



**Marine Protected Areas
Sub-Committee Meeting**

To be held at:

**Thoresby College, South Quay
King's Lynn, PE30 1HX**

**23rd May 2012
1030 hours**

Meeting: Marine Protected Areas Sub-Committee
Date: 23 May 2012
Time: 10:30hrs
Venue: Thoresby College, Queens Street, King's Lynn



"Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry."

Agenda

- 1 Welcome by the Chair
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Declaration of members' interests

Action Items

- 4 Minutes of the Marine Protected Areas Sub-Committee meeting on 30 November 2011
- 5 The WFO Cockle Fishery
- 6 Contingency planning for the WFO cockle fishery (i.e. Wrangle sands)
- 7 Marine Planning: Vision/Objectives
- 8 Environment Agency Consultation
- 9 Update on Angling 2012

Any other business

- 10 To consider any other items which the Chair is of the opinion are matters of urgency by reason of special circumstances which must be specified

Eden Hannam
Acting Chief Executive Officer
9 May 2012

Marine Protected Areas Sub-Committee

"EIFCA will lead, champion and manage a sustainable marine environment and inshore fisheries, by successfully securing the right balance between social, environmental and economical benefits to ensure healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and a viable industry".



An meeting of the Marine Protected Areas Sub-Committee took place at Thoresby College in King's Lynn on Wednesday 30th November 2011 at 1030 hrs.

Members Present:

Mr S Bagley	MMO Appointee
Mr R Brewster	MMO Appointee
Mr R Handford	EA Representative
Mr N Lake	MMO Appointee
Mr C Morgan	MMO Appointee
Mr T Pinborough	MMO Appointee
Mr R Spray	MMO Appointee
Cllr T Turner	Lincolnshire County Council
Mr K Vanstaen	MMO Appointee

EIFCA Officers Present:

D Vaughan	Chief Executive Officer
E Hannam	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
R Jessop	Senior Research Officer
J Stoutt	Senior Marine Environment Officer
J Byrne	IFCO
I Dye	IFCO
S Lee	Skipper / IFCO

Present by Invitation:

C Bentley	Natural England Representative
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Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Donnelly (NE Representative), and Councillors Sale (SCC) and Thompson (LCC).

Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were received from Messrs Bagley, Brewster and Lake all of whom were WFO1992 entitlement and lay holders.

Chairmans Announcements

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that Mr Smith (MMO Appointee) had tendered his resignation from EIFCA and would therefore no longer be attending meetings, and was consequently not present at the sub-committee.

MPA11/19 **Minutes of the Marine Protected Area Sub-Committee meeting held on 25th May 2011**

Mr Handford advised that on all three sets of minutes within the papers he had been referred to as an MMO Appointee when he was actually an EA Representative.

It was Resolved the minutes were a true record of the proceedings:

Proposed: **Mr Handford**
Seconded: **Mr Vanstaen**
All Agreed

MPA11/20 **Minutes of the Extraordinary Marine Protected Area Sub-Committee Meeting held on 30th June 2011**

There were no matters arising it was Resolved the minutes were a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: **Mr Pinborough**
Seconded: **Mr Lake**
All Agreed

MPA11/21 **Minutes of the Extraordinary Marine Protected Area Sub-Committee Meeting held on 23rd September 2011**

There were no matters arising it was Resolved the minutes were a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: **Mr Brewster**
Seconded: **Mr Vanstaen**
All Agreed

MPA11/22 **Presentation on the autumn mussel surveys, by the Senior Research Officer, and consideration of the management measures for the 2011/2012 mussel fishery in the Wash**

The Senior Research Officer gave a presentation on the mussel surveys which had been carried out over 19 areas. He advised that the decline in stocks since 2009/2010 appeared to be due to a parasite known as *Mytilicola*, which was thought to be more prevalent in adult stock. Mr Lake questioned whether leaving adult stock on beds was potentially acting as an incubator for the parasite to which the SRO responded that whilst there was a suggestion the parasite was more likely to affect adult stock this did not appear to be the case in the Wash fisheries.

The survey indicated that whilst stock levels on individual beds had fluctuated either up or down and adult stocks had declined there was an increase of approx 1,500 tonnes overall.

When comparing the available stock with the Conservation Objectives, it was apparent the 3,664 tonne of adult stock did not meet the criteria for a mussel fishery, however, the 7,540 tonnes of juvenile stock meant there were enough available to open a relaying fishery with 5 beds having sufficient tonnage to maintain a mean density of 25t/hectare which would allow a TAC of 1,204 tonnes.

The five beds to be fished from would be:

Mare Tail North	(381t)
Holbeach	(309t)
Trial Bank	(620t)
Breast East	(145t)
Blackshore	(206t)

Following previous procedure this would be split between dredge and handwork fishing methods, and it was suggested the TAC for each method should be 109t handworked and 1,095t dredged.

The maximum daily quota would be in line with the amendment made to the WFO 1992 in March 2010 which permits 8,000kg/day for a seed fishery. With weekly returns being a requirement to ensure only the allocated TAC was removed from each bed.

