

**Free
Trial**

northern ireland
water

Delivering what matters

Rush solution without pollution

Between
**May & September
2017 & 2018** we will be
offering a **free grassland
weed control trial** in the
Seagahan Catchment
Area, Co. Armagh.



**Working together with the
community to protect our drinking water supplies**

Organised by NI Water in conjunction with the Water Catchment Partnership



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



Northern Ireland
**Environment
Agency**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk | Agency



Department for
Infrastructure

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk



**The
Voluntary
Initiative**



**ULSTER
FARMERS'
UNION**



College of Agriculture,
Food & Rural Enterprise

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High levels of the herbicide MCPA have been detected in Seagahan Reservoir near Markethill in Co. Armagh. In order to reduce these levels, NI Water are proposing a trial project, working with farmers and the local community to protect this valuable water source. This will involve a free weed-wiping service being delivered to farmers within this catchment area in the Summer of 2017 and 2018.

What is the problem?

The water in the reservoir at Seagahan is treated and used to supply quality drinking water to NI Water's customers in the surrounding area. Water quality in Seagahan Dam is affected by activities on land in the surrounding catchment area. Routine monitoring of water in the dam has shown high levels of grassland pesticides such as MCPA, which could be from agricultural activity such as controlling rush infestation using a boom sprayer applicator.

Be assured that the final drinking water quality is of a high standard and meets all the required water quality standards. However extra treatment is required as a result of the water quality in the Seagahan Dam, which increases cost in order to maintain the necessary high drinking water standards for customers in the area.

What is the Solution?

NI Water is working with The Water Catchment Partnership and the farming industry as part of an innovative campaign to help reduce levels of MCPA in the Seagahan Reservoir catchment area. It is planned to offer a free weed-wiping service using Glyphosate, as an alternative to spraying MCPA, to demonstrate an alternative effective rush control method which causes less pollution. The overall aim is to show that pesticide levels can be reduced in the reservoir without the need for more expensive water treatment processes. This can then be used as a test project to demonstrate the benefits of NI Water working together with farmers and possibly doing more of these type of initiatives in future in other areas.

The project will have a Farm Liaison Officer working with farmers and land managers to manage the weed-wiping and promote better advice on handling, applying and disposing of grassland sprays, guidance on mechanical control of rushes and improving land condition to addressing the underlying causes of infestations.

What is MCPA?

MCPA is a selective herbicide specifically designed to kill weeds without harming crops and is a common active ingredient in both agricultural and domestic herbicide products. MCPA is widely used for controlling the growth of weeds like the Common Soft Rush, which has flourished in grassland following wet weather periods in recent years.

MCPA does not bind to soil particles so it is prone to leaching, directly into watercourses or via mole and land drains. Once in the water it can take 3-4 weeks to break down without treatment.

NI Water frequently detects high levels of MCPA in rivers and lakes and at abstraction points in many drinking water sources in Northern Ireland. This MCPA is removed in the water treatment process and drinking water is of a high quality standard.

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Who is involved in The Water Catchment Partnership?

The Water Catchment Partnership is a working group established with representatives from NI Water, Ulster Farmers Union (UFU), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) and The Voluntary Initiative. The group's aim is to deliver one message incorporating the ethos from all organisations to effectively tackle the problem of pesticides in the water environment, particularly in drinking water areas.

The Water Catchment Partnership started its campaign to address significant water quality issues in Northern Ireland in 2013. The Partnership has helped farmers and land managers understand the core aspects of handling, applying and disposing of grassland sprays has provided guidance on mechanical control of rushes and has assisted in improving land condition to addressing the underlying causes of the weed infestations through community engagement at events across the Province.

Why use Weed-Wipers?

Rushes can be managed by using herbicides applied by either a boom sprayer, knapsack or a weed-wiper. Weed-wipers can manage rushes more efficiently than conventional boom sprayers using less chemical with a dramatic reduction in spray drift. Weed-wipers are only licensed for use with glyphosate, a chemical that has potentially less impact on water quality as it can break down quicker in around 3-7 days compared with MCPA, which breaks down in 3-4 weeks.

Greenmount CAFRE has held demonstrations at Glenwherry Hill Farm where plots of rushes were controlled using a number of different methods:

- Mechanical cutting
- Weed-wiping with glyphosate
- Cutting and weed-wiping the regrowth with glyphosate
- Boom spraying with MCPA

This demonstrated that the area cut and later weed-wiped with glyphosate showed the most effective rush control with minimal water pollution. This method uses a glyphosate product specifically approved for use in a weed-wiper. The percentage of rush cover reduced from 81 per cent in 2014 to 20 per cent in 2015.

