



Agenda Item No. B5

Success Criteria: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

By: Project and IFC Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority – 21 November 2014

Subject: **BLACKWATER /CROUCH MCZ MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND RIVER ROACH ORDER**

Classification Unrestricted

Summary: To report on progress in working towards the recovery of native oysters within the MCZ area and actions regarding the River Roach Oyster Fishery.

1. Native oyster management within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ area

The Stakeholder Working Group has continued with consideration of actions to achieve the restoration of native oyster populations.

In August the KEIFCA vessel Tamesis undertook a major survey of native oyster stocks within the MCZ area, excluding private fisheries. The survey also recorded data on other related species and seabed material.

Native oysters are primarily a sub-tidal species, sometimes also inhabiting the lower intertidal. This survey targeted the sub-tidal seabed and sometimes in restricted sheltered waters also covered areas of the lower intertidal.

The MCZ covers a total surface area of 305 km². Sub-tidal seabed (below LW chart datum) covers 168 km².

The survey covered a total area of 122 km² which is 73% of the MCZ sub-tidal seabed. The survey was funded by KEIFCA, Natural England and Crouch Harbour Authority. One tow of 100 metres in length was undertaken with a small mesh oyster dredge within each grid rectangle or sub-rectangle. A total of 199 tows were undertaken.

A full report of the survey findings will be produced by the end of the year. Initial assessment of data and calculations indicate the following:

Total Quantities Observed				
Species	Number	Weight kg.	Area km ²	Total Stock tonnes
Native Oysters – Crouch and Roach	221	14.5	8.68	14.7
Native Oysters - Remaining area	138	7.1	113.9	59.6
C. Gigas Oysters – whole area	348	74.2		
Slipper Limpet Live		524		524
Slipper Limpet Dead shell		410		410
Oyster shells dead (mainly old)		1257		1257

Stakeholder Workshop

On 12 November 2014 the 2nd Annual Full Stakeholder Native Oyster Workshop was held at West Mersea. Recommendations from the Working Group to the Workshop included

- Blackwater & Ray Sand Proposed restoration actions - laying cultch & preparation of ground (make application for grant funding)
- Consider actions for Crouch and Roach area?
- Provision of a website
- Consider options for legislative management

Actions since the last Annual workshop include:

- Three Working Group meetings have been held and a progress report/discussion paper was sent out to all attendees in February.
- A meeting was held in March 2014 to discuss proposals and option with fishing industry representatives.
- An application was made by KEIFCA for EFF grant funding to undertake an MCZ oyster survey – not successful.
- KEIFCA undertook an MCZ native oyster survey excluding private fishery grounds in August 2014.
- KEIFCA has collated data with regard to seabed and private oyster fisheries within the MCZ.
- A sample of oysters from the Blackwater was provided to Southampton University as part of a study looking at native oyster gender within south coast and east coast populations. The Blackwater sample showed 41.9% male and 51.6% female whereas one south coast sample showed 6.7% male and 86.7 female.
- In July 2014 three vessels undertook, on a voluntary basis, the cleaning of cultch via chain harrowing within a 1km² area to the south of West Mersea. This was undertaken so as to increase the

chances of a successful spat settlement. This area will be monitored next year to assess whether settlement has been successful.

- The working group is progressing with a grant application to fund the laying of cockle shell cultch within defined areas.
- KEIFCA is Collaborating with the University of Essex and Essex Wildlife Trust to submit funding proposals for two PhD projects.
- KEIFCA is working on draft legislative management options.
- A draft website have been constructed and can be implemented if agreed

As this workshop took place after the completion of this agenda paper a verbal report will be given regarding recommendations from the Workshop.

KEIFCA is asked to **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the recommendations from the Stakeholder Workshop.

2. River Roach Oyster Fishery Order

Leases were offered to all four previous lease holders for their acceptance and payment. These would be subject to the lease conditions and previously agreed Fishery Management Plan.

At present one lease has been agreed and issued and a second has been agreed and is due to be completed shortly. Other previous lease holders have indicated that they do not wish to take up new leases.

The August native oyster survey included the Several Order area and showed only small numbers of native oysters.