Mr Bagley noted that a passage of time would have elapsed between the opening of a dredge fishery and completion of the survey, during which time there may have been some growth, he therefore wondered whether this would be taken into account and the TAC would be amended. The SRO advised the survey results would be used as the baseline as it would not be possible to resurvey. It was also pointed out that the Appropriate Assessment would be based on the survey results and any amendment would require a further Appropriate Assessment and approval from Natural England.

Mr Bagley also questioned whether the Conservation Objectives may in themselves be damaging the fishery by requiring a certain amount of adult stock remains on the beds, which was possibly harbouring the parasite. This thought was echoed by Mr Brewster who felt it may be a case of 'killing the beds with kindness'. Mr Morgan questioned what action had been taken in other areas which had mytilicola, and whether it would affect anything other than cockles. The SRO advised that there had been limited die off of stocks but it was thought the mytilicola was more a coincidence than the cause, he also advised that oysters could be affected by the parasite.

Mr Lake felt the fishery was in decline even without fishing taking place. He felt it was a catch 22 as leaving adult stock on the ground resulted in mixed year classes which couldn't be marketed so the fishery was producing stock which was unusable and allowed the older ones to remain on the grounds harbouring the parasite, he blamed EIFCA for causing the situation and felt they should be held responsible for sorting it out. The CEO advised that the management measures in place had been agreed by members, which Mr Lake was one of, and there was no guarantee the situation would be any better without the management measures, it should be remembered that the Authority were doing their best with the information available.

Charlotte Bentley advised that whilst the adult stocks on the Gat sand may not have a commercial value they were very valuable to the Conservation Objectives, however if it could be proved they were cause of the *Mytilicola* problem then they should not be retained. She felt the matter needed urgent attention but was adamant they should not be removed if they were not causing the problem. Members were also advised that NE had reassessed the number of over wintering birds in order to ensure the minimum requirement for AFDW was used.

Having carefully considered the officers proposals for the opening of a relaying fishery Members Resolved to accept the proposals and agreed the opening date for a handwork fishery would be following approval of the Appropriate Assessment and the dredge fishery aimed at April but could be reviewed following consultation with the industry.

**Proposed: Mr Morgan
Seconded: Mr Vanstaen
All Agreed**

It was further Resolved that the Welland Wall could be opened to fishing, with no TAC applied, once the EHO closure was no longer in place.

**Proposed: Mr Morgan
Seconded: Mr Vanstaen**

MPA11/23 Paper recommending the revocation of three WFO 1992 Entitlements following their expiry

Members were provided with a brief resume of the mechanism in place to maintain a WFO 1992 entitlement to a licence. It was then explained that three entitlements had expired and the required action to retain the licence had not been carried out, it was therefore the Officers proposal that the members agree to revoke the entitlements but they should not be reissued until the review of the WFO 1992 was complete.

It was Resolved that the three entitlements be revoked and reissue would be held back until the review of the WFO 1992 was complete.

**Proposed: Mr Pinborough
Seconded: Mr Spray
All Agreed**

MPA11/24 Report on the attendance by Officers at the "International Workshop on Shellfish Assessment: state of the art and new techniques" and a visit to a Dutch mussel aquaculture operation

Members found the report very interesting and agreed to accept it.

MPA11/25 Report on the progression of a voluntary agreement regarding the protection of *Sabellaria spinulosa* within the Authority's district

Mr Lake accepted the need to protect *Sabellaria* reefs but he did not believe the areas concerned were reefs, more like clumps, and therefore questioned whether they needed protecting. The MEO advised that initially there had been some confusion on what constituted a reef and a consensus had been reached which did not rely solely on the height or density.

Mr Lake still felt no account had been taken for areas of mussel which grew on *Sabellaria*, whilst the fishermen would not be able to take the mussel the *Sabellaria* would die anyway as it would be smothered. The MEO advised that whilst areas would be closed to fishing with towed gear which would prevent mussel dredging it should be remembered that these areas would be reviewed and if re-surveying found the area no longer formed part of the interest feature it could be re-opened for fishing.

Mr Vanstaen suggested that EIFCA should have a reference area to compare the level of damage done by fishing in order to have evidence to put forward in the future, which the MEO felt was a very helpful suggestion.

Mr Lake then moved on to comment on suggestions that the industry had not progressed the accreditation of the pink and brown shrimp fisheries due to lack of funding he disputed this and advised no further progress had been made because the pre-assessment had not been completed. The CEO advised the pre-assessment had highlighted some issues which needed to be addressed before full assessment could be carried out, any further work before these issues were addressed would be a waste of money. He believed it was for the industry to take on the management measures themselves but agreed to try to get MES to present their findings to the industry as soon as possible.

The Chairman suggested a report on progress should be made to the next meeting with as much work as possible being carried out in the meantime.

Members agreed to accept the report.

MPA11/26 **Project Plan detailing a comprehensive review of WFO 1992 management**

The paper set out the main objectives and how the Authority were going to take them forward. It was considered by the officers to be a priority piece of work.

Members agreed to accept the report

MPA11/27 **Report on the pre-assessment of Brown and Pink Shrimp fisheries within the Authority's district**

Members agreed to accept the report.

MPA11/28 **Report on the establishment of Wash Fishery Order 1992 tolls and licence fee levels for 2012-2017**

The paper set out how it had been resolved to proceed with reviewing the tolls / fees applicable to the WFO 1992, which Defra had confirmed were the correct steps to follow. The DCEO advised there was a need to consider the timescale and whether tolls should be set for a 5 year period or 10 years which would coincide with the expiry of the Order, it was also necessary to decide whether the money should be kept for propagation or whether a percentage should be used to offset the costs of research.