Based on these findings this project intends to trial this method of rush control in the Seagahan Catchment area. Weed-wipers are an effective method to use whilst managing rush infestations and other grassland weeds, and pose a lower risk to quality water.

What does this free Weed-Wiping Trial involve?

We are offering to treat rush infestations, free of charge, using a weed-wiper in the Seagahan catchment area. The main target will be rush control on grassland and in addition other weeds such as thistles and nettles are also eligible for treatment during the project using a weed-wiper. NI Water will employ a weed-wiping contractor to do the work. You can then arrange directly with the contractor to do the work on your land at a suitable time.

NI Water are providing a **free Weed-Wiping service** for farmers in **Seagahan Catchment area** between **1 May and 30 September 2017** and **1 May and 30 September 2018**.

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It has been demonstrated that effective rush control is obtained by weed-wiping rushes two years in succession. Any farmer availing of the scheme in 2017 is encouraged to apply for follow-up weed-wiping in 2018.

NI Water are employing a Farm Liaison Officer to manage the project and give free support for farmers and land managers to understand rush treatments and best practice measures. If you are a farmer within the area above, we need your help and cooperation to understand the areas of rush infestation on your land and working together, we can manage the problem without posing a risk to water quality.

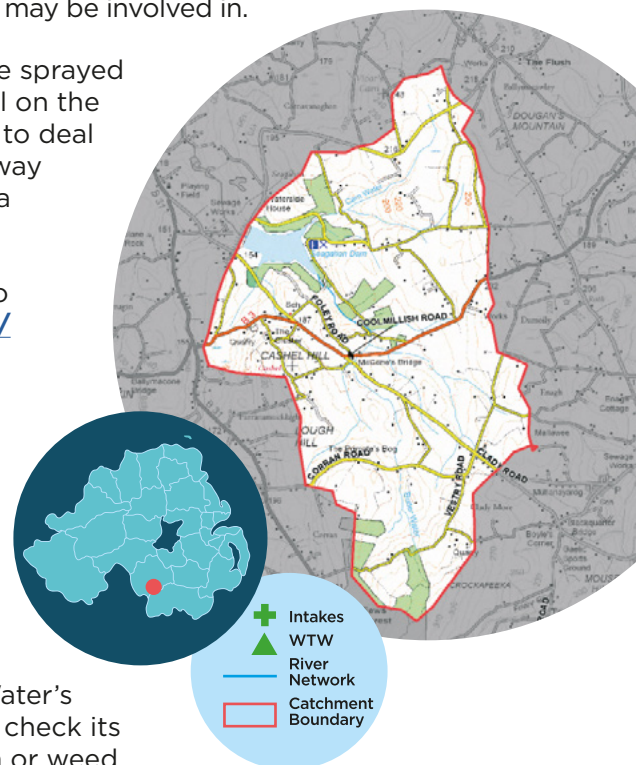
Further Details and Disclaimer

- The target aim of the project is to provide an alternative for MCPA use on your land within the catchment. If MCPA is used by anyone it could affect the trial results, so we are actively encouraging farmers in this area to refrain from using any pesticide product containing MCPA for the 2-year duration of the project.
- The contractor will be required by NI Water to follow recommended bio-security procedures, however if you are not content with these procedures then you should not allow the contractor to access your land and not allow the weed-wiping to go ahead.
- To make maximum benefit from the scheme, we strongly advise you to cut mature rushes a number of months prior to weed-wiping so that the contractor can then treat the re-growth, which is most effective.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that the work does not impact on cross compliance responsibilities or other schemes that you may be involved in.
- It your responsibility to keep livestock away from the sprayed pasture in strict accordance with the harvest interval on the Pesticide application record. It is your responsibility to deal with noxious weeds and ensure livestock are kept away from any noxious weeds within the treated area for a suitable timescale.
- For more information, please follow DAERA guide to Integrated Pest Management- www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/integrated-pest-management

Who is eligible for the free weed-wiping?

The Seagahan catchment area in Co. Armagh has been selected for this trial. That is the area where the water runoff from the land makes its way to Seagahan reservoir. Only fields within this area are eligible for the free weed-wiping service. Following receipt of a properly completed application form, NI Water's Farm Liaison Officer will arrange to visit your farm and check its suitability for weed-wiping. Only fields that have a rush or weed infestation problem will be deemed eligible.

