

**NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting:
13th September 2018: 11.00 a.m.**

**AGENDA
ITEM NO.
9**

SCIENCE AND SURVEY QUARTERLY REPORT TO 21ST AUGUST 2018

1. MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE NWIFCA DISTRICT:

a) Marine Conservation Zones

- i. West of Walney MCZ. MMO have completed their formal consultation on a proposed byelaw to prohibit bottom towed gear from within the whole WoW MCZ. NFFO (National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations) has filed an objection to both the byelaw and designation of the site. A response from MMO is awaited.
- ii. Defra consultation on Tranche 3 MCZ sites closed on 20th July. We await the outcome of the consultation.

b) Assessment of Fishing Activities in Marine Protected Areas

i. Activities which should be incorporated into a programme of assessments of recreational and commercial 'bait collection' has been under discussion with Defra for more than a year. Agreement on responsibilities for activities occurring within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is also needed. Defra have now set a timescale of the end of December 2018 for IFCAs to complete HRAs so that management of the following activities within all EMS can be determined:

- worm digging;
- worm pumping;
- crab tiling;
- shore crab gathering;
- winkle gathering;
- shrimp netting;
- bivalve gathering.

These new assessments will divert Science team's priorities to meet this deadline. TSB requested analysis of work that may be delayed. This is provided as Annex A.

A Natural England led 'Bait collection and hand gathering task and finish group' has been set up to develop a methodology for determining the need for assessments, and a consistent process for their delivery to managers.

ii. Officers are providing information to a Defra-funded project which aims to summarise IFCAs' experience of the 'Revised Approach to Fisheries Management in EMS'. The project is based in Southern IFCA.

c) NWIFCA MPA Monitoring and Control Plan

In accordance with the MPA M&C Plan the annual schedule of HRA reviews of HRAs is ongoing. Assessments for Cumbria Coast MCZ and Allonby Bay MCZ will be commenced soon.

2. ST BEES VOLUNTARY CODE OF PRACTICE

The Voluntary Code of Practice to prevent netting around St Bees Head was brought in at the beginning of March and ended on 15th July. IFCOs report 100% compliance which is very encouraging.

3. NWIFCA RESEARCH PROJECTS

a) Nephrops creel potting – Officers are on standby for notification from the fisherman as to when he will start to fish the creels and will gain data from his catches.

b) Bass populations and tagging study – CEFAS scientists worked one set of tides assisted by the Deputy Senior Scientist in July with full MMO dispensation. Using rod and line they tagged twenty-six >40cm bass with DST (data storage tags), and sixty <40cm bass with T-bar tags and for scale sampling. A run at drift netting was unsuccessful. They intend returning to carry out more tagging work in the coming months over the summer, and the science team will assist where possible.

A workshop with anglers and other interested parties is set for 27th September at the Royal Station Hotel in Carnforth. See Annex B for publicity poster. Members are invited to register their intent to attend via email to Cefas address on the poster.

c) Razor Clam collaborative research – officers met with a further fisherman who had expressed interest in collaborative research on 27th July.

d) Whelk Fisheries in the northwest – discussions are on-going with one fisherman to obtain samples over at least a 12 month period, MMO have issued dispensation to take undersize whelks, and equipment has been ordered to begin the sexing and ageing work.

4. MMO Evidence project non-lethal deterrents suitable for control of seals from fishing vessels

Officers have reported previously on the District's fishers having severe problems with seals taking the catch from nets. Officers investigated options for effective non-lethal seal deterrents and found none available. It is therefore very welcome and of great interest to see that MMO have launched a project with the objective of gaining better understanding of the seals behaviour, impacts on fisheries and ultimately to field test the most promising deterrent approaches. A poster has been dispatched (Annex C) and will be displayed around the District calling for fishers to take part in the survey.

5. TAG – IFCA TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

The Senior Scientist attended an informative TAG meeting in July focusing on MSC Fisheries in Partnership (FIP) projects which work to MSC accreditation (scallop and nephrops), updates on whelk research including CEFAS research and all areas with whelk fisheries, discussion around staff exchanges and more collaborative research, data management systems, CEFAS new stock assessment models for crab and lobster fisheries.

