

Agenda Item C2

Shore Report - Essex

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority **Quarterly report for the period May 2022 to November 2022**

Overview

This period has seen some unusually warm and dry weather which may have had a part to play in the reduced yield and extended fishing times within the TECFO. The temperatures have stayed warm throughout October but are now beginning to cool and codling are beginning to show in the North of the district. Efforts throughout the summer were mainly focused on bass, sole, and skate, with skate seeming to have been less frequent than in previous years.

The cost of fuel is continuing to have a negative impact on the fishing industry with a possible link being made to a reduced effort by charter vessels. The cost-of-living increase could also be a relevant factor.

The introduction of iVMS has been hit with resistance from the commercial fleet however we are seeing a reluctant uptake. Commercial vessels have continued to be put through stringent MCA inspections causing some vessels to spend prolonged periods of time tied up, unable to fish. Some oyster vessels have taken the decision to deregister rather than comply with MCA requirements.

Harwich & Walton

Trawlers have maintained a reasonable effort on sole and to a lesser extent, skate. Walton pier and beaches are showing a steady effort within the angling community, with reports of smooth hounds, large shoals of whiting and a small amount of codling. An increase in fixed netting within Dovercourt Bay has been evident.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Clacton

Fishing effort has been relatively low over this period with the whelk vessels moving back to home ports. Commercial activity seems to be picking up over the last month with the introduction of 'Brightlingsea fresh catch' and other vessels landing a variety of fish including bass, skate, and sole. A possible reduction in charter vessel activity has been noted but we are still seeing regular trips from the Brightlingsea fleet.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 15

West Mersea & Tollesbury

Trawlers and netters have continued to fish for sole and skate with a strong effort focussed on bass over the summer months. Sizeable cod have started to be seen in the area and with the Blackwater and Thames estuary herring fishery open, some vessels are turning their efforts to this. Some oyster fishing vessels have deregistered due to challenging MCA requirements but dredging continues on private beds. There have been reports that Mersea fishers have seen a rise in demand from local restaurants/pubs following MMO RBS checks.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20

Maldon & Bradwell

Vessels working out of Bradwell have reported poor fishing over the last period, however, there has continued to be a steady effort. Most vessels still sell direct to the public through Facebook. Soles, bass, and skate are the staple catches by means of trawl and netting.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

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

The native oyster fishery remains closed which has meant the focus has been within private grounds for native and pacific oyster dredging. There has been a small increase in netting activity in the rivers, with some fixed gear beginning to be sighted. Dredging for clams continues in the Crouch and Roach at low levels.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Southend-On-Sea & Leigh-On-Sea

The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order was closed on 7th October 2022 with some vessels tied up for winter and some moved to dry docks for annual maintenance. With the outside permit fishery closed this year, some vessels have turned attention to trawling, whelking and netting. Fishing, as normal for this time of year will be slow over the winter.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 18

Holehaven & Thurrock

Fishing effort remains low but steady from the few boats in the area, mostly netting inside the Thames. Reports of mullet, soles, and the occasional bass. Charter angling vessels work frequently from Holehaven.

Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4

Alice Highton,

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Officer, Essex