



## **Agenda item C2**

### **Essex Report**

#### **Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Quarterly report for the period ending 30 Sep 2015**

##### **General Summery**

Fishing success was highly variable through this period with many drift boats unsure as to which new regulations would be introduced for bass. Concerns over the effects of increased minimum landing sizes, catch restrictions and possible future mesh size increases were raised by fishermen across Essex.

##### **HARWICH & WALTON**

After a very good Spring for bass drift netting, numbers had dwindled by the end of July and landings were fair to poor throughout the remainder of the period. With little quota available for other species such as thornback rays, some vessels chose not to fish to save on fuel costs or to work inshore marks. There was little commercial activity upriver in the Stour with no registered vessels being observed working around Mistly or Manningtree during this period. Trawling for sