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**Yellow Fish**



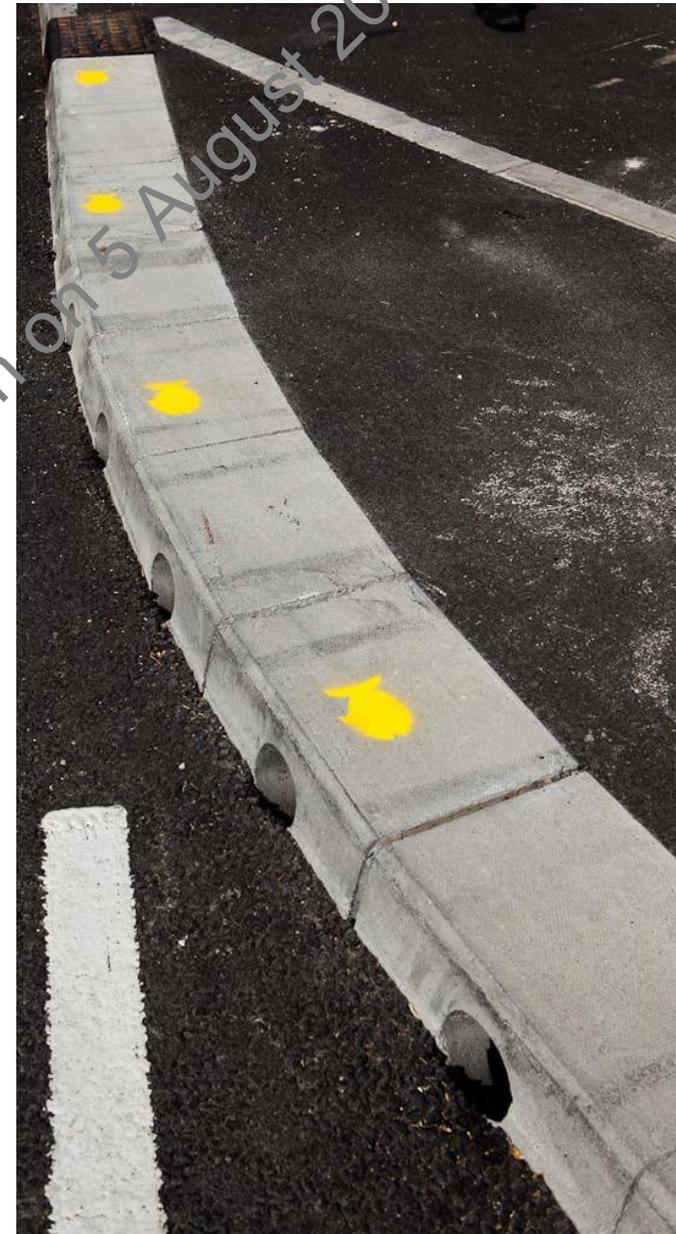
Environment  
Agency

# guidance manual

Pollution Prevention Guidance

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## **Introduction: Only rain down the drain!**

Yellow Fish is a simple diffuse pollution prevention tool with the clear message 'Only rain down the drain!'. It can help you to prevent pollution incidents from occurring by promoting good practice and housekeeping. It raises awareness of water pollution issues, promotes positive engagement with local communities and provides opportunities to gain media interest. It also demonstrates your dedication to protecting the environment to the nation, through our Yellow Fish map.

Yellow Fish is therefore ideal for supporting your Corporate, Social and Environmental Responsibilities programme whatever your business.

Yellow Fish is a national Environment Agency project that builds on an international approach to protecting the environment. It involves stencilling a Yellow Fish symbol beside drains to remind people that any waste entering them may go directly to the nearest stream, river, lake, canal, beach or bathing water, causing pollution and killing wildlife.

## **What are the issues?**

Road and surface water drains are designed to carry only rainwater, usually to the nearest watercourse. Allowing any polluting matter to enter these drains is like pouring it directly into the watercourse.

Pollution from trading and industrial estates; manufacturing, industrial and waste premises; construction sites and housing developments can seriously affect water quality. The effects can be acute (short term impact) or chronic (long term impact) and can range from the creation of an eyesore to the killing of fish and wildlife.

Causing or knowingly permitting pollution to enter a watercourse or not following pollution prevention legislation is an offence. If you cause water pollution it can result in being recharged for our costs and enforcement action, such as prosecution, a fine of up to £50,000 or even imprisonment. Preventing pollution is a responsibility for landowners, landlords and tenants. Yellow Fish can help you reduce the

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potential for pollution incidents by combining awareness with good pollution prevention practice.

Pollution is also caused by misconnections. Misconnected premises let the foul waste from toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, showers, baths and sinks to enter surface water drains. A misconnection may also cause trade effluent to enter surface water drains. All of these wastes must go to a sewage treatment works through the foul sewer. You are likely to need consent from your Water and Sewerage Company (WaSC) to discharge trade effluent to foul sewerage.

As a housing or commercial developer, Yellow Fish can be included as part of your road marking programme. When new occupants move in, you can provide the Yellow Fish leaflet to explain the drain markings. This can be combined with information from Connect Right about misconnections. You could use this approach to engage with the local community and demonstrate your commitment to improving local environments.

**Pollution incidents should be reported to the Environment Agency on the Incident Hotline, 0800 80 70 60, which is free of charge to call and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

## **Pollution prevention guidance**

Yellow Fish can help prevent many types of pollution incidents from occurring through raising awareness and good practice. We provide comprehensive guidance on our website, from which we have produced the following basic guidance.

**General:** Assume that your activities will cause pollution unless you can demonstrate otherwise and follow the Yellow Fish message – Only rain down the drain!

**Misconnections:** Ensure toilets, sinks, showers, baths, washing machines and dishwashers are connected to the foul sewer. Ensure that only uncontaminated rainfall connects to surface sewers.

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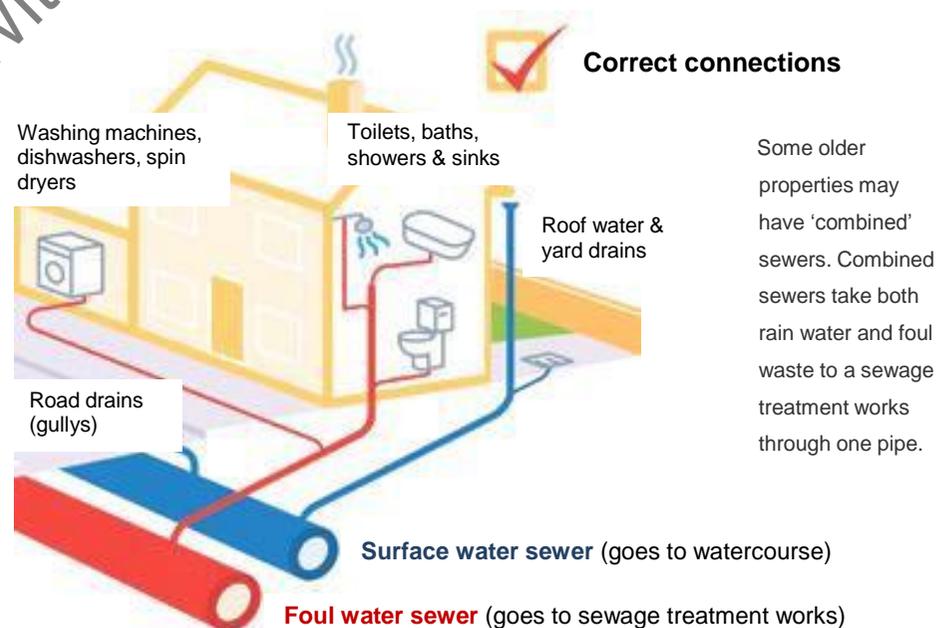
**Site drainage:** Produce a complete drainage plan for your premises identifying foul and surface water drains and manholes. Drains can also be marked by type (foul = red, surface = blue) and with the direction of flow in addition to using the Yellow Fish symbol. These measures can be invaluable if an incident occurs.

**Storage of materials:** Poor storage of oil, chemicals or raw materials (both solid and liquid) is the cause of many pollution incidents. Store materials in appropriate and sealable containers, in good condition, away from drains, watercourses or impermeable ground and protect from collision. Provide secondary containment for storage tanks, IBCs and bowser (to hold 110% of maximum capacity) and for drums and smaller containers (bundled pallets, drip trays, kerb bunded areas or sealable containers). Cover outside storage areas to prevent rainwater entering.

