

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee

7th February 2014: 10:00am

REPORT
NUMBER

9

NORTH MORECAMBE BAY SEED MUSSEL DREDGE FISHERY – TRACK RECORD

Background

Under the proposals in the Morecambe Bay Hybrid Fishery Order, the allocation procedure for hand-gathering licences is a tiered points system based on proven active and material participation in the Morecambe Bay cockle and mussel fisheries.

It is proposed to also incorporate an allocation system based on proven track record for seed mussel dredge licences either under the Order if it is granted by the time of the fishery in 2014, or for use under existing byelaw authorisation should the Order not be in place by then. Due to the increased interest in this fishery there is now a necessity to have a mechanism for limiting numbers of authorisations or licences issued, or for restricting catch per vessel (setting quota) should demand outweigh stock levels or capacity of the area in order to ensure sustainability of the fishery and ensure no risk of damage to any conservation features within the Morecambe Bay EMS.

Track Record

Under EU legislation a fishing vessel's 'track record' is the amount of the particular species of fish which it caught in any calendar year which forms the basis on which it is allocated quota for a subsequent year. The basis for allocating quota for a particular quota year is established by reference to the track record of that vessel over a number of previous years. For all intents and purposes schemes are complicated and based on a number of factors. Officers do not propose to bring in a complicated system for seed mussel dredging but there are a number of principles that could be adopted / adapted.

Officers would suggest that TSB use the following points for the basis of discussion, in order to develop a track record system acceptable to the Authority.

- a) Track record can be determined from a defined set of years – for Morecambe Bay seed mussel dredging it is proposed this should be defined as the period from the granting of the Morecambe Bay Mussel Fishery Order (1978) up to this year ie. 1978 – 2013.
- b) For Morecambe Bay seed mussel dredging it would be more appropriate to assign track record to a company or individual who has been actively involved in this fishery than to a vessel. Vessels have changed hands over the years, and vessel track record could preclude long-standing and known operators in favour of unknown operators who have had no investment or ownership of the fishery.
- c) Track record is not saleable or transferable. It remains with the company / individual.
- d) Track record cannot be increased or transferred by purchase or transfer from another company / individual.
- e) Track record can be used solely to allocate the number of licences / authorisations issued in a year or to also allocate the resource based on amounts fished during the defined track record period. The NW&NWSFC and NWIFCA have hard-copy landings returns which

have been required under the old Order and under recent authorisations on which to base this allocation.

- f) Track record could also include a requirement to prove reliance on the stock during the defined track record period.

Mandy Knott
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29th January 2014