

Skates and Rays Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) Working Group Meeting

Meeting One

Online MS Teams 10 October 2023

The comments below were received by Working Group (WG) members during a WG meeting on October 10 2023. Due to the fast-paced nature of the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) development process, some draft proposals may have changed at the time these minutes are published and not all comments considered prior to public consultation.

Agenda

1. Intro to the FMP, discussion on FMP species concerns and process for developing management measures.

- Are there data on catches rather than landings? Difference between what is caught and what is landed which causes management challenges.
- Important to get a picture of the effort in the area to look at localised fisheries.
- Biggest concern to raise is wanting to know where some skates and rays have disappeared to. Prices are low so when there aren't any this is an issue.
- Survey index has dropped for the last 2 years. But still well above long term average.
- 4c inshore liners catch thornback.
- Big problem with the fly shooters within the Southern North Sea.
- Thornbacks – quite a few around where a Working Group (WG) member is. Torbay recreational catch results have a lot of thornbacks as well as the blondes.
- Issues with undulate ray, prohibition has caused some choke issues, recommend FMP to investigate this.

2. Engagement Plans

- How do you engage with charter boat owners? Not only through Angling Trust but IFCA angling representatives. Key to engage with Charter boats.
- Need to learn lessons from the other FMPs and be clear what role the WG will have in the development of the FMP. WG needs to be aware of what is going on in engagement events.
 - AM - We are learning from previous FMPs and keeping new FMP working groups light touch and will only convene the working group when we have specific elements of the FMP, we want working input on. Making sure key

deliverables of the FMP are right. We want to keep it as efficient as possible to try and reduce stakeholder fatigue.

- Common skate fished in area 8 - was a fishery going back a few years and became a prohibited species but seeing increased abundance now. Fishers in Newlyn looking into this and seeing if population is rebounding, and a fishery could be built back up. Desk top review of common skate would be good.
- Beam trawl surveys are going up for common skate/ blue skate. Eastward expansion and the population do seem to be recovering but does not cover larger individuals of that species.
- Question around how skates and rays stocks in other parts of the country are being managed as they are important in the Irish sea and Bristol Channel too.
 - AM unsure how these are being managed – but will look into it.
- Can the working group see the evidence plan at this stage? Missing an opportunity to get working group views on evidence. Sense checking of some of the information that is being put out needs considering as some information in other FMPs has not been true on the ground.
 - AM - Need to understand if we can share this. The key role of the FMP WG is to get input into these documents.
- English Channel engagement – No event in Southern IFCA district, online events would be good for people to engage on this FMP with.
 - AM - Could do a separate session in Weymouth / Poole and cover the southern IFCA district.

3. Questions for the Working Group

- WG membership – Difficult to know as some people do not recognise people on the call need to make sure there is sufficient representatives from all FMP areas. Many people have not come because of stakeholder fatigue. This is an important FMP and people have just finished consulting on Frontrunner FMPs. Deadlines causing massive issues.
 - AM - Deadlines are set and we cannot move them. That is why we are trying to take a lighter touch approach to engagement.
- Are the FMPs looking at management because the deadlines are shorter or are they going to highlight potential changes to management and where research needs to be focused.
 - AM - We are not at a stage yet where we know this. Management for skates and rays is patchy and the FMP can make recommendations.
- Surprised that Mevagissey is on the list as it is limited in terms of catches.
 - If we need to go somewhere else, then let us know.
- When is publication date?
 - Publication is end of 2024 and should be going out for consultation around Summer 2024.

4. Agree Terms of Reference

Agreement/ not read it.

5. Next Meeting

Doodle poll to be sent out.

MEETING CLOSED

Attendees:

Alex Maydew (chair)	MMO Fisheries Management Plans Team
Rachel Thirlwall (minutes)	MMO Fisheries Management Plans Team
Fran French	West Mersea Fisherman's Association
Harry Owen	Exeter and Brixham
Juliette Hatchman	Southwest Fish Producers Organisation
Martyn Youell	Waterdance (trawlers, netters, and potters)
George Balchin	Conservation and Research Manager at Sussex IFCA (Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority)
Sarah Clark	Deputy Chief Officer Devon and Severn IFCA
Jack Bennet	Fisheries Conversation Officer Shark Trust
Jim Ellis	Elasmobranch Specialist
Judith Farrell	Humberside Fish Producers Organisation
Alison Atterborne	Senior Fisheries Biologist Natural England
Will Wright	Chief Officer Kent and Essex IFCA
Simon Cadman	Principal Enforcement Officer Cornwall IFCA
Kieran Hyder	Recreational Fisheries Lead Cefas.