**Spills:** Spills cause pollution by entering drains directly or being flushed down by surface run off from rain. Prevent spills by storing and handling materials safely and clean up spills immediately.

**Waste storage:** Store waste in appropriate sealable containers away from drains, watercourses and impermeable ground.

**Trade effluent:** Do not allow effluent to enter any drains without appropriate consent. Use interceptors to prevent oil contaminated water and suspended solids leaving your premises. Do not allow wash waters to pass through oil interceptors as detergents can remove the retained oil.



## How to Yellow Fish

Undertaking Yellow Fish is very simple. There are two core parts to Yellow Fish. The first is raising awareness about sources of pollution and how to prevent incidents taking place at your premises. The second is to mark drains on your premises with the Yellow Fish symbol to reinforce the pollution prevention message.

Before you start, it is important that you have permission from the landlord or landowner of your premises. You will also need to contact the highways department of the Local Authority if you wish to mark road gullies. Yellow Fish also provides opportunities to engage with local schools and communities and is ideal as part of an environmental improvement project.

Drains can be marked using the Yellow Fish stencil design provided. We recommend that highway drains are marked on kerbstones using the stencil printed on A4 paper. For general surface drains the stencil can be printed on A3 paper to provide a larger symbol. We would also recommend using a

permanent line marking spray paint or a permanent acrylic paint. For health and safety reasons, we recommend that you only mark kerbstones and follow the enclosed risk assessment.

You can raise awareness in a number of ways: newsletters; toolbox talks; posters; training sessions. Make sure everyone knows about Yellow Fish, they all have their part to play in preventing pollution. If you are working with the local community you may want to get a local newspaper or local radio or television station involved.

Very importantly, don't forget to complete the feedback form and send it back to us. We want to recognise your support and add your project to our Yellow Fish map showing the project location, who carried out the project and when it was undertaken.



## Yellow Fish facts

- Most road drains and surface drains are designed to carry only rain water. Pouring pollutants down these drains is like pouring them straight into the river.
- One litre of oil can pollute one million litres of drinking water.
- The oil from one car engine can pollute an area the size of two football pitches.
- Oils do not mix with water and can spread out across water in a layer one molecule thick.
- Oil is toxic to aquatic life and prevents oxygen being absorbed on the surface.
- Cooking oils and fats should not be disposed of down drains even when mixed with detergents.
- Cooking oils and fats can be used to produce biodiesel or used as a biofuel.
- Cooking oils and fats may be disposed of at dedicated collection points or could be collected by local schemes for recycling.
- Run off from industrial / trade sites can contain highly polluting substances that cause environmental damage.
- Sewage, grey water and cooking oils and fats can cause oxygen levels to decrease due to high Biochemical (Biological) Oxygen Demand (BOD).
- Ammonia contained in sewage is directly toxic to fish and aquatic life.
- Phosphate in sewage and grey water can cause increased plant growth and eutrophication.
- The high nutrient levels in sewage and grey water can cause 'sewage fungus' to grow on the bottom on rivers and brooks.
- Pollution entering rivers inland can cause pollution on beaches and in bathing waters.
- Soils and sands entering drains can cause sediment pollutions in rivers, affecting fish spawning areas.
- Misconnected premises can lead to river banks being covered with used toilet tissue and sanitary products.
- Yellow Fish can help you to make improvements to your local watercourse and environment and prevent them deteriorating.

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## Contact details

Please contact Yellow Fish as follows...

by email:

