

Annex 1 to Agenda Item 11

Whelk Research Proposal

Background:

The introduction of Byelaw 4 Potting Permit 2020 has opened up a large portion of the northern part of the NWIFCA District to whelk fishing that was not previously viable. Given the introduction of this fishery on virgin stock and the limitations on data available on the size-at-maturity in the District, it is an opportune moment to undertake research on the size-at-maturity of whelks in the District. This research will help to go towards developing an appropriate MLS for whelks across the NWIFCA District, and aid in sustainable management.

Aim:

To determine the size-at-maturity for whelk stock in the NWIFCA District

Methodology:

Five to six commercial fishers (dependent on uptake) will be asked to provide 1 sample of whelks once per month for four months, from their respective areas.

Samples will consist of the contents of one pot that has been attached to a commercial string as part of their usual fishing activities.

The sample must not be riddled, to allow all size classes to be sampled.

The location the sample pot was hauled must be provided, along with the date it was hauled, the soak time and bait used.

Fishers will be asked to freeze samples if officers are unable to collect them on the day of landing, and store them until pick up can be arranged.

Samples will then be de-frosted and a representative sample of 50 individuals will be dissected following standard methodology used in whelk size-at-maturity work. If possible due to time and resource constraints, statolith work will also be undertaken to determine the age of whelks at maturity.

Fishers will be offered a reimbursement for providing samples. This will be a set price based on the price of whelk per kg, the typical volume of whelk caught in a standard pot and the number of samples they provide.

Start date:

As soon as possible, due to the time dependent nature of the spawning season.