

SOUTH MORECAMBE BAY

ARNSIDE TO KNOTT END

Senior Fishery Officer, S. J. Waite

TRAWLING

During this last quarter I have observed no activity taking place on a commercial basis in this fishery. Fishermen associated with the fishery returned their inshore boats to their seasonal moorings during the last quarter. Although fishermen have concentrated their efforts in other seasonal fisheries, I expect effort in this fishery to improve during the next quarter.

As with the last quarter, I have observed no activity in this fishery from fishermen working on a hobby basis.

SHRIMPS

During this last quarter fishermen associated with the inshore shrimp fishery have continued to work on a regular basis. Landings throughout the last quarter have proved better than in corresponding years. As a result fishermen are optimistic about the inshore shrimp fishery this season. Due to landings improving on the last quarter, effort from fishermen working their inshore boats on a part time basis has increased again with good landings being checked and reported.

During this last quarter I have also observed an increase in activity from hobby fishermen working push nets working between the Morecambe Stone Jetty and Heysham Harbour. Landings have shown a marked improvement on the last quarter.

Fishermen associated with the inshore fishery continue to voice their concerns regarding the future introduction of the Marine Conservation Zones. Although at present there are no plans to turn Morecambe Bay into a Marine Conservation Zone, fishermen have voiced concerns regarding the possible increase to the traditional inshore fishery from inshore fishermen currently working other areas.

COCKLES

During this last period I have observed no activity taking place in this fishery. I have, however, had occasional reports of 3–4 Chinese ladies removing small amounts of cockles on a very occasional basis. During this last quarter I have continued to check all the cockle beds in my area but have seen no improvement in stocks of both mature and immature cockle. As a result all beds in the Morecambe Bay area remain closed.

MUSSELS

During this period I have observed no harvesting of mussels on any of the recognised skears between Bare and Heysham Harbour. Mussels have continued to be harvested on a very occasional basis from skears in the Knott End area. Effort, however, remains extremely low key.

During this last quarter I have continued to monitor all mussel beds in my area on a regular basis. The early signs of seed on Heysham Flat Skear, mentioned in my last report, have proved disappointing due to large areas of both seed and mature mussel having been stripped away by wind and tidal influence. I have observed very few skears with any sign of either seed or mature mussels in commercial quantities.

During this last quarter I have continued to collect shellfish samples for Lancaster City Council and Wyre District Council.

DRIFT STAKE AND SET NETS

Fisherman associated with the inshore drift net fishery returned their inshore drift net boats to their seasonal moorings after their winter overhaul. Effort in this fishery remains poor with fishermen associated with the inshore drift net fishery concentrating their efforts in other seasonal fisheries. Early reports proved very disappointing with very few Bass being caught. Fishermen, however, have noticed a slight improvement in landings towards the end of this quarter and have also reported an increase in undersize Bass being landed in recent years.

During this last quarter I have observed the return of both stake or set nets throughout my area although effort has proved disappointing. Fishermen associated with the fishery have reported a few Plaice, occasional small Bass and a few large Smooth Hounds being caught. Their efforts have also been compounded by large amounts of seaweed.

DINGHY AND SHORE ANGLING

Effort has steadily increased throughout this last quarter. Anglers have reported landings of Plaice, Dabs, a large quantity of undersize Bass and mature fish being landed. Fishermen have also continued to catch Smooth Hounds as mentioned in my last report.

Effort during this last period by shore anglers has continued to take place over high and low water tides at the top end of Morecambe Bay, the Stone Jetty at Morecambe, Heysham and Arnside. Effort and fish landings have, however, proved poor with the exception of the Heysham Bass Nursery Area. This area has been checked on both day and night time tides. Fishermen continue to fish the area for Bass although very few landed are of a legal size. I have observed fishermen continually landing circa 50+ undersize Bass only to throw them back damaged. This practice should not be occurring in a Bass Nursery Area and will continue to be checked on a regular basis throughout the next quarter.