Members considered the paper and agreed to accept the report and the suggested procedure.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1220 hrs

MARINE PROTECTED AREA SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

Agenda Item 5

23rd May 2012

To receive a presentation on the spring cockle surveys by the Senior Research Officer and to consider and agree the management measures for the 2012/2013 cockle fishery in The Wash

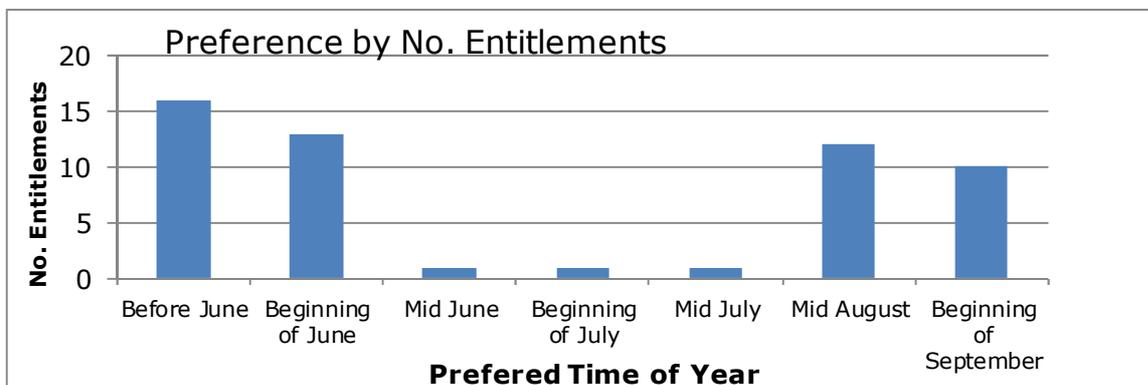
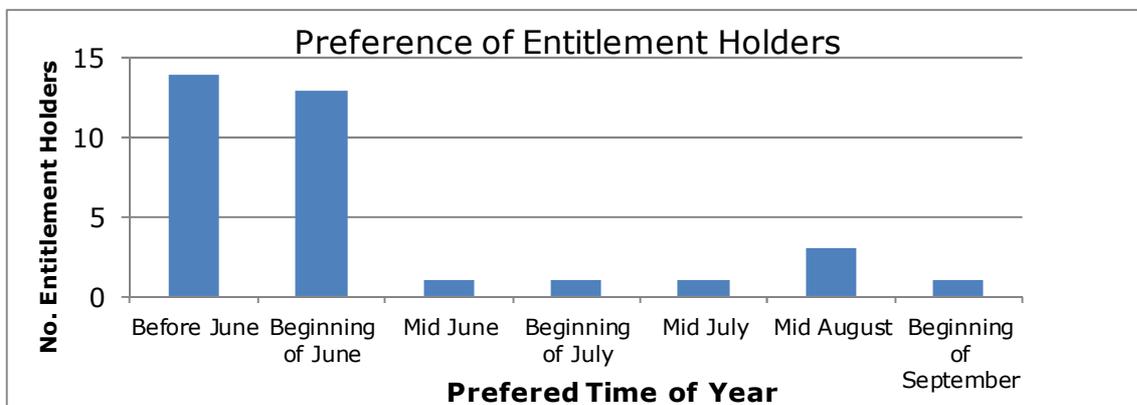
Background

The Authority is the grantee of the Wash Fishery Order 1992. As Grantee it has specific management responsibility relating to the species names on the Order. Of these species, cockles and mussels are the two commercial species that dominate the management of the Wash.

The Wash is also a highly designated site for nature conservation. As the Authority is the grantee and manages and licences the fishery it has responsibilities under the Habitats Regulations as the 'Relevant Authority'. To manage this and reduce conflict the Authority has set out agreed managed policies as well as an agreed process in the cockle charter. Copies of both have been circulated to all Entitlement holders. The management policies can also be found on the Eastern-IFCA website.

Prior to Survey

As reported to the Authority at the Statutory meeting on 25 April 2012, to gauge the appropriate timing for a cockle population survey the Authority conducting a postal consultation with the Industry. This allowed the Authority to determine the preferred opening date of the cockle fishery.



The responses to the consultation were split with 25 entitlement holders representing 27 entitlements expressing a preference for an early May/June opening whereas 4 entitlement holders representing 24 entitlements preferred a late August-September opening. In light of these responses the Authority conducted the spring surveys between March 20th and April 24th 2012, allowing sufficient time for the data to be analysed and an Appropriate Assessment to be conducted ready for a June opening. The timing of these surveys is consistent with the majority of Eastern-IFCA's and ESFJC's previous spring cockle surveys.

