to be another plan and more progress after 2021. But by 2021, we should see these improvements.

- Increased waste water treatment in urban areas
- Increased focus in agriculture on the efficient use of nutrients and on water quality
- Improved protection of public drinking water sources
- New water quality measures in 600–700 water bodies
- Improved water quality in 150 additional water bodies
- Increased public and stakeholder engagement with water issues



This leaflet was produced by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office.

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## Where can I get a copy of the draft plan?

You can get a copy of the draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018–2021 from the website of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/river-basin-management-plans/public-consultation-draft-river-basin-management>

### How can I share my comments on the draft plan?

Everyone is welcome to give their views:

**Email** your views to [rbmp@housing.gov.ie](mailto:rbmp@housing.gov.ie)

**Post** your views to:

**River Basin Management Plan Consultation,  
Water and Marine Advisory Unit,  
Department of Housing, Planning,  
Community and Local Government,  
Custom House,  
Dublin 1 D01 W6X0**

### I want to give comments about an area or region

**Email** your views to the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office at [info@lawco.ie](mailto:info@lawco.ie).

### I need more information about getting involved in local water quality issues

If you need more information or you would like to get involved in improving water quality, contact the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office.

**Email:** [info@lawco.ie](mailto:info@lawco.ie)

**Phone:** 0761 06 5262

**Website:** [watersandcommunities.ie](http://watersandcommunities.ie)

### What is the final date for sharing my views?

Send in your views before 5pm on 31 August 2017.

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# Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021

Send in your views before 5pm on 31 August 2017.

## Why is water quality important?

Water is essential to life. Good water quality in our rivers, lakes and other water bodies such as estuaries and coastal waters is vital. It protects the environment, water supplies, public health and our quality of life.

Water is also vital for industry. For example, the fishing and tourism industries need clean water in our rivers and lakes to succeed. Agriculture and the pharmaceutical industry need good, plentiful, clean water supplies to produce food and medicine.

## How can we improve our water quality?

The Government believes that we can improve water quality through public participation and by creating the right structures to implement actions. Communities, river trusts and other organisations can play their part.

To make sure we improve water quality throughout the country, the Government has produced a draft document titled The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (2018–2021). This plan shows the actions that different sectors, organisations, communities and State bodies will take to protect Ireland's 4,832 water bodies, at local, regional and national level. This is the second plan for managing our river basins. A river basin is an area of land that is drained by a river.

Before the plan becomes final, the Government wants to hear your comments and concerns. This booklet explains:

- what is in the draft plan;
- where you can get more information; and
- how to share your views and concerns.

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## How clean are our waters?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitors water quality in Ireland. Among the EPA's main findings are:

- There has been a decline in the proportion of rivers with excellent water quality.
  - Between 2007 and 2009, an estimated 13% of all rivers had excellent water quality
  - Between 2013 and 2015, an estimated 10% of all rivers had excellent water quality
- There are fewer high status water bodies, like rivers and lakes, than before the first river basin management plan was implemented. A high status water body has excellent quality water.
  - 55% of rivers have good or high status water quality
  - 46% of lakes have good or high status water quality
  - 44% of estuaries have good or high status water quality
  - 91% of groundwaters – waters under the ground – have good water quality
- Almost a third (32%) of all water bodies recently assessed have been identified as being at risk of not meeting good or high status water quality standards.

## What reduces the quality of our water?

### Agriculture

- Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, which are substances in manures and slurry that pollute water
- Sediments, which are small bits of material such as soil that run-off from fields
- Farmyard pollution run-off, which can arise from stored manures and contaminated water, which is a point source pollution

### Urban waste water

- Pollution from inadequately treated or untreated sewage

### Changes to the aquatic environment

- Physical changes or damage to aquatic habitats, which are areas in and around water bodies such as river banks

### Forestry

- Clearfelling – cutting down every tree in a forest
- Draining land for forestry
- Planting and establishing forests

### Peat extraction

- Particles in water that change the aquatic environment
- The possible release of ammonia, which is a greenhouse gas

### Domestic waste water

- Pollution from septic tanks and other household sewage treatment systems

### Urban run-off

- Contaminated run-off from paved and unpaved surfaces

### Invasive alien species

- Non-native plants such as Japanese knotweed
- Non-native shellfish such as the zebra mussel

These threaten ecosystems and cause environmental harm.

## What are the main actions in the draft plan?

Here are six of the main actions in the draft plan. These are expected to be put in place between 2018 and 2021.

### Improved waste water treatment

Irish Water will deliver new or upgraded waste water treatment plants in 105 urban areas.

### Improved drinking water protection

Irish Water will produce risk assessments of 353 public drinking water sources across the country.

### Farming initiatives to help improve water quality

The National Dairy Sustainability Forum will set up a pilot programme led by dairy co-operatives to exchange knowledge with dairy farmers on better management of nutrients and farmyard pollution, which is called point source pollution. Other agricultural actions are outlined in the draft plan.

### The Blue Dot Catchments Programme

The Blue Dot Catchments Programme will create a network of river and lake areas. Agencies will work together to protect or restore excellent water quality in these water bodies.

### The National Water Forum

The Government has set up the National Water Forum. The forum includes stakeholders in water, such as community groups and representatives of agriculture. This forum will raise public awareness. It will also analyse all water issues.

### Greater public participation

The new Local Authority Waters and Communities Office will help you get involved in actions to improve water quality at river basin and local level.