



DRAFT Code of Conduct: Manila Clam Trial Fishery

Introduction

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (KEIFCA) has developed this Code of Conduct to outline the expectations and best practices for those taking part in the Manila Clam Trial Fishery (the 'Trial') over the next two years. The aim of the Code is to support sustainable harvesting of Manila clams, minimise any environmental impact of the trial, and ensure high-quality scientific data can be gathered to help inform future decisions.

This Code is intended to create a fair and respectful framework for all trialists that have been successful in their applications to participate. Continued involvement in the Trial is dependent on following these expectations. The Code will be reviewed annually by KEIFCA over the two-year period and updated as required.

The minimum conservation reference size for Manila clams (35mm shell width), and for other species that may be caught as bycatch, is a legal requirement and must be complied with at all times.

Any offences will be prosecuted, and the trialist will be asked to leave the trial.

Standards of Behaviour

To maintain a positive and cooperative working environment, KEIFCA expects the following standards of behaviour from trialists:

- A high standard of good behaviour and positive working relations between trialists, KEIFCA staff, officers, members, and other fishery stakeholders.
- KEIFCA may decide to ask a trialist to leave the Trial if illegal activity or poor/aggressive behaviour is recorded.

Attendance at meetings and engagement with the project

- Trialists are expected to attend at least two-thirds of all meetings.
- As with the last trial, there is an expectation that trialists would work closely and constructively with KEIFCA officers and provide information, data and views regarding the trial on request.
- If trialists fail repeatedly to answer requests or engage in the project, they will receive a letter from KEIFCA outlining these issues. If this behaviour persists then the trialist will be asked to leave the Trial.

Fishing Practices

To ensure the responsible and sustainable running of the Trial, KEIFCA expects the following fishing practises to be observed by trialists:

1. Trialists will only harvest clams within the times, areas, and for the number of trips specified by the Authority.
2. Any Manila clams on board or landed from a Trial vessel will be considered as taken as part of the Trial unless otherwise agreed with KEIFCA.
3. The maximum quantity of clams that can be retained per trip will be specified by KEIFCA and must not be exceeded.
4. Clams must only be stored and landed in containers approved by KEIFCA.
5. Only fishing gear that has been inspected by KEIFCA may be used. This includes dredges, riddles, and any other relevant fishing equipment, which must meet the specified design and size requirements.
6. A damage rate of less than 10% must be maintained during all fishing operations, however, KEIFCA will be operating under the assumption that vessels will be aiming for a damage rate of less than 8%. This will be assessed by taking a representative sample of retained and rejected catch to calculate the percentage of individual shellfish with signs of cracking, chipping, or other shell damage.
7. A functioning remote electronic monitoring (REM) system, as approved by KEIFCA, must be installed on board all vessels taking part in the trial.
8. Trialists are expected to work with KEIFCA officers to facilitate the collection of scientific data throughout the trial as required.
9. During the course of the Trial KEIFCA may update the Code of Conduct and provide specific details of trial requirements, which will be communicated in writing.

Code of Conduct conditions

KEIFCA expects all trialists to follow this Code of Conduct. If a trialist breaches the code of conduct on two separate occasions within the 2-year Trial the following procedures will be implemented:

1. First breach: The trialist will receive a letter explaining the specifics of the observed breach, along with guidance on how to avoid similar issues in the future.
2. Second breach: The trialist will receive a letter asking them to leave the Trial.
3. If a trialist is asked to leave, they have the right to appeal the decision by contacting the Chairman of the Authority.
4. If a trialist leaves, the Chairman will inform the Authority of their departure. The vacant trialist position may then be offered to the next applicant in the ranked list.
5. If a first breach is deemed a major breach of the management measures the trialist will be asked to leave the Trial. In this case, they have the right to appeal the decision by contacting the Chairman of the Authority.
6. Trialist positions will be reviewed by KEIFCA each year.

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