Survey Results

During the course of the surveys, 1,382 stations from a total of 22 sands were sampled. Figures 1 and 2 show the distributions of adult and juvenile stocks found during these surveys. Table 1 (attached) provides a summary of these stocks. From this table the summary of current stocks can be seen to be at the following levels below:

	Tonnes of Stock
Total Adult Stock (≥ 14mm width)	7,107
Total Juvenile Stock (<14mm width)	14,001
Total Stock (all sizes)	21,108

Although the atypical mortality that has badly affected the cockle populations since 2008 continued through 2011, the above figures represent a significant recovery from the 10,000 tonnes recorded following the 2011 surveys. This is mainly due the growth of cockles from a strong 2010 year-class cohort that has greatly exceeded the losses resulting from fishery and natural mortality. Because these cockles are still only two years old and many of the older cockles have died as a result of the atypical mortality, the stocks are currently dominated by small cockles that are less than 14mm width. From figure 1, however, it can be seen that patches of larger cockles ≥ 14 m width are present in fishable densities. These are mainly pockets of older cockles that have survived on the Breast, Thief, Whiting Shoal and Mare Tail sands or the fast-growing 2010 year-class cockles on Wrangle.

Consultation Process

All Wash Fishery Order (WFO) Entitlement holders have been provided with the same background survey information that is enclosed with this report along with the officers' proposals outlined below. An industry meeting has been convened for the 22nd May 2012 to discuss and consider the officers' management proposals further. The views and opinions that are raised at that meeting will be verbally reported to members.

OFFICERS' MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE 2012/2013 WASH COCKLE FISHERY

Total Allowable Catch (TAC)

The TAC for the cockle fishery has traditionally been 33.3% of the adult (≥ 14 mm width) cockle biomass. Based on this figure it is proposed that **the TAC for the 2012/2013 fishery should be:**

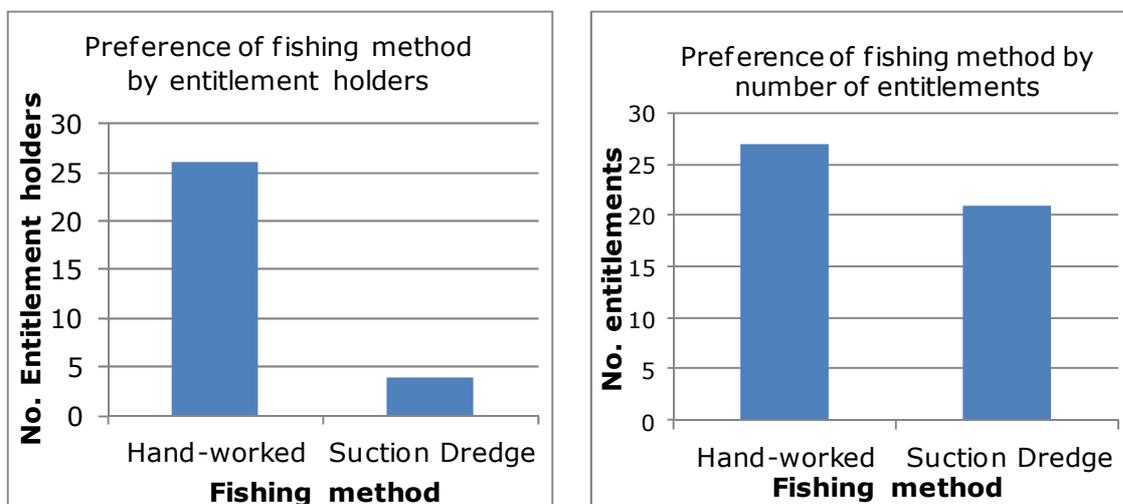
Overall TAC **2,369 tonnes.**

Authority members should be satisfied at how this figure was calculated. Once comfortable, Authority members are asked to Agree with an Overall TAC of 2,369 Tonnes for the 2012/13 cockle fishery.

Allocation of the TAC

The management measures restrict dredge fisheries to those beds that support a cockle stock composition consisting of at least a 70% adult cockle ($\geq 14\text{mm}$ width) biomass. Due to the high predominance of small cockles ($< 14\text{mm}$ width) on most of the beds, only the Friskney, Roger/Toft, Gat, Thief and Whiting Shoal/Hull Sand beds have stocks that fulfil this condition. Together, these areas support 1,186 tonnes of cockles $\geq 14\text{mm}$ width. Because most of these cockles are spread across large areas in low densities, or are mixed among juvenile stocks, only the 347 tonnes present on the Thief and Whiting Shoal beds are at densities to support a successful dredge fishery without subjecting the ground to heavy fishing pressure. As previous dredge fisheries have been prosecuted by 45-50 vessels, the officers feel the stocks on these beds are insufficient to support a successful dredge fishery.

Further, during the consultation with the industry members on March 6th, Entitlement holders were asked to record the method of fishery they would prefer for the 2012/2013 cockle fishery.



26 entitlement holders representing 27 entitlements expressed a preference for a hand worked fishery. 4 entitlement holders representing 21 entitlements expressed a preference for a suction dredge fishery. Method Preference will be asked as part of final consultation with Industry the day prior to the sub-Committee meeting. A verbal update on preference will be given at the meeting.

The Habitats Regulation assessment has been drafted under the assumption that a hand worked fishery is preferred.

