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Life support

In 2007-2008 during a residency with the environment agency these series of architectural interventions were made at a site managed by the environment agency in Kielder, Northumberland. Here is an explanation of the functional aspect of the site from the environment agency.

‘Freshwater Pearl Mussels

Pearl mussels live in fast flowing rivers and they can reach an age of 100 years. They produce a larval stage in summer which attaches to salmon before dropping off to grow into a mussel the following year. Pearl mussels are very rare and declining, and the North Tyne has one of the most important populations in England. As part of our drive to enhance wildlife, the Environment Agency is working to conserve pearl mussels by stocking salmon which hold the larvae to the River North Tyne.

This artificial stream has been designed by artist Joseph Hillier to provide near natural conditions for the mussels to breed and release their larvae to attach to salmon in the connected circular tank. These salmon will then be stocked to the River Tyne. The mussels you can see in the stream are around 60 years old. The stainless steel structures celebrate the sinuous form of the mussel and provide protection and shade to both the salmon and mussels.’