

BIOSECURITY PLANS

Purpose of Report

To inform members of the Cefas recommendation that IFCAs implement biosecurity plans in relation to disease and non-native invasive species.

Recommendations

1. That the report be received.
2. That members consider whether to instruct officers to draw up a draft Biosecurity Plan for approval by the TSB.
3. That members consider whether such a Plan should cover:
 - a) the area to be covered by the Morecambe Bay Fishery Order (MBFO) or
 - b) the whole NWIFCA District.

Background

1. The application of biosecurity in aquaculture is a shared responsibility. Each individual involved plays a different but critical role in the implementation of the overall programme. This highlights the fact that, in order to be effective, biosecurity is necessary at all levels within aquaculture industry, from the control of infectious disease spread at an international level, to the development of national controls and down to operation of suitable practices at a local level. In these terms, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) monitors the status of international diseases, our government (through Cefas) is responsible for controlling biosecurity within national limits, and Aquaculture Production Businesses (APBs) are responsible for biosecurity within their enterprises¹.
2. In the context of shellfish farming, disease prevention is the only effective measure. Once a disease is present within a harvesting area it is difficult to control and there is little possibility of eradication. There are many examples throughout the world where introduced diseases have had devastating effects on sectors of the shellfish farming industry. The spread of *Bonamia* sp. in native oysters within the UK is just one example².

¹ Eastern IFCA Biosecurity Plan 2010

² Eastern IFCA Biosecurity Plan 2010

3. During consultation with Defra and Defra partners over the MBFO Cefas recommended that the NWIFCA should consider drawing up a Biosecurity Plan, particularly in relation to Several Areas and aquaculture operations. It has now been written into the Management Plan for the Order that the NWIFCA will draw up and implement such a Plan.
4. The NWIFCA District is shellfish disease free at present, and it would be advisable to incorporate management measures to ensure this situation continues. Many other areas suffer shellfish diseases such as *Marteiliosis*, *Bonamiosis* and *Minchinia* sp., believed to be the cause of mass cockle mortalities in the Wash and Burry Inlet fisheries. The risk of the spread of such diseases into our District through vectors such as fishing vessels, gear, even cockle bags, needs to be examined and if necessary measures implemented as a prevention.
5. Shellfish resources in the District, particularly seed mussel, have become extremely important to the UK and Ireland's mariculture industry due to their disease-free status. It is essential that this situation continues.
6. At least three non-native species have been reported within Morecambe Bay and the Duddon Estuary area: leathery sea-squirt (*Styela clava*), Japweed (*Sargassum muticum*) and Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*). The most recent sighting of Chinese Mitten Crab was reported to the NWIFCA on 12th April 2012 – an adult female carrying eggs was found on 30th March at Millom Pier (South Cumbria Rivers Trust via the Environment Agency). Apparently this is the fourth report from this site in 7 years. This has impacted on the work of the NWIFCA around the authorisation of seed mussel dredging at South America (North Morecambe Bay) this year.
7. Chinese Mitten Crab is reported to be established in the Dee Estuary and was a serious issue affecting the fishery for under-size mussel at West Kirby earlier this year. Officers sought advice from the TSB at the time about our obligations regarding non-natives found within a fishery, and the risks associated with their transference to other areas, as may be the case with relaying of mussels.
8. Eastern IFCA have a biosecurity plan for the Wash Fishery Order area, and are willing for other IFCAs to use it as a template (<http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/documents/Biosecurity%20Plan%202010.pdf>). South Cumbria Rivers Trust also has a plan and produce an educational leaflet for stakeholders (<http://www.scrtr.co.uk/biosecurity/biosecurity>).
9. There is a statutory requirement on Aquaculture Production Businesses to have Biosecurity Plans in relation to disease.
10. Besides the fact it would be good practice, a Biosecurity Plan and associated management measures would provide the framework under which Officers and operators would work to minimise risks and protect stocks and biodiversity into the future.

Science and Morecambe Bay Fishery Order Officer
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