Taking the above preference into account, the officers propose **the 2012/2013 cockle fishery should be limited to a Handwork Fishery.**

Authority members are asked to consider the information presented for the preference for harvest method. Members are asked to choose between:

- A- Hand-worked Fishery**
- B- Suction Dredge Fishery**

Beds to be opened to the Handwork Fishery

Most of the beds support a mixture of large and small cockles. Because it is possible for the handwork fishery to identify and operate within discrete patches of larger cockles it is proposed that **all beds within the Regulated Fishery of the Wash should be open to the Handwork Cockle Fishery.**

There are localised patches on some of the beds that support high densities of 2011 year-class juvenile cockles and/or slow-growing 2010 year-class cockles. In order to protect these juvenile stocks it is proposed **closed areas should be implemented in areas of high-density juvenile cockles. These include patches within the Dills, Mare Tail, Holbeach, Inner Westmark Knock, Daseley's and Breast beds.**

Authority members are asked to discuss the opening of beds.

Options for Authority members are:

A- To open all beds

B- To open all beds except those with high juvenile cockles.

Opening date of the fishery

The consultation (shown above) held on March 6th highlighted a slight preference among Entitlement holders for the fishery to open May/June.

The opening date of the fishery will depend upon:

1. The advice from Natural England following their appraisal of the Habitats Regulation Assessment,
2. In accordance with the Cockle Charter, once agreement has been reached with Natural England, the Authority will provide at least seven calendar days' notice of the opening date to allow fishermen to prepare their vessels and obtain a licence.

The fishery will remain open until the TAC has been exhausted or when otherwise directed by the Chief Executive Officer.

This matter of a start date was also reconfirmed with the industry at the Industry meeting, and an update will be given at the Authority meeting. As illustrated above, the preference for start dates by the industry is divided into two pods, those preferring early start dates, and those preferring latter dates. There is little middle ground between them.

In addition, different processors have given differing information regarding the value and yield of cockles and what would be the most appropriate starting date.

Authority members are asked to accept and discuss the verbal update from the Industry meeting the day proceeding, and consider the options for an appropriate start date.

Officers consider the two options for start dates for consideration by the Authority members to be :

A- Early June 2012(subject to assessment timeframes)

B- August 2012

Number of days the fishery will be open

Discussion will be held with the industry members at a meeting held on May 22nd regarding the number of days the fishery should be open each week. The outcome of this discussion will be provided verbally prior to formal agreement by the Sub-Committee.

Last year we moved to breaking the fishery over neap tides, while in previous years a Monday to Friday and a Monday to Thursday fishery has operated. The Authority would seek a break to allow:

- The sands to recover
- To extend the fishery
- To allow shrimp growth to occur for those choosing to shrimp later in the year.
- To rest both entitlement vessel and enforcement crews (to avoid overtiredness)
- Easier to schedule with other industries

Authority members are asked to consider a regular break in the fishery. The options for a break are:

- A- No break**
- B- On neap Tides (of 6.5m or less)**
- C- On a week day calendar (Monday to Friday)**
- D- On a week day calendar (Monday to Thursday)**

Daily Quota

In accordance with Regulation No2 of the Wash Fishery Order 1992, the daily quota should be:

Handwork Fishery: **2 tonnes**

Catch Returns Data

In order to effectively manage the TAC and to monitor where cockles have been lost to atypical mortality, it is important that fishermen provide Eastern-IFCA with details of their fishing activities. Information requested on the supplied catch return forms should be returned to the office weekly.

The Authority will be focusing considerable attention on catch returns. Entitlement holders who fail to make returns could see their Entitlement licence suspended or for repeat infractions cancelled. Skippers working on behalf of Entitlement holders could see financial penalties used.

General

Because the handwork fishery is being consented within a SSSI and SAC, care should be taken not to cause unnecessary disturbance to the site. The officers are aware that most fishermen participating in the handwork fishery are using the wash from their vessel's propellers prior to settling on the sand in order to remove the top layer of sand and shell away from the area they are going to be harvesting. It is the officers' opinion that this activity is not detrimental to the site, provided it is conducted in a responsible manner that does not cause excessive physical disturbance to the seabed. As disturbance from this activity is greatest when the vessel is anchored or slowed in some way, Regulation No.1 of the Wash Fishery Order 1992 shall be applied to the following effect:

No vessel participating in the hand-worked cockle fishery may employ any equipment that either fixes the vessel to the seabed or slows the vessel's movement while the vessel's engine is running. This includes anchors, sea anchors, drogues or any other equipment that could be used as an anchor or sea anchor.

The appropriate assessment for the 2009/2010 hand worked cockle fishery is currently under legal challenge, in relation to concerns that propeller wash activities associated with the fishery could cause significant damage to the cockle populations, supporting habitats and dependant bird populations. Officers are liaising closely with Natural England in relation to this issue. Proposals for the 2012/2013 cockle fishery will be closely evaluated, through the appropriate assessment process, to ensure that the Authority and Natural England are satisfied that the fishery will not adversely affect the site.

A draft Habitats Regulation Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) for the 2012/13 cockle fishery was circulated with the proposal.

To ensure the hand-worked fishery is being conducted in a responsible manner, activities will be monitored throughout the season. Any evidence found that indicates the handwork fishery is causing excessive disturbance to the site may lead to the closure of the fishery.