The Farm Liaison Officer's decision as to eligibility will be final.



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How to apply?

Project details and the Application Form can be found online at www.niwater.com/watercatchment or www.ufuni.org

The completed application form should be returned by post to:

NI Water Weed-wiping Project
41 Seagoe Industrial Estate
Craigavon
Co. Armagh
BT63 5QE

When is the application deadline?

Applications should be received by NI Water before 30th April 2017. In exceptional circumstances, applications will be accepted after this date.

What happens after application?

- The Farm Liaison Officer will contact you and arrange to carry out a brief visit on your land to determine its suitability for the proposed weed-wiper treatment and guide you through any paperwork.
- NI Water will then write to you to inform you if your application is approved.
- You should then, and only then, contact the weed-wiping contractor directly to arrange treatment dates that are suitable for both parties to get the most effective results. The date of the weed wiper treatment is dependent on the following factors:
 - Contractor availability
 - Weather forecast for period during and after application
 - Ground Conditions
 - Rush suitability as the weed must be actively growing above other vegetation (to protect grasses)
- After the weed-wiping has been completed, the Farm Liaison Officer will arrange to visit to evaluate the success of the rush treatment on your land. This will be carried out roughly 2 months after treatments take place.
- The follow-up weed-wiping will then be arranged for 2018.

If you require any more information or have any questions about the trial, please get in touch with the **Farm Liaison Officer** on **07803799217** or email at weedwiping@niwater.com

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The Process is as follows:

Information packs will be available at local UFU/DAERA offices or downloaded from: www.niwater.com/watercatchment or www.ufuni.org

Application form completed

Farmer will complete project application form and highlight fields to be treated for rushes on farm maps. Application form must be returned to NI Water before 30/04/17.

Farm Liaison Officer Approval

The Farm Liaison Officer visits farm concerned and agrees which fields are eligible for the project.

Rush Treatment

Farmer will liaise with NI Water Contractor to complete weed-wiping at a time suitable to both parties considering ground and weather conditions.

Farm Liaison Officer post- trial visit

After completion of rush treatment Farm Liaison Officer will arrange to visit the area to evaluate the work.

2018 follow up treatments

The Farm Liaison Officer will contact all successful applicants to repeat process for weed-wiping in May - Sept 2018.

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Application Form

Use BLOCK LETTERS throughout, and ensure any alterations are initialed and dated.
Do not use correction fluid.

Section 1: Details of applicant(s)

Name(s) of applicant(s):

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other) Forenames Surname

Main correspondence address:

Postcode:

Telephone number (including dialling code):

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Mobile Number:

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Email address:

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Address at which proposed work is to be carried out (if different from address above):

Postcode:

In relation to the farm business are you the (Please tick):

Owner (actively farming land):

<input type="checkbox"/>

Active farmer (land taken in conacre):

<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please state details):

--

Farm holding size (tick one box):

Less than 10ha	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 - 25ha	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 - 50ha	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 50ha	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Section 3: NI Water / Farmer Agreement

