



Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

Quarterly report for the period September 2023 to November 2023

Overview

Typically for the summer to autumn transition we are seeing a slight decline of vessels at sea and potters bringing gear in shore for preparation for the winter. Despite higher air and sea temperatures, high rainfall and high winds have caused disruption.

Efforts for bass fishing are slowing, with attention turning to sprat with some vessels having large orders to fulfil. Meanwhile amongst the potters, whelking has continued to decline with only one vessel operating in Essex and the Harwich crab and lobster fleet are struggling due to pots being filled with mud. This is thought to be due to dredging activities in the rivers.

Charter boats and anglers have seen steady catches of skate, dog fish and autumn bass, with some mackerel, dabs and the occasional codling.

The beginning of this quarter also saw the seasonal close of the TECFO cockle fishery.

Harwich & Walton

Trawlers have maintained a reasonable effort on sole and skate but potters are feeling frustrated by the continuation of mud filling their pots. This means they are seeing much lower catch rates and are having to work much harder at sea. Some pots have been brought inshore to protect from the wind. Recreational pots are still in use off beaches. Sea anglers are seeing steady catches of skate and smoothhound with the odd sole and codling showing up.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing effort has been slow in these ports, with the trawling vessels not going to sea very much. One commercial vessel has been focussing on lobster restoration with juvenile lobster being released along the coast in large quantities. Charter anglers are much busier with regular trips catching a range of species including skate and codling.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 13

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Trawlers and netters have continued to fish for sole and skate, with occasional sizable bass being landed. Some sizeable cod have been seen but not in good numbers. Some of the fleet will soon start turning attention to herring with the temperatures starting to drop. Potting effort is low with only one vessel working from this port.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Maldon & Bradwell

Vessels in these ports remain to put in a steady effort. Gear is set in rivers for skate and trawlers work inshore for sole and skate. Selling direct means that these vessels are able to make a steady income and seems to be an effective way of working.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

North Fambridge, Burnham-On-Crouch, Barling, Paglesham & Rochford

The native oyster fishery remains closed so efforts continue to be on private grounds for oysters. Some activity has been noted on public ground for pacific oysters and white weeding continues to occur out of cockle season. Some gear has been sighted in the Crouch and Roach but effectiveness is reported to be relatively poor. Clam dredging in the rivers continues on private grounds.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order closed, and we are now seeing vessels turning to their winter activities. Some have started fishing for sprat while others may start to focus on setting whelk pots. Many vessel owners are working hard on non TECFO vessels with the view to apply for further licences when the new regulation order commences.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 18

Holehaven & Thurrock

No positive sightings of vessels working have been obtained in this quarter, but it is thought that some activity does continue. Efforts generally are focused on netting in the river.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3

Alice Highton,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex