



# Marine Management Organisation

**Date:** 12 December 2024

**Location:** MS Teams

**Subject:** Wrasse Complex FMP Working Group (WG) 2

**Attendees:**

Name	Affiliation
Kate Drewery	Defra, Non-Quota Species Team
Grant Horsburgh	Defra, Non-Quota Species Team
Rui Vieira	Cefas
Jim Ellis	Cefas
Kieran Hyder	Cefas
Zachary Radford	Cefas
Sarah Clark	Devon & Severn IFCA
Sarah Birchenough	Southern IFCA
Imogen Wright	Southern IFCA
Mat Mander	Devon & Severn IFCA
Hannah Rudd	Angling Trust
Peter Davies	University of Plymouth
Lauren Stewart	Defra, Wrasse academic
Antony Jensen	University of Southampton
Calum Pritchard	University of Aberdeen, Wrasse academic
Edgar Moxom	Commercial fisher, Plymouth University liaison
MMO FMP Team	

**Apologies:**

Name	Affiliation
Tom Russell	Commercial fisher
Richard Stride	Commercial fisher, South Coast Fishermen's Council

**Agenda:**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- The MMO thanked members for their participation.
- Due to similar stakeholder interests, the Wrasses Complex FMP and Black Seabream FMP are being developed in tandem. Working Group meetings for the two projects will be held as consecutive sessions to enable the most effective and efficient engagement for members.

**2. Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR) acceptance**

In the last meeting, Working Group members were asked to consider and review the ToR, providing comments or amendments to the MMO FMP team by 1 November 2024. No comments were received via email, and no objections were received in this meeting. It is assumed that the WG ToR has been accepted in the absence of feedback

Please find the published WG ToR here:

[WC FMP BSB FMP Working Group WG Terms of Reference ToR .pdf](#)

**3. Overview of the Wrasses Complex FMP**

**4. Review and discussion of DRAFT FMP policies**

**WG feedback**

Policy 1:

- No comments

Policy 2 (Much of the WG feedback encompassed both Policies 1 and 2):

- A WG member asked whether the Sea Angling Diary could help with wrasse data gathering.
  - A WG member noted that currently wrasse species are grouped under one code in UK Sea Angling Information Library (UKSAIL) because of concerns around species ID. A WG member was happy to work with MMO to improve recreational data, noting the error will increase with separate species as a result of decreased sample size. Suggested that the FMP process could encourage diarists for sea angling diary to increase and improve data collection and reporting. Angling data could be used to improve our understanding of the distribution of seabream as they are not often caught in Cefas surveys.

- Several WG members questioned the use of the term “policy” over “action”.
  - A WG member agreed that improving data quality is a policy but noted that policy one and two are the same. WG member would not use the term “stock assessment” at all and suggested consideration of different wording. WG member reiterated that Policy one and two are not policies but “actions” or “goals”. The policy would be more around improving the status of the stock.
  - A WG member noted that what MMO are now calling policies, Cefas are calling goals. It would be useful if terminology was consistent across FMPs.
  - WG member mentioned there is new guidance from Defra that goals are now ‘Policy Goals’. WG member also agreed that these are more evidence gathering actions. Suggested contacting the Defra policy team to get a steer on the wording.
  - A WG member said that there is expected to be guidance soon around standardizing the language. Wording should keep expectation right with stakeholders.
- WG member suggested: changing the wording of the policy to merge policy 1 and 2.
- A WG member highlighted that it is important to consider the cost versus benefit for actions on wrasse. Noted important recreational first catch species but it could be worth putting something in about the cost benefit to avoid creating more downstream work at the implementation stage. Noted the important ecosystem impacts that go beyond economic value.
  - MMO responded that this is the first block of thinking and so includes all ideas, it is likely this will need to be prioritised, which could involve a cost-benefit analysis.
  - A WG member questioned whether work on wrasse can be dovetailed with other species/FMPs, achieving better value for money.
  - A WG member mentioned that Ecosystem functioning can be prioritised for “data rich” wrasse species to offer a proxy for other similar wrasse species.
  - A WG member mentioned that in Scotland fishers are keen to be involved in Scottish surveys. They explained that each week, fishers need to report number of wrasse individuals and type of species they catch in the first 20 wrasse pots that are deployed. Wants to investigate how to collect data from fishers. Fisher self-reporting is a cheaper way to bring them on board without needing to run a formal survey.
  - A WG member noted the risk of not setting expectations at the right level with the funding available. It is understood that striking the right balance is difficult as you also do not want to leave out valuable information. Suggested including a

paragraph in the FMP setting the expectation of what will be possible with what is available.

- A WG member also highlighted that science-industry partnerships will be key in achieving evidence-related FMP actions.
- A WG member highlighted that policy 7 could be the place to manage socioeconomic expectations and introduce a cost-benefit analysis.

#### Policy 3:

- A WG member asked whether it might be possible to include something similar to the Channel FMP regarding the handling of wrasse to improve survivability, as this would be a quick win in the short-term.
- A WG member mentioned that consideration is needed with regard to the wording being used and managing expectations. One needs to think about the use of the phrase stock assessment here.
- A WG member noted that we know nothing about wrasse post-release survival. WG Member believes that currently, that in terms of prioritising evidence gathering, this is far more important than age, growth and maturity as we do have some limited existing biological data.
  - MMO responded that there are issues with post release survival (barotrauma), and information on how to revive a fish with barotrauma could be useful.
  - A WG member responded that collecting more survivability data is important but there are things that can be done now with the actions in the short term. An example from Florida of the type of things that are possible is that all boats must have descending devices for snapper in Florida [<https://returnemright.org/>].
  - MMO noted they have also been shown how wrasse with barotrauma can be revived in buckets.
  - A WG member noted that there is a global review of catch and release. New studies are very expensive and difficult to do. Suggested we try to read across from other research and use this in the short term.

#### Policy 4:

- A WG member was informed in the past that the live wrasse fishery was expected to decline over time as wrasse will be cultured and grown. The live fishery is a worry and seems to be following this natural decline. Concerns raised around the ethics of maintaining the live wrasse fishery. The IFCAs, who have brought management into

place have restricted the fishery geographically. There is a very limited area in IFCA districts that live wrasse fishing can take place.

- MMO responded that the FMP is being open and looking to monitor the longevity of the fishery and if necessary, it may be able to bring in management to restrict this fishery from getting larger. However, if there is no evidence to suggest any concerns then the FMP has now jurisdiction to close a fishery. There are other organisations, e.g., RSPCA, who can also influence change here.
- A WG member noted the demand for live wrasse decreasing in the Southern IFCA district.
- A WG member mentioned that Devon and Severn IFCA limited the spatial extent of the fishery, the level of effort and implemented different Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) for the individual species. Lots of research was conducted to result in the management implemented.

#### Policy 5

- A WG member said that although anecdotal evidence is unsubstantiated, the reported increased presence of lice and the subsequent impact may be very real.
  - WG member reported that they have recently seen much larger sea lice offshore where you get fewer wrasse. Therefore, one must also consider factors such as climatic changes.
- A WG member believed that the first short term action is completely unrealistic and not feasible. Asked why genetic studies are being conducted and what the outcome of this will be for the policy goal. Need to revisit the wording to leave it as open as possible for the right study to be put forward. Genetic analysis is expensive.
- A WG member mentioned that there have been studies on wrasse genetics and there was not much differentiation between populations. Noted that there are problems with genetic studies.
- A WG member highlighted that they collected genetic data as part of their PhD. It has not been analysed fully due to lack of funding. The research was going to look at understanding population structure on the south coast of the UK to understand management unit size of wrasse. Believed this is important given the regional management approach. Need to better understand whether this is the right approach to take.
  - A WG member agreed that genetics is one tool to help define management units, and this comes with its own positives and limitations. Noted that ICES considers multiple tools to define assessment areas.

#### Policy 6

- No comments.

#### Policy 7

- A WG member highlighted that it would be good to include charter boats or a more inclusive term for all anglers, in the reasoning paragraph.
- A WG member queried the use of the word “optimise” with regards to socioeconomics. Asked why optimise this fishery over others and in which way? The wording in this section perhaps needs to be revisited.

#### Schematic feedback

- A WG member asked what was meant by stock assessment and if there was a method the team has in mind.
  - MMO noted that there are numerous existing methodologies available. MMO recommended using these pre-existing resources before developing new ones, emphasising that this is more of an implementation consideration.
- A WG member noted that the positioning of the arrows makes it seem like there is a timeline at the top that is linked to the schematic.

### **5. Next Steps**

### **6. Wrasses Complex FMP and Black Seabream FMP Stakeholder Engagement Plans**

#### WG feedback:

- WG members appreciated that many of the workshops are in the evening.
  - Concerns were raised about advertising around Christmas and recent timelines.
  - A WG member expressed willingness to support spreading engagement message through the Angling Trust.
  - A WG member based in Shoreham had a list of anglers and netters and was willing to assist with communications.
  - A WG Member suggested Fisherman's College as a potential engagement location in Lyme Regis.
- Overall feedback from the WG was to consider the balance of having draft policies ready to discuss at the workshop versus open-ended discussion. While some structure

is important to facilitate effective dialogue, presenting draft policies may send the wrong message to stakeholders.

- A WG Member questioned what was expected from stakeholders and how their input would be integrated into the process. Emphasised the need for transparency and the value of stakeholder contributions. Highlighted that stakeholders often felt uninformed or believed that policies were pre-determined, urging for better transparency regarding their level of input.
  - A WG member suggested leading with asking stakeholders what management measures they would like to see, using examples from other contexts or asking how they would adapt them.
  - Advised caution in engaging with policies, suggesting that presenting evidence and asking for development ideas might be more effective than proposing management or policies.
  - MMO agreed to look into how to best change the workshop format to reflect this feedback.
- A WG Member expressed opinions about stakeholder fatigue and recommended consulting Defra and ICFA about lessons learned from previous tranches.
- A WG Member also emphasised the need to really explain the legislative reasoning behind FMPs, their jurisdiction and the development/implementation process. that recreational fishers lacked experience with FMPs and suggested providing more background context as part of the engagement to clarify the policy process.
- A WG member raised a question about the Scottish government's actions, noting its importance for understanding stock structure.

## **7. AOB**

- WG was encouraged to circulate the Wrasses Complex FMP & Black Seabream FMP online survey to any contacts they have.
- FMP team welcomes any feedback on the internal pre-engagement report to be sent by the 6 of January 2025.

The MMO highlighted that if any members had any further points they would like to put forward, please send them via email ([fmp@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:fmp@marinemanagement.org.uk))

## **Appendix 1: Actions**

Reference	Action description	Assigned to
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12/12/2024/01	Provide feedback on the <u>internal</u> pre-engagement report to be sent by the 6 <sup>th</sup> of January 2025.	All WG members
12/12/2024/02	When published online, disseminate January workshops/engagement information through Angling Trust.	WG member
12/12/2024/06	Review Policy Goals and workshop agendas based on WG feedback	FMP team