

CENTRAL AREA

RIVER WYRE TO RIVER ALT

Senior Fishery Officer, S. Brown

TRAWLING

One full time inshore trawler and one inshore twin beam trawler have worked regularly from Fleetwood despite the unseasonable weather conditions.

Reasonable catches including some sole have been taken from Lune Deep, catches of plaice and roker from the "Edge of the Bank" below Shell Wharf.

The area's one remaining larger trawler is struggling with many of her traditional prawn grounds now being lost to windfarms.

SHRIMPING

The Lytham shrimp boats have benefited from the Ribble changing its course to the west. The shift has provided a productive and sheltered area from which modest landings have been taken throughout the spring season.

The flatter areas along the Sefton coast have not been as productive, the onshore winds and variable temperatures resulting in extremely erratic fishing conditions. Some respectable landings have been made from the Penfold Channel and Southport however many of the shrimp fishermen have also been laid up for prolonged periods.

Reports from push and hand netters along the Fylde Coast reflect a similar story of erratic conditions, catches have however generally been sufficient for domestic purposes.

COCKLES AND MUSSELS

The prospect of the developing Southport cockle fishery is the source of a great deal of excitement within the industry. The reality is a lot more prosaic.

We have experienced very significant losses of stock to this year's unseasonable weather conditions. The Penfold Channel beds have contracted to their traditional size and hold modest stocks of cockle that is still mostly just undersize.

There have been similar losses on the North Ribble beds off Lytham and St Annes. The bed in the N. Run at St Annes appears to have survived the worst ravages of the weather but sitting as high as it does the cockles generally grow much slower than those in more sheltered areas.

The Belfast mussel dredger 'Drie Gebroeders' B927 has been transshipping seed mussel from the Morecambe Bay fishery through Fleetwood to Ireland. The transshipment process proved too traumatic for the seed mussel and led to unacceptably high losses in transit. This combined with the crane used for landing breaking through the quay (it made a very substantial hole) brought a stop to this operation. The operator was however extremely impressed with the potential of the seed mussel fishery in Morecambe Bay, he is looking into more efficient means of moving seed mussel to his lays in Ireland.

NETS, POTS AND COMMERCIAL ANGLING

The growing fleet of small registered fast boats based at Fleetwood is beginning to show the area's potential. Lobster landings have been a little disappointing so most vessels have concentrated on the Bass fishery. Some respectable landings have been made from drift nets but rod fishing has proved far more productive. Some very productive landings have been made by individuals skilled in this method of fishing.

The Lytham drift netters have worked steadily, modest landings of Bass have been observed.

Set nets have been seen or reported on Salters Bank, along the Lower Penfold Channel, off Ainsdale and out on Tailors Bank. Catches have reflected the weather conditions, generally poor and a little erratic.

ANGLING

Beach launched angling boats based on the Fylde and Sefton Coast have fished weather permitting regularly throughout the spring season, the Bass fishery being the prime target for their efforts.

Shore angling remains as popular as ever however catches have been a little disappointing consisting of the occasional Bass, Codling and flatfish.

GENERAL

I have worked with Officers Steve Waite and Andrew Brownrigg on patrols both afloat and ashore targeting the many potential problems we have at present. These include the Heysham Bass Nursery Area and the Ribble and Leasowe cockle fisheries all of which have needed considerable attention. A great deal of officer time has been taken up collecting MSH shellfish samples, it is expected that the major Ribble cockle beds will receive classification in time for opening on 1st September. I have attended several meetings with other local government bodies to try and ensure that the Ribble fishery runs with the minimum of disruption to other beach users.