**yellow.fish@environment-agency.gov.uk**

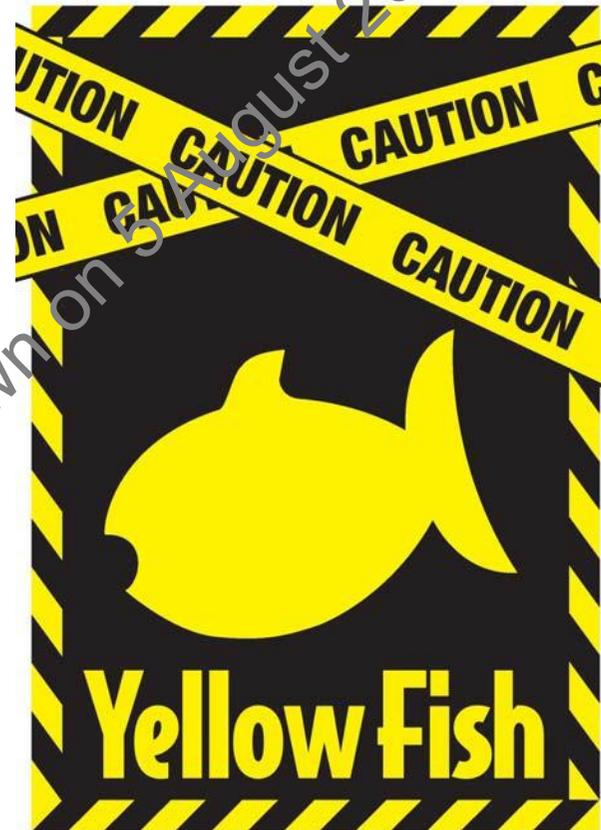
by post:

**Yellow Fish  
Environment Agency  
National Customer  
Contact Centre  
PO Box 544  
Rotherham  
S60 1BY**

For more information visit:

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for Yellow Fish

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## Glossary

**Algal bloom** – an uncontrolled increase in the growth of bacteria or algae often caused by eutrophication.

**Ammonia** – a toxic compound that dissolves in water to form the ammonium ion. It is an animal/human waste product and used in fertilisers.

**Bathing water** – parts of the sea or inland waters that have been designated as waters for people to swim in.

**Biodiesel** – a type of biofuel made from used cooking oils that are treated with chemicals to remove glycerol. Normally used in vehicles.

**Biofuel** – a fuel that is made from virgin plant material or recycled from waste plant material.

**Biochemical Oxygen Demand** – the amount of oxygen required by aerobic microbes to break down the organic material in a sample of water. The break down of organic material removes oxygen from the water.

**Bowser** – a mobile tank that is often used to transport water.

**Combined sewer / drain** – a combined foul and surface sewer. Designed to transport toilet waste, waste effluent and rain water to sewage treatment works.

**Diffuse pollution** – pollution that does not have a single entry point into a watercourse. It also covers pollution that originates within surface sewers, that has a single discharge point (the outfall) and a diffused source or sources within the sewer catchment (diffused point source pollution).

**Effluent** – treated or untreated waste water, such as foul sewage or grey water. Also covers waste water from industrial processes.

**Eutrophication** – the process responding to excessive levels of nutrients, such as nitrates and phosphates from fertilisers or sewage. This is most often observed as algal blooms in warm weather.

**Foul sewer / drain** – drains and pipes designed to transport toilet waste and waste effluent to sewage treatment works.

**Grey water** – waste water from sources such as washing machines, sinks and dishwashers.

**IBC** – intermediate bulk container made of plastic with a metal cage that holds approximately 1000 litres.

**Impermeable** – does not allow substances, such as water, to pass through.

**Iridescence** – rainbow effect caused by thin layers of oil on water.

**Misconnection** – a connection to a sewer that results in wrong disposal taking place, such as a toilet to surface sewer.

**Oil interceptor** – usually a series of tanks designed to remove oil from water by slowing the flow rate and allowing the oil to separate and float on top of the water.

**Personal protective equipment** – equipment designed to prevent injury.

**Phosphate** – a chemical required for plant growth often found in fertilisers and sewage.

**Pollutant** – a contaminating substance or object that causes pollution.

**Pollution** – the introduction of pollutants into the natural environment that have a negative impact.

**Sewage** – contaminated toilet water containing human waste.

**Sewage fungus** – bacteria that grow in response to increased nutrient levels from sources such as sewage, often forming 'hairy' mats on the bottom of watercourses.

**Sewage treatment works** – a place that removes physical, chemical and biological contaminants from water before returning it to a river.

**Surface sewer / drain** – drains and pipes designed to transport water caused by rainfall to watercourses.

**Watercourse** – any flowing body of water, such as a brook, river, pond or lake. It also covers canals and even dry ditches that carry rain water to a flowing body of water.