The Sub-Committee is asked to review its agreement so far and consider and confirm the final management measures for the 2012/2013 Wash cockle fishery

Ron Jessop
Senior Research Officer
15th May 2012

Eden Hannam
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

1. Senior Research Officer's 2012 cockle survey summary and associated charts

23rd May 2012

To consider and agree Contingency Management Measures for the 2012/2013 Wash Fishery Order cockle fishery

Introduction

Surveys conducted in spring 2007 showed the cockle stocks situated within the regulated beds of The Wash were at their second highest recorded level, with a total biomass of 34,696 tonnes. During the summer of 2008 cockles on several of the beds were observed to be dying. Unlike "ridging" events, which typically result in large proportions of the population being forced out of the ground over a short period of time, often following a period of storms, the symptoms in 2008 were different. During this period cockles were observed to be coming to the surface and gaping. Although relatively low numbers of cockles (approximately 1-2% per day) appeared to be affected at any one time, over a protracted period of several months, the losses resulted in reductions in biomass on some of the beds of over 90%. Similar mortalities have been observed each year since then, their impact helping to reduce the total cockle biomass to 10,000 tonnes in 2011.

Field observations have led to the following conclusions:

- Mortality appears to primarily affect larger cockles (>14mm width). This appears to be independent to the age of the cockles. On faster growing beds mortality has occurred among two year-old cockles, while on slower growing areas mortality has occurred among three and four year-old individuals.
- On sandy sediments the affected individuals are typically observed to be gaping, unburied on the surface. In muddier sediments affected cockles have been observed to have remained buried.
- Moribund unburied cockles have poor response times, closing slowly when touched.
- In affected areas, approximately 1-2% of the cockle population appear to be moribund at any one time. Because not all moribund cockles rise to the surface, the number of gaping cockles on the surface may be an underestimation of the actual mortality rate.
- Mortality is most noticeable between May and October
- Symptoms appear similar to "atypical" mortality events that have been occurring annually in the Burry Inlet since 2004.

Studies have been conducted, both in the Burry inlet and The Wash, since 2008 in order to determine the cause of the mortality, including a study of the food productivity in The Wash. Although these studies have failed to determine a cause of the mortalities, samples of moribund cockles tested by Cefas indicate three species of *Haplosporidian* parasites may be involved. In an unpublished paper (Longshore, 2010) the author wrote,

"There is strong circumstantial evidence that the haplosporidian infections may be a major contributory factor in the observed mortalities in The Wash."

Previous studies looking at atypical mortality among the Wash cockle stocks, and those at the Burry Inlet, indicate the problem is on-going and likely to continue into the

foreseeable future. If trends observed since 2008 continue during 2012, the current stock composition and distribution would indicate that the cockle stocks currently present on Wrangle Sand will be particularly vulnerable to high mortality rates this year. Because mortality mainly occurs during the summer months, it not only results in a loss of revenue to fishermen, but the lost cockles provide no benefit to overwintering bird populations that rely on the shellfish stocks for food.

A programme was instigated in February to monitor and quantify cockle mortality rates on Wrangle. Surveys have subsequently been conducted twice/month at ten stations on this bed that will continue through the summer. The results gained so far show the average mortality rates to be low, but gradually increasing (0.03%/day mortality in February to 0.13%/day in April). The majority of these current mortalities are believed to be the result of cockles that have "ridged" out of the high density patches and washed into the survey stations.

It is proposed that if the monitoring programme detects that "atypical" average mortality levels have increased to a trigger level exceeding 1%/day exceptional management measures would be implemented. It is anticipated that these measures would enable increased fishing effort to be applied to the Wrangle bed, thus reducing the potential wastage. If the monitoring programme showed atypical mortality levels had reached the trigger level of 1%/day the following measures would be instigated:

- Consult with the Chair and Vice-chair of both the Authority and the Marine Protected Area Sub-Committee.
- Entitlement holders, Authority members and Natural England would be informed that trigger levels had occurred.
- A Test of Likely Significance and an Appropriate Assessment would be submitted to Natural England regarding the contingency management measures.
- Subject to the management measures gaining approval from Natural England, Entitlement holders will be given notice of the intention to implement contingency management measures (The length of notice will depend upon whether the approved management involves a change in fishing method from Hand-working to Dredging).

It is important to note that an assessment is still required. Analysis of the Assessment by Natural England could recommend changes or tweaks to the proposal.

PROPOSED CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2012/2013 COCKLE FISHERY SHOULD MONITORING DETECT "ATYPICAL" MORTALITY RATES HAVE REACHED A TRIGGER LEVEL

For The 2012/2013 fishery the most vulnerable stocks are anticipated to be on the Wrangle beds. The majority of the 3,271 tonnes of cockles present on Wrangle are from the 2010 year-class cohort. Although only 1,833 tonnes of these stocks had attained 14mm width at the time of the spring surveys, and thus contributed towards the TAC for the fishery, the whole of this year-class are believed to be vulnerable to natural losses over the coming summer. To minimise these potential losses from the fishery, the officers propose that should mortality rates increase to the trigger level the Wrangle stocks should be managed separately to the rest of the fishery. This would involve implementing a separate TAC for the stocks on Wrangle to that of the other Regulated beds.