1. Date of Project: The weed-wiping project (Project) can only be carried out at each site between 1 May and 30 September in 2017 and 2018.
2. Access: To take part in the Project you agree to provide access to treatment areas for the weed-wiping contractor appointed by NI Water (Contractor) and NI Water at all times required, including NI Water's Farm Liaison Officer. NI Water's Farm Liaison Officer will visit sites prior to the any treatments and also after weed wiping to evaluate the success of treatments. You agree to provide suitable access to water for filling the weed-wiper to the Contractor. By submitting this application you warrant and represent that you have full responsibility and control over the land in respect of which you have requested the weed-wiping to be carried out (including any access or exit routes required to be accessed by the Contractor). Where land is leased in conacre, it is your responsibility to ensure that both the tenant and the landlord are aware of and are in agreement with the Project.
3. Date of Work: You agree that once NI Water approves your application, you should make all further arrangements in relation to the trial directly with the Contractor, including agreeing suitable dates and times for delivery of the weed-wiping service. It is your responsibility to consider weather forecasts, ground conditions and the optimum stage of the rush growth, before arranging a suitable weed-wiping treatment date and time with the weed-wiping contractor.
4. Compliance with Laws: It is your responsibility to ensure that the Project is in compliance with any relevant laws required to be adhered to in respect of your land in connection with the Project, including legislation due to land designations (e.g. ASSI), or conditions in any currently agri-environment or DAERA scheme/regulations. It is also your responsibility to follow pesticide guidelines restricting animals from sprayed pasture in accordance with the harvest interval on the Pesticide Application Record. It is also your responsibility to ensure infestations of Ragwort or any other noxious weeds do not harm livestock (we would recommend that you follow DAERA Best Practice Guidelines available on <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/control-noxious-weeds>, as well as any other applicable guidelines).
5. Liability: In consideration of receiving the benefit of the weed-wiping trial, if your application is successful you agree that neither NI Water nor its employees (including the Farm Liaison Officer), agents, other members of the Water Catchment Partnership or representatives (Representatives) shall be responsible for any injury, loss, or damage that may occur to you, the landowner, your land or property, from any cause, or for any other expenses, losses or liabilities (including as arising in connection with the Project and the weed-wiping services, and as caused by the Contractor), to the utmost extent permitted by law. In particular, you acknowledge that any issues with the weed-wiping services and Project shall be between you and the Contractor to resolve, and that under no circumstances shall NI Water or its Representatives be liable for (i) any special, indirect, incidental, or consequential loss or damage whatsoever, or (ii) any loss of profit, loss of use, loss of opportunity, or any cost or damage resulting from any such loss. Nothing in this Agreement shall exclude or limit NI Water's liability for anything which cannot be excluded or limited under applicable law.
6. Indemnity: In further consideration of receiving the benefit of the weed-wiping trial, you agree to indemnify and hold harmless NI Water and its Representatives from and against any and all claims, damages, liabilities, costs and expenses arising out of or relating to any injury, loss, or damage that may occur to you, the landowner, your land or property, from any cause (including in connection with the Project and the weed-wiping services).

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7. Disclosure of Information: You warrant and represent that you will provide full and accurate information to NI Water and the Contractor in connection with the Project, including any information which might impact NI Water's assessment of the suitability of your farm for the Project.
8. Other Weeds: The project's primary focus will be on rush control, however the Contractor will also consider control of other weeds, e.g. thistles or nettles as part of the Project. These weeds are also eligible for treatment under the Project if they can be effectively treated using a weed wiper.
9. Use of MCPA and Follow Up: In return for the free weed wiping, NI Water encourage you not to use any pesticide product containing MCPA within the Catchment Area for the 2-year duration of the Project. You are also encouraged to arrange a follow up weed-wiping with the Contractor in the second year of the Project.
10. Confidentiality: All information supplied by the farmer in connection with this agreement and project shall be treated as confidential by NI Water.
11. Termination: Both you and NI Water have the right to terminate the weed-wiping Project applicable to your farm at any point at not less than 1 weeks' notice, in your case, and 1 days' notice, in NI Water's case. Notice may be served by the Contractor or Farm Liaison Officer on NI Water's behalf.
12. Entire Agreement: This Agreement constitutes whole agreement between NI Water to the exclusion of any other arrangement or understanding between you and us, whether written or oral, relating to its subject matter.

Project Agreement

- I / We understand the responsibilities and conditions discussed previously in the information pack, application form and the NI Water/Farmer Agreement Declaration, and agree that they shall apply to my take up of the Project.
- The information given in this form is correct and I take full responsibility for it.
- A farm map showing the areas proposed for weed-wiping must accompany your completed application form.
- Applications will be accepted until 30th of April 2017. In exceptional circumstances, applications will be accepted after this date.

I hereby declare that I am in acceptance of the requirements of the NI Water/Farmer weed-wiping agreement 2017/2018 as detailed above.

This declaration must be signed by the person who is responsible for actively farming the land.

Signature of applicant:	Print name in BLOCK Letters:	Date:

Application forms must be returned via post to the following address by 30th April 2017:

NI Water Weedwiping Project,
41 Seagoe Industrial Estate, Craigavon, Co Armagh, BT63 5QE

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Contact us

Further details of NI Water's 'Rush Solution without Pollution' free weed-wiping trial can be found at

www.niwater.com/watercatchment

or by e-mail at weedwiping@niwater.com

or by contacting our Farm Liaison Officer on **07803799217**.

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

Roy Taylor

Water Catchment Partnership Team,

NI Water,

Westland House,

40 Old Westland Road,

Belfast,

BT14 6TE

If you have a disability, medical condition or other reason where you will need special assistance from NI Water then please contact us. We record calls for quality and training purposes.

