



Agenda Item B7

Success Criteria: 2,3,4 and 6

By: Lead Scientific and Conservation Officer

To: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority –  
4 September 2015

Subject: **COCKLE FISHERY**

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To report on Management of the Thames Estuary Cockle  
Fishery

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## **1. The Thames Estuary Cockle Fishery Order (TECFO)**

The hydraulic dredge cockle fishery was opened by the Authority on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Catch rates have been modest although it was reported by the industry and officers that the meat yield was initially very low. Due to this reduced meat yield and requests from the industry, the fishery was closed for two weeks from 19<sup>th</sup> June to 5<sup>th</sup> July to allow growth rates to increase before further harvesting. Following the closure, industry reported that meat yields had increased but were still below average.

Catches of the maximum of 13.6 m<sup>3</sup> or approximately 11 tonnes were made by most vessels each trip and weather conditions have been good. There are mixed reports from the industry regarding the presence of cockle spat (young cockles) on the grounds. The presence and extent of spat will be confirmed during the September surveys.

### **1.1 Total Allowable Catch for 2015 Fishery**

It was agreed at the last meeting that a provisional total allowable catch (TAC) of 7700 tonnes would be allocated and that any increases or changes would be subject to survey results and discussions with license holders showing that stocks were available in other areas and that growth was good.

The allocation of fishing trips and fishing weeks were changed following discussions with licence holders, the Chairman and the Vice Chairman after the first week of the fishery when low meat yields were reported. The total number of trips and the TAC

will stay the same, however as the fishery was closed for two weeks and reopened on 5<sup>th</sup> July, the season has been extended for two weeks until 23<sup>rd</sup> October to compensate for the two week closure (see below for details). Licence holders were sent a letter detailing the changes (Appendix 1).

#### Specified Landings per Specified Fishing Period

14th June – 19th June (1 week) 2 specified landings per period

21st June – 3rd July (2 weeks) NO SPECIFIED LANDINGS

5th July – 10th July (1 week) 2 specified landings per period

12th July – 23rd October (15 weeks) 3 specified landings per period

1.2 The Authority is asked to **APPROVE** the actions listed above.

## **2. Allocation of cockle licences**

The Authority has received a letter (Appendix 2) from Mr Ben Smith, a cockle fisherman from Essex, expressing his concern at the rejection of his applications for a licence to fish within the TECFO area. He has requested that his letter be provided to Members for discussion

2.1 The Authority is asked to note and consider the content of the letter