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for regulated beds (excluding Wrangle)

The proposed TAC for the 2012/2013 cockle fishery is 2,369 tonnes. Of this quota, 611 tonnes were contributed from Wrangle (33.3% of the 1,833 tonnes of cockles \geq 14mm width present on Wrangle). Under the contingency management measures, the stocks on Wrangle would be managed separately from the other regulated beds. By removing Wrangle's contribution from the overall quota **the TAC for the remaining regulated beds would become 1,758 tonnes.**

Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Wrangle

Wrangle supports a total of 3,271 tonnes of cockles. These stocks are composed of:

- 1,833 tonnes of cockles \geq 14mm width
- 1,318 tonnes of cockles <14mm width that are of the 2010 year-class
- 120 tonnes of cockles <14mm width that are of the 2011 year-class

Excluding the 120 tonnes of 2011 year-class juvenile cockles, Wrangle supports a total of 3,151 tonnes of older cockles. 2,643 tonnes of these are present in densities that exceed 1.5 tonnes/hectare. This density, which equates to catch rates in the dredge fishery of approximately 0.75 tonnes/hour, has been used in the management of some of the recent cockle fisheries as a threshold beneath which stocks are considered too low to support a financially viable fishery. Although the recent increase in cockle prices means it is now viable to fish stocks at lower densities, the officers feel it is still appropriate to limit fishery effort below this level as this will afford the other biota some respite from heavy fishing pressure.

Under the contingency management measures, the officers propose that **the TAC for Wrangle would be 2,643 tonnes.** This equates to the biomass of 2010 year-class and older cockles situated in Wrangle that are present in densities exceeding 1.5 tonnes/hectare.

Method of fishing

Due to the current stock composition and distribution, officers have proposed that the 2012/2013 cockle fishery should be a Hand-work fishery. Recent trends on Wrangle have shown that atypical mortality can cause the cockle stocks to die rapidly over the course of a few months. Should mortality begin to occur at a similar rate to 2008, losses may occur faster than a hand-worked fishery could harvest, potentially resulting in a larger wastage. Should atypical mortality levels reach the trigger level and the contingency management measures become necessary, it is the officers' advice that Wrangle should be opened to a dredge fishery in order to minimise potential mortalities.

Authority members are asked to consider the information provided and to agree the implementation of contingency management measures for the 2012/2013 Wash cockle fishery should atypical mortality rates reach a trigger level. Particular consideration is asked to be given concerning the method of fishery to be used.

Ron Jessop
Senior Research Officer
16th May 2012

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

Agenda Item: 7

23 May 2012

A report on the Marine Management Organisation's Draft vision and objectives for East marine plans

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is developing marine plans for the East Inshore and East Offshore areas. In March 2012, the MMO published a collective draft vision and objectives for the two East marine plans. Stakeholders were invited to comment on the draft vision and objectives, which will ultimately influence future planning decisions for developments in the marine environment. Formal consultation on the draft plans is set for the end of this calendar year.

Vision

The draft vision for the marine plan areas included a description of the existing character of the East marine areas, followed by an "ideal" scenario for the future (set at 2033). The intention was that the vision was detailed enough to be meaningful, but not so detailed that its key messages would be lost.

The character description highlighted the importance of the East marine areas for commercial fisheries as "traditional activities" and "a considerable influence on communities". It emphasised the significance of marine protected areas in the East marine areas, reflecting the importance of these areas for biodiversity and natural environment.

The projection for 2033 referred to "increased knowledge and understanding of opportunities for sustainable use" resulting in "new jobs and wealth, integrated with protection and appreciation of the environment". It continued stating that "new developments are undertaken in a way that enables sustainable commercial fishing... to continue, providing economic and social benefits, particularly to coastal communities". It stated that "Tourism and recreation are making a significant contribution to the prosperity and well-being of local people and visitors to the coast." Finally, the vision for 2033 declared that "the East plan areas have good environmental status".

This vision has recognised to some extent the importance of commercial fishing in the district, as well as the area's value in terms of its natural marine environment. These points align well with the IFCA vision for sustainable use and a balance of social, environmental and economic benefits. However, although "tourism and recreation" was referred to several times, the draft vision and objectives document made no direct reference to recreational angling.

Objectives

Draft objectives were listed in categories linked to the UK's five high-level marine objectives (sustainable marine economy; strong, healthy and just society; living within environmental limits; good governance; and using sound science responsibly).

Officers' consultation response

Officers provided a response to the draft vision and objectives consultation. Time constraints meant that officers focused on the executive summary. The main points made were:

- The document was dense and difficult to navigate;
- The draft objectives slanted towards economic activity, rather than balancing social, environmental and economic benefits;
- Infrastructure and offshore wind energy generation appeared to have been given special status, which could bias future development decisions;
- The cultural value of coastal fisheries, including their link to tourism and supporting coastal communities, was not clearly identified in the draft objectives;
- There was little mention made of managing conflict, for example when relevant authorities take decisions and need to balance social, environmental and economic concerns.

Officers expressed an interest in discussing these points with MMO planning officers; a meeting is to be organised in the coming weeks.

