

## Classification 2009: Explanatory illustration

What pressures are currently impacting on the biology of our rivers and lakes?

Classification is a way of reporting the health of a river or lake. It can indicate where the quality of the environment is good and where it may need improvement. This illustration shows one of the challenges facing our water environment, and can help give an idea of how to protect it.

Biology affected by river conditions



fish



macrophytes  
(water plants)



diatoms  
(microscopic algae)

### Too many nutrients

Plants and animals living in our rivers, lakes and seas need nutrients to survive. But too many nutrients can harm fish and other aquatic life. If too much organic waste (for example from farming or sewage) is put into a system, the bacteria will require large amounts of oxygen to break up this waste. Oxygen levels in the water may drop too low and only the toughest organisms can survive. Diatoms and macrophytes can quickly dominate the water. In extreme cases visible blooms of algae can appear.

