

REGIONAL FISHERIES GROUP

Meeting Notes Monday 26th July 2021

Area 4c

15:00 – 17:00 MS Teams Conference Call

Attendees:

DEFRA

Phil McBryde

CEFAS

Carl O'Brian

Jim Ellis

MMO

Justin Rowley (Chair)

Paul Tyack

Edward Baker

Julian Roberts

IFCA

Julian Gregory (Eastern)

William Wright (Kent and Essex)

INDUSTRY

Ken Bagley

Wayne Brewster

Paul Gilson

Fran French

Jonny French

Ashley Mullenger

James White

June Mummy

Paul Lines

1. Fisheries Management Plans

Deferred for another meeting as DEFRA representative was not available.

2. Quota

See appendix 1 for summary of catch limit discussion.

Additional quota – comment from industry that it appears the non-sector/U10 fleet are provided with additional quota in stocks they do not need but lack quota in stocks they need such as bass and Spurdog.

Request for data on Cockles

Request for update on catch limits for Thames and Blackwater herring

3. Collaborative Science Discussion

NS Sole

Industry concern that the decline in sole is spreading along the coast.

Carl O'Brien (CEFAS) explained that in response to industry requests to investigate the abundance of Sole in the North Sea, the research vessel Endeavour has been tasked to include sole abundance surveys in the current North Sea survey work.

Carl and Jim Ellis explained that part of the reason for the high TACs compared to the low level of landings of NS Sole is the fact that estimates of recruitment into the stock were ultimately higher than reality.

Industry want an assessment of the stock inside 12nm and there is concern over the fact that fishing restrictions in the Wash mean that the presence of sole is not seen in landings. CEFAS acknowledge a better understanding of the Wash is required.

This is also the case for NS Plaice and **Carl is bringing this up with ICES**

NS Cod

CEFAS explained that the assessment area for NS Cod is much larger than the area relevant to the inshore fisheries in the Southern NS and that there is a lack of abundance in the Southern NS compared to areas in the North. There is a disconnect between the survey information and how this is turned into TACs by fisheries managers.

Thornback Ray

Industry are seeing this species in increasing numbers even on the beach and in rivers.

CEFAS have funding for a 1-year study on abundance but note that Thornback Ray have moved between Area 4c and 7d and the UK quota for Skate in 7d is comparatively small.

The EU/UK Specialist committee for fisheries has agreed to consider how best to interpret ICES advice for Skate quotas.

Spurdog

Industry – the fishery was destroyed in one summer by Norwegian long lines and the stock is susceptible to overfishing.

CEFAS advised that there is a tag and release program under way. The stock is increasing since it bottomed out in 2002 but is still significantly less than in the 60s/70s. ICES have assessed this as a non-target fishery it is a political decision whether to allow any by-catch landings but it is currently judged that by-catches are low compared to the SW where they are caught predominantly in trawl fisheries.

Other comments

DEFRA informed that Ministers are aware of challenges faced on the coast but could not confirm if they are aware of specific species issues.

Industry have said they do not want to speak with government because they think it is just 'lip service'

4. Grants

MMO grants team were unable to attend. Details on current FASS scheme are:

Webpages link - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fisheries-and-seafood-scheme>

Telephone: 020802 65539

Email: FaSS.queries@marinemanagement.org.uk

Please contact the team if you have any questions.

AOB

Bass

Industry request for a bass fishery in the Thames and Wash again.

CEFAS and DEFRA explained that the stock is still recovering, and the science does not support targeted fishery. The current measures are for bycatch only. They explained that areas of local abundance are needed to help expand the wider stock. A slight increase in the quantity that can be landed as a by catch from trawls has been made to 380kg per month instead of 500kg for 2 months, but the 5% limit remains in place.

Industry questioned how much enforcement was going into bass regulations.

Since 1 January 2021 there have been 29 cases of enforcement action relating to bass regulations.

Mussels

Industry concern regarding potential closure of mussel beds.

Eastern IFCA explained they are doing survey work to ensure they have enough evidence to make a decision and they will not close unless absolutely necessary.

Windfarms

Industry concern that there is no room left to fish due to presence of windfarms.

Eastern IFCA and the Wash Fishery Order

Industry requested a face to face meeting to discuss the 'Wash Order'.

DEFRA explained that multiple meetings have already been held to discuss this and DEFRA support the IFCA's processes to assess this.

Appendix 1

Stock	U10's Comments	O10's comments	Additional quota
NS Cod	Why are there no fish? Catch limits higher than needed		

4c 7d Herring	No Comment	No comment	
NS Mackerel	Industry – the U10s cannot catch their allocation because the fish is being caught by super trawlers.		
NS Skate	No comment	No comment	
NS Sole	Industry concern that the catch limits are too high, and the stock will get overfished.		
NS Sprat	No comment		