

Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone:

Artisanal Shrimp Management Policy



This policy comes into effect on:

This document sets out how Eastern IFCA will manage small-scale, hand-hauled shrimp fishing activity within a marine protected area under the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021. It also sets out what Eastern IFCA would consider constitutes a 'risk' in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021.

Introduction

The Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (the MCZ) is a marine protected area off the North Norfolk Coast. Eastern IFCA must ensure that the conservation objectives of the MCZ are furthered (*Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009*, s.153 and 154).

Eastern IFCA assessed fishing activity within this area and identified that use of bottom towed gear will hinder the conservation objectives of the site when this is undertaken over certain habitats.

As such, Eastern IFCA created the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021, which prohibits fishing with bottom-towed gear within the MCZ except in a small section in the north-east of the site (which does not include habitats or species sensitive to bottom towed gear. In addition, there is a specific exemption in relation to a small area in the south-east of the site defined as the 'artisanal shrimp management area' (Chart 4).

Artisanal shrimp fishing at the current level of activity is not hindering the MCZ conservation objectives. This fishing activity must be monitored and managed to ensure it does not change in such a way that the conservation objectives would be hindered.

What is meant by artisanal shrimp fishing?

This describes the small-scale shrimp fishery located within part of the MCZ with the following characteristics:

- Small vessels using bottom-towed gear that is hauled by hand only;
- Beam widths of 10ft (3.048m) or less;
- Very low levels of activity.

The total impact of shrimp fishing within the site is measured as a maximum area of seabed over which fishing takes place. This is called the 'swept area'. This is calculated using the known beam width, the estimated tow duration and speed, and the number of tows per year.

The assessment estimated a current precautionary maximum swept area of 1.03 km² per year. Fishing beyond the maximum swept area is considered a risk to the

conservation objectives for the purposes of paragraph 10 of the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021.

Managing artisanal shrimp fishing activity to ensure that the conservation objectives are furthered

With respect to artisanal shrimp fishing, the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021 will:

- Prohibit the activity except:
 - Within the 'artisanal shrimp management area' (Appendix 1, chart 4 of the byelaw); and
 - Where fishing gear is hand-hauled only; and
 - Where the beam width of fishing gear is 10ft (3.048m) or less; and
 - Where the beam is operated from a vessel of no more than 7.9m metres in overall length; and
 - Where fishing gear does not include a chain foot rope.

Shrimp fishing permitted under the byelaw as above must also be in accordance with the Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018.

This is intended to prevent any increases in swept area as a result of changes to fishing gear.

In addition, Eastern IFCA will monitor the amount of fishing activity in order to monitor the swept area of the fishery through the year. This will be done using mandatory return forms from any person (including recreationally) who fishes for shrimp in the area. This requirement is also set out within the byelaw and is summarised as follows:

- A person must notify Eastern IFCA within 24 hours of shrimp fishing activity within the artisanal shrimp management area;
- Where fishing has taken place, the person fishing must complete and return a fishing activity form within 7 days of fishing with the following information:
 - Vessel name and PLN;
 - Date and time of fishing activity;
 - Width of beam;
 - Tow duration;
 - Average tow speed;
 - Landed weight of shrimp caught.

Monitoring of shrimp fishing activity as set out above will be augmented by the Shrimp Permit Byelaw 2018 which prohibits fishing for shrimp without a permit (unless fishing for recreational purposes from a vessel which is not a registered fishing vessel).

If the level of artisanal shrimp fishing activity reaches a total swept area of 1.03km² within a calendar year, Eastern IFCA will close the area to this fishery until the start of the following calendar year, using the Closed Areas Byelaw 2021. This is to ensure the fishery will not risk hindering the conservation objectives of the MCZ.

Review

This policy will be reviewed no later than six years after coming into effect.