



Water clarity

What's the issue? *Water clarity is the visual assessment of the load of dissolved or particulate matter carried in the river or loch water. Suspended sediments are caused by soil erosion in fields or of the river banks. This often becomes much worse in heavy rain or snow melt. High suspended sediment loads damage ecosystems by covering the river bed in fine sediment, stopping light penetration into the water and carrying contaminants such as nutrients and pathogens.*

Taking the measurement



Who? Any observer without any training, who is passing a river or loch can make a useful measurement.



Your safety Remember DO NOT go alongside the river or loch if: you can't swim, the water is too deep or fast moving, or if you are alone.



How long does it take? 2 minutes



Equipment needed No specialist equipment needed.



How to measure If safe to do so, look down into the water and see how easy it is to observe features below the surface. Then use the descriptive scale below to categorise the water clarity. Use the comments box to tell us if you think it is particles of soil, or algae in the water, or the brown colouration of water from peaty soils.



Tips If it has recently been raining heavily tell us in the comments box. Do you think the river has just started to rise following the rain, or is the flow decreasing?

Definitions



Clear Very good light penetration and easy to see through the water column.



Cloudy A milky colouration is seen to the water as you look through it.



Opaque Substantial loss of transparency, water has a chocolate brown colour.