



<b>Project Name:</b>	Environmental Limits – A Scoping Study
<b>Funded by:</b>	Defra: <b>D</b> evelopment for <b>F</b> ood, the Environment, and <b>R</b> ural <b>A</b> ffairs (UK)
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<b>Duration:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2005 – 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2006

### Project Overview:

To meet the goals of the UK's Strategy for Sustainable Development, and European agreements made following the Gothenburg Summit in 2001, policy developers must understand the constraints imposed on their decisions by the environment. The identification of these environmental limits or thresholds is complex, due to the wide range of study areas, and consideration of the biophysical, social and economic factors. There are many different types of environmental limits, referred to in different ways, e.g. thresholds, boundaries, minimum standards, and biological capacity. The main area of study concerns limits that are relevant to the resilience of the natural environment to the impact of human activities, and the effects of these impacts on the provision of ecosystem goods and services. The focus of the project is to assess the current body of information on environmental limits and their relation to natural resources.

### The role of CEM:

The tools to enable policy customers to understand the way in which environmental thresholds or limits are determined, are unevenly developed across all the topic areas included in Defra's remit. The scoping study will provide an overview of the current 'state of the art' in each of the topic areas, based on a set of review material generated by experts in each of the different fields, so that the policy advisors in the UK can be informed about: the ways in which environmental thresholds or limits are defined using scientific and social criteria; the robustness of the evidence base that is available to them are dealing with threshold issues in a policy context; and, the gaps in existing knowledge and the extent to which these might be overcome by further work, based on position papers written by experts in the fields and workshop discussion of the results. The outcomes will be a final report, a special issue of the position papers, and a database of the references used during the project.

**Links:** <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/natres/evidence.htm>