



Horseshoe Point Eelgrass Assessment 2015

1.0 Acknowledgments

A massive thank you is owed to coastal volunteer Cliff Morrison for putting in the time and effort to survey Horseshoe Point for eelgrass on several occasions in 2015 and for providing Eastern IFCA with the valuable data and images used in this report.

2.0 Introduction

Eastern IFCA organise an annual survey of eelgrass at Horseshoe Point on the South Bank of the Humber estuary. The aim of these surveys is to record the distribution of *Zostera noltii* at Horseshoe Point. This work forms an important part of the review of Regulatory Notice 4, under the Protected Areas Byelaw. The surveyed area is closed to fishing (bottom-towed gear, crab tiling, hand worked fishing and bait digging) under the Protected Areas Byelaw Regulatory Notice 4, to protect *Zostera noltii*, a subfeature of the Humber Estuary Special Area of Conservation from damage due to fishing activity.

3.0 Method

Horseshoe Point on the South Bank of the Humber was surveyed for eelgrass by coastal volunteer Cliff Morrison, and Eastern IFCA Marine Environment Officer Stephen Thompson on the 4th and 19th August 2015 and the 30th July 2015, respectively. Coordinates of eelgrass found by Cliff Morrison were taken using a GPS with an accuracy stated at $\pm 5\text{m}$.

On the 19th August 2015, the 6.6m tide was followed down from the marsh edge, and all wet areas surrounding the coordinates where eelgrass had previously been recorded in 2013 were walked and visually surveyed.

4.0 Results

4.1 Location, extent and condition of eelgrass found

Two small patches and some new growth further out from these were located at 53.496869° N, 0.095312° E (accuracy of GPS $\pm 5\text{m}$) on the 19th August survey (Figure 1; Figure 2). The extent of the patchy coverage of eelgrass was measured at 1.6 x 2.4 m. The eelgrass had accumulated sand and fine silt around the amid patches. As the channel drained, there was an island effect around the plant (Figure 3) before it totally drained and became uncovered, when it became so fine it was hardly visible.

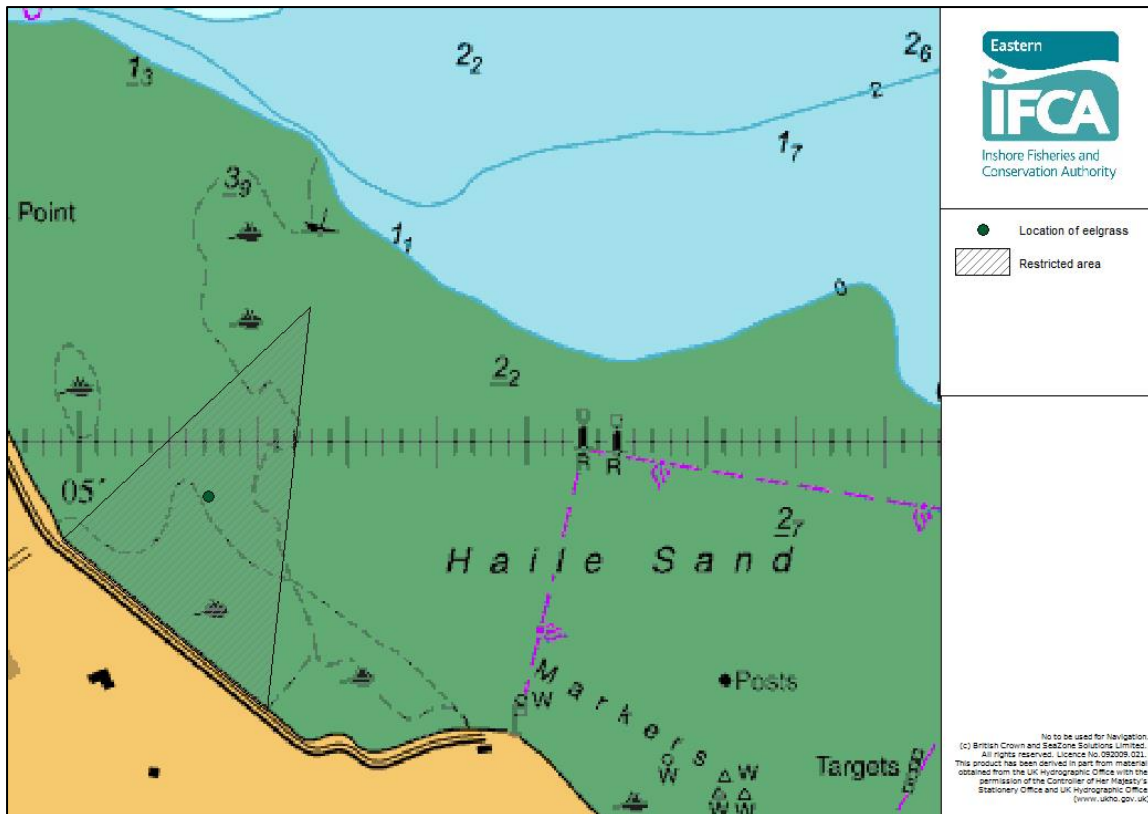


Figure 1. Location of patch of *Zostera* sp. (dark green) within the area surveyed by foot on August 19th, and within the area restricted to fishing activity under Regulatory Notice 4 of the Protected Areas Byelaw (grey).



Figure 2. One of two patches of eelgrass at 53.496869 N, 0.095312 E (± 5 m) on the 19th August looking at a two-metre measuring tape East to West (top) and North to South (bottom).



Figure 3. The eelgrass plant remained on the 'island' of sand as the channel drained down, photograph taken three hours after high tide on August 19th, 2015.

4.2 Saltmarsh encroachment

The marsh at Horseshoe Point was noted to be extending outwards due to samphire colonisation, however there was also marsh erosion observed and deepening creeks. Further up the drainage creek had become an established marsh creek since the previous year's survey. Samphire was found to be growing on developing marsh less than 70m west of the eelgrass patch.