Judith Stoutt
Senior Marine Environment Officer

18 May 2012

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List of Background Papers

- 1 Draft vision and objectives for East marine plans. Marine Management Organisation, March 2012, available at: http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/marineplanning/documents/vision_objectives.pdf
- 2 EIFCA officer response to MMO consultation on draft vision and objectives for the east marine plan areas

23 May 2012

A summary report of the Environment Agency's Wash East Strategy Scoping Consultation Document

Purpose and content of the Consultation

The Wash East Strategy is being developed to provide an overview of coastal management (sea defences) between Hunstanton and Wolferton Creek, on the east coast of The Wash. The Strategy is being developed because of a need to review the previous strategy (2001) and because issues have arisen in relation to funding certain coastal management schemes. The consultation document forms the scoping stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for this strategy. The document presents information that sets the context of the strategy, establishes the Assessment criteria, and sets out the proposed scope of the Assessment. The Assessment objectives, indicators and targets provide a means by which the environmental issues and outcomes of strategic options can be assessed, in order to inform and influence the development of a preferred approach.

The Environment Agency is asking for comments on this document in order to confirm that the scope of the assessment, and the level of detail of information that will be used for the next stages are appropriate. In particular, they seek opinions on:

- The scope of the assessment;
- The assessment criteria and approach to be used for scoring the proposed strategic options against the various receptors; and
- The screening stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

Background Summary

In 2001 the Environment Agency adopted a Strategy for the management of the South Hunstanton to Wolferton Creek frontage. This recommended initial structural works followed by a renourishment campaign and annual recycling of material from Snettisham Scalp in the south, to the low sediment beaches in the north. The second Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2) for The Wash identified a number of issues with regards to the on-going management of the frontage. These included uncertainty over the viability of the current management approach in the face of future climate change and uncertainty in coastal processes interactions across the frontage length. The SMP2 therefore recommended a review of the 2001 Strategy. In addition to this, recent funding changes in coastal management has meant that for many schemes across the country alternative funding sources will be required in order to supplement government funding. This potential funding issue, combined with the need to review the 2001 Strategy, forms the basis for The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy (WECMS). The boundary of the project area was extended to include the frontage of Hunstanton Town and Cliffs which is managed by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk because of the interrelated coastal processes along the east coast of The Wash.

Consultation questions

The document is usefully structured and sets out key issues with associated questions. In brief, the categories are:

- Project area
- Links to existing legislation, plans & policies
- Scope of the SEA (what receptors should be scoped in or out of the full assessment)
- Constraints and opportunities for local communities, including recreational facilities
- Risk to historic environment
- Land contamination
- Coastal processes as a pathway with potential to impact other receptors
- Approach to Water Framework Directive assessment (water quality)
- Impacts on critical infrastructure (roads & utilities)
- Impacts on biodiversity, flora and fauna (including fish and associated fishing activities)
- SEA objectives
- SEA indicators
- SEA assessment framework.

Relevance to Eastern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority

The Authority's environment officers intend to approach this consultation by assessing the potential for the strategy to affect the marine environment – in particular, sensitive fisheries receptors (see list below). Social and economic issues will also be considered. Officers comments will focus primarily on the water quality and biodiversity, (in the flora and fauna sections of the report), and provide opinion relating to the potential for impacts on shellfish populations, designated shellfish waters, and fish nursery habitat.

Next steps

Officers will formulate a response raising the following issues:

Environmental

Water quality (Shellfish Water requirements)

Physical loss or damage to shellfish beds (cockles, mussels, razors)

Biodiversity (shellfish beds as key sub-features of the Wash & North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation)

Smothering of benthic habitats (including shellfish beds, fish spawning and nursery habitats)

Cumulative effects (the strategy combined with other plans or projects, including shellfishing activity)

Economic

Commercial fishing (loss of fishing opportunity and/or displacement of fishing activity)

Fishery ownership (notification of private fishery owners Le Strange Estate)

Bait digging (loss of opportunity and/or displacement of activity)

Social

Loss of opportunity for recreational sea anglers (beach angling and bait digging)

Recommend direct liaison with commercial and recreational fishing stakeholders, either at strategy or individual coastal management project level

Strategic

Recommendation that the strategy environmental assessment considers the Authority's Annual Plan 2012/13 as part of the background search of existing plans and policies.

Sandra Cowper
Marine Environment Officer (GIS)

15 May 2012

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Background Paper

1 Wash East Strategy Scoping Consultation Document (postal delivery)

23rd May 2012

Angling 2012 Update

Angling 2012 surveys started in earnest in April after using the end of March as a training and testing period. During this period officers attended further sessions with CEFAS to discuss method and technique.

Actual visits were 80% of planned visits in April (35 out of a potential 44 site visits). 18 interviews were conducted (up 360% from last month) with only one angler refusing to take part in the survey.

Current commitment from the Authority is for four days per week. This is currently being completed by the Area Officers, but with the cockle fishery about to commence, this will see Research and Environment staff increasing their participation.

Anecdotal reports from the area officers indicate that angling activity was still low throughout the district which is likely to be a reflection of the poor weather in April. May's surveys are underway and include boat-ramp sites as well as shore sites. So far this month activity has remained low as the poor weather continues.

The Angling 2012 database has also arrived from CEFAS and, once installed, the pool of completed survey forms can be entered in.

Sub-committee members are welcome to join Authority Staff as they conduct their surveys.

Due to the large commitment of resources by the Authority, an update of progress will be made at all full Authority and MPA meetings during the duration of this project.

Luke Godwin
Marine Environment Officer (Data)

15th May 2012

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Background Paper

There are no background papers to this report