6. RECREATIONAL ANGLERS ENGAGEMENT

Science Officer James has been tasked with progressing the Recreational Angling Strategy work and has begun familiarisation with angling marks in Morecambe Bay and attempts to

engage face to face with anglers as a starting point to gaining better understanding of their issues. A questionnaire will be sent out asking for anglers bait collection data.

Two meetings of the Bivalve Mollusc Working Group were held during this quarter. Discussions informed recommendations then taken to TSB for approval.

7. COCKLE FISHERIES

- i. A limited commercial fishery was opened on the North Penfold cockle bed, Southport on 30th July.
- ii. In Morecambe Bay there does not appear to be substantial commercial quantities of size cockle at present; however there has been a noted spatfall which requires monitoring. Officers may consider the potential for a craam only fishery in North Morecambe Bay once Flookburgh and Pilling survey results are obtained in September, and report back to TSB should this be the case.

8. MUSSEL FISHERIES

Morecambe Bay mussel fisheries have required a substantial amount of Officer time and effort due to fast changing environment, presumably affected more than most years by the cold spring and hot summer.

- i. All NWIFCA IFCOs and science officers are fully aware of the NWIFCA Biosecurity Plan and the need to be vigilant over the potential for spread of INNS and shellfish disease. In May IFCO Dixon reported that three adult Chinese mitten crabs had been found under crab tiles in the Walney Channel. This has had major implications for movement of seed and part-grown mussel from Morecambe Bay and a full report was provided to TSB on the work undertaken to facilitate continuing activity on the Morecambe Bay mussel beds.
- ii. Seed mussel which recruited to the north Morecambe Bay beds had not reached condition for a dredge fishery. The Falklands beds were heavily covered in starfish predating on the stock which was offered to hand-gatherers. Due to tides and other fisheries being opened this did not progress. The stock on the lower skears at Heysham proved also to not have put down mud and therefore not in a dredgeable condition.
- iii. Low levels of size mussel hand-gathering occur on the north Morecambe Bay beds. Heysham Flat was opened under authorisation as a hand-gathered seed mussel fishery on 23rd July.
- iv. The area around Seafield Road, Lytham received a substantial spatfall. It is being monitored with the potential for a seed mussel fishery this year.
- v. Dee Estuary mussel continues to be prosecuted by a small group of Byelaw 3 permit holders.

Mandy Knott
Senior Scientist
21st August 2018

ANNEX A

Analysis of Core and Project Work of NWIFCA Science Team affected by Requirement to Achieve Defra Bait Collection Management Deadline

This document is provided to give an indication to NWIFCA Members of the core and project work planned for 2018/19 by NWIFCA Science Team that potentially has to be parked for NWIFCA to achieve the Defra-set deadline for identification of management of bait collection activity in EMS. Deadline is set at 31st December 2018. This analysis is based on knowledge as at 22nd August 2018.

- a) The following work is likely to be affected / delayed by the above requirement:
1. Development of NWIFCA survey capability from North Western Protector (use of side scan sonar, drop down camera and video equipment; ground discrimination with Olex software);
 2. Lack of development of (1) will affect ability to carry out sub-tidal survey on Solway mussel beds;
 3. HRAs on fishing activities in Cumbria Coast MCZ and Allonby Bay MCZ;
 4. Nephrops creel potting project with Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Natural England;
 5. Razor clam collaborative research project with industry;
 6. Whelk research and size at maturity work to inform future flexible permitting conditions in new byelaw;
 7. Development of research projects with Lancaster and Cumbria Universities;
 8. Shrimp stock assessment and by-catch research;
 9. Small Fish surveys programme development;
 10. Impacts of windfarms and electro-magnetic fields (EMF) on elasmobranchs and partaking in national Elasmobranch Steering Group;
- b) In addition the Bait Collection work will put a massive strain on the science team in terms of morale and in completing the following core tasks:
1. NWIFCA Byelaw Review – particularly the proposed Potting Byelaw;
 2. MMO Marine Licence Consultations – inevitably some developments will not be responded to;
 3. CEFAS Bass tagging research – availability of officers to undertake on-board work with Cefas scientist may be curtailed; engagement with recreational and commercial sector will be restricted;

Mandy Knott
NWIFCA Senior Scientist
22nd August 2018