Operation CLAMP DOWN 5

Information & Intention

- The close season for freshwater fish is from 15 March – 15 June 2017 inclusive (please see below).

- Operation CLAMP DOWN 5 (OCD5) follows on from the last four years’ successful close season initiatives involving the VBS pilot project in SE, and which was national for the first time last year following VBS national roll-out in spring 2016. OCD5, therefore, will be the second national initiative.

- The intention is that the VBS will gather intelligence for the Environment Agency (EA) and police regarding illegal angling in general – but specifically on rivers and other waters where the coarse close season applies in England.

- Whilst out of season offences are the EA’s responsibility, fishing without permission is a criminal offence under Schedule 1 of the Theft Act 1968. The intention is that VBS will also report any information on criminal activity encountered, or incidents in progress, to the police.

- Emphasising the partnership approach to fisheries enforcement, we will be working closely with police forces and joint patrols (VBS, EA, police) will be mounted on occasion – and widely publicised. Where geographically relevant, these patrols and incoming intelligence will feed into Operations TRAVERSE and LEVIATHAN.


- We now have the web-based text and email alert system, ‘Angling Alert’. REMs and our new Intelligence Manager, Gary Thomas, will make full use of this communications tool to promote OCD5: https://www.anglingtrustalert.co.uk/

- Should issues be encountered with migrant anglers, Angling Trust Fisheries Enforcement Support Service (FESS) Regional Enforcement Managers (REM) will liaise with Angling Trust Building Bridges Project Manager, Rado Papiewski. It should be emphasised to VBs that multi-lingual close season posters can be downloaded, free, here: http://www.anglingtrust.net/page.asp?section=709 . Hard copies of multi-lingual leaflets can be provided if required.

- REMs will be responsible for coordinating VBS activity with the EA and police in their areas.

- IM will monitor the secure VBS websites and ensure that any useful incoming intelligence is disseminated as appropriate.
• Upon conclusion of OCD5, the quantity and quality of intelligence submitted, along with volunteer hours contributed/quantity of patrol summaries submitted, will be collated by REMs and submitted to the National Enforcement Manager (NEM). These statistics will then be shared with the EA.

• VBs are required to identify themselves as such when reporting incidents to the EA and police, and, as always, obtain a call reference number and request feedback. These should be noted in online patrol summaries and/or passed by the VB to his or her relevant REM. REMs will provide these reference numbers on a rolling basis to the IM/NEM, who, upon conclusion of OCD5, will request feedback from the Agency.

• IM will share any relevant statistics and intelligence arising with NWCU.

• Any positive outcomes will be widely publicised.

Deployment

• On 15 March 2017, VBS Phase 1 numbers 324 volunteers throughout England. During OCD5, that figure will be increased owing to further induction days in all six regions.

• Police contacts in all forces, and the National Wildlife Crime Unit, can be furnished with this briefing note.

The Relevant Law

• On 13 March 1995, a new national byelaw in England and Wales retained the coarse fish close season on rivers, streams, drains, some canals and still-waters within specified SSSI.

• The annual statutory close season for coarse fish in rivers, streams and drains (and some canals and still-waters within specified SSSI) is 15 March – 15 June inclusive.

• It is a criminal offence to fish for, take, kill or attempt to take or kill freshwater fish during the statutory close season.

• Although eels are excluded from the definition of freshwater fish under s.41 Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, it is also an offence to fish for them with rod and line during this period – unless permitted by local byelaws.

• Out-of-season fishing is punishable by a fine of up to £50,000 – additionally, there are powers regarding tackle forfeiture and licence disqualification.

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