

NWIFCA Technical, Science and Byelaw Sub-Committee

2nd February 2016: 10:00 a.m.

AGENDA
ITEM NO.

5

BIVALVE MOLLUSC WORKING GROUP (BMWG)

Aim: Update TSB on progress with BMWG

Recommendations:

1. Approve continuation of BMWG to complete separate cockle and mussel management plans for Morecambe Bay and the Duddon Estuary.
2. Approve the draft Morecambe Bay Mussel Management Plan at Annex A.

Update

1. The draft plan at Annex A documents agreement reached at meetings of BMWG in November and January and work outstanding to complete the plan.
2. The development of new cockle stocks in Morecambe Bay in 2015 with the potential for a fishery in 2016 means the group will now review its representation to ensure cockle interests are adequately represented. The group proposes to try and develop an agreed management plan for cockle stocks. An initial draft cockle plan has been circulated to Officers and will be sent to BMWG Members to open the discussion.
3. The group is working constructively and positively and the resulting management plans should provide a strong base for future management of stocks. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for early April.

Outstanding issues

4. **Full HRA of all fisheries:** In 2016, NWIFCA has to move towards full Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRA) of all mussel and cockle fisheries. In the past these have only been carried out for seed mussel or for other fisheries derogated against byelaw measures (eg. Closed Season). Size mussel and cockle fisheries have remained open subject to adequate stocks and any seasonal or temporary closures introduced under byelaw. However, the EMS review assessing the impacts of all fisheries on all conservation features of EMS, to be completed by end 2016, requires documented assessments and if necessary management measures before fisheries can take place to ensure that fisheries will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the designated site.
5. A process has been agreed with industry which will allow size shellfishing to take place in 2016 while HRAs for fisheries are being completed. There will also be a full HRA of each management plan which should reduce the need for repeated HRA for every fishery in future
6. **Data on bird food requirements** is needed to inform HRA and potential impacts of fishing, and is necessary for authorisation of fisheries. Datasets and advice are awaited from Natural England although in the meantime RSPB member Mr Booth has done some helpful preparatory work.

7. **Decision making process** - there needs to be some description of the NWIFCA decision making process and delegated powers under the Plan included in the document.
8. **Setting restrictions on seed mussel dredge fishery** – It was agreed that there may be years when limiting the number of entitlements, the spatial extent of the fishery, times of fishing etc. may be required and this would be assessed and decided on annually. The rationale for this needs to be included in the Plan.
9. Further management plans may be needed for other areas of the District.
10. **Research Proposals** - Trevor Jones discussed the KES 2 PhD project proposal with Bangor University researching reliance of birds on bivalves in Morecambe Bay, mainly funded by Bangor Mussel Producers. A provisional meeting will take place next week, and once the project details are finalised other interested parties will be invited to get involved.

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24th January 2016