

8 January 2016
Ref: FB/8/a1

Dear Sir/Madam,

Informal data gathering - Towed fishing gear management in The Wash and on the North Norfolk Coast

Reasons for this informal data gathering

Eastern IFCA ("The Authority") has assessed the impacts of towed fishing gears on the designated habitats in The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (W&NNC SAC). The towed fishing gears are: beam trawls (Brown and Pink shrimps), beam trawls (white fish) and demersal otter trawls.

The assessments identified that there is likely to be adverse environmental impacts from towed gears interacting with these designated habitats: subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment and subtidal mud.

Eastern IFCA is required, under European nature conservation law, to consider management measures to protect the habitats in the W&NNC SAC. Therefore, we are currently considering spatial habitat closures to restrict the use of towed fishing gears. With your cooperation, we are aiming to minimise disruption to fishing activity, where possible.

Information required

The Authority needs to know the important towed gear fishing grounds in the W&NNC SAC, so that we can consider these when locating spatial habitat closures. Our aim is to design closed areas that will have least impact on fishing activity whilst protecting the designated habitats. To gather this information, we have produced a short questionnaire for you to complete. Please read the enclosed guidance note before completing the questionnaire.

This letter and enclosures (guidance note and questionnaire) are also available to download at: <http://www.eastern-ifca.gov.uk/>

Consultation deadline

The closing date is **Friday 5th February 2016**. Responses received after this date may not be considered.

Please send your response using the freepost envelope provided, or e-mail it to: mail@eastern-ifca.gov.uk

Alternatively, write to:
Attn: Towed gear activity questionnaire
Eastern IFCA
6 Bergen Way
North Lynn Business Village
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 2JG

Data Confidentiality

We recognise the sensitivity of your fishing data. Individual responses will be treated as confidential. However, we will create a summary of the responses which may be published. There may be circumstances in which Eastern IFCA will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, we will not release any personal information.

Next steps

Following this stage of data gathering, Eastern IFCA will collate and analyse responses. We intend to host a workshop in spring 2016 (date to be confirmed) to summarise how the questionnaire responses have been considered and to further discuss habitat closure proposals with the fishing industry and interested stakeholders.

Questions/queries

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the questionnaire in person with an Officer, please contact the Eastern IFCA office on 01553 775321 or via e-mail: mail@eastern-ifca.gcsx.gov.uk.

If you require the letter/enclosures in larger print, please contact the office using the contact details provided.

Yours sincerely,



J Gregory
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Enclosures:

1. Questionnaire guidance note
2. Questionnaire and charts 1-3