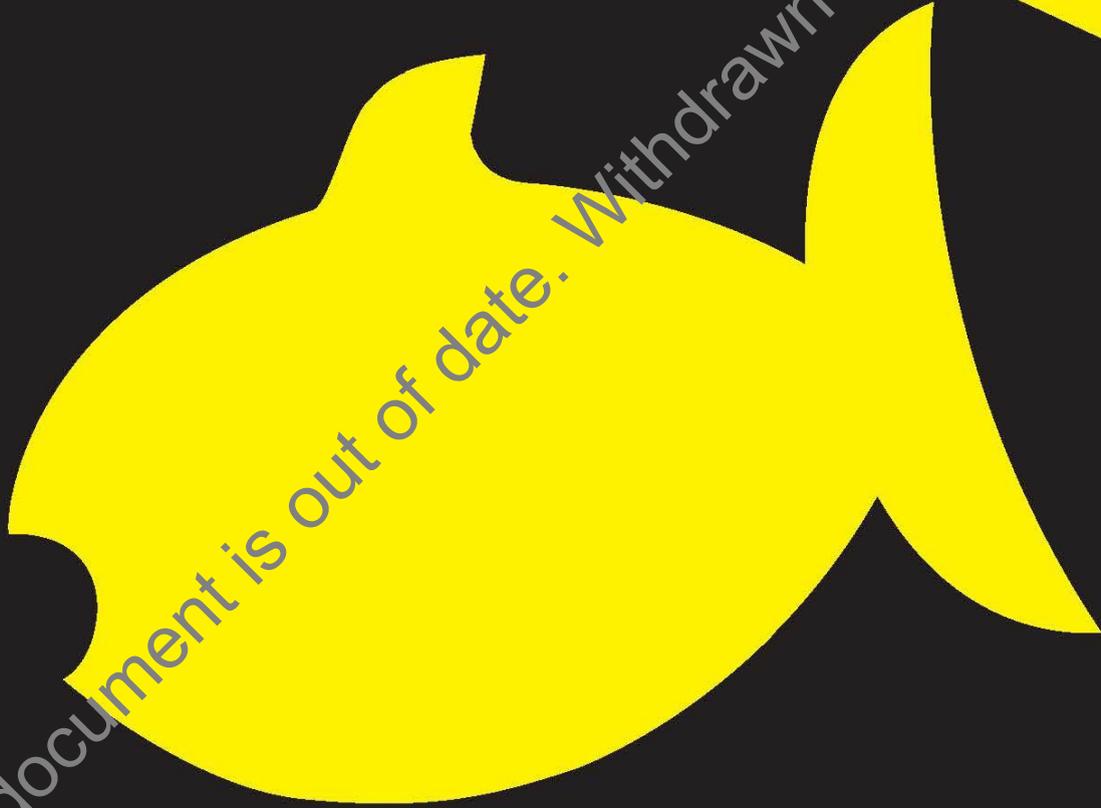
## Yellow Fish template

1. Print out the template on A4 paper to make sure it is the correct size.
2. Carefully cut out the yellow fish.
3. The template can then be used or transferred to another material (e.g. card, cardboard, lino, plastic).



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**CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION**



**Yellow Fish**

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**fish**

**ONLY RAIN  
DOWN  
THE DRAIN!**



[yellow.fish@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:yellow.fish@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yellowfish](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yellowfish)



## Yellow Fish Feedback Form

*Name of Group(s):
*Date of painting session:
*Location of drains marked (road names and postcodes):
Contact details for project group:
Permission for project granted by:

\* These fields must be completed for us to add the details of your project to our Yellow Fish Map

Additional feedback:

### How we will use your information

We, the Environment Agency, will process the information you provide so that we can:

- Publish, on our website, the location of your Yellow Fish scheme, the date it was carried out and the name of your organisation.

We may also process or release the information to:

- contact you about you participation in the Yellow Fish scheme.
- offer you documents or services relating to environmental matters;
- consult the public, public organisations and other organisations (for example, local authorities, the emergency services, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) on environmental issues;
- carry out research and development work on environmental issues;
- assess whether customers are satisfied with our service, and to improve our service; and
- respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (if the Data Protection Act allows).

We may pass the information on to our agents or representatives to do these things for us.

Please return the form to:

Yellow Fish, Environment Agency, National Customer Contact Centre, PO Box 544, Rotherham, S60 1BY or by email:yellow.fish@environment-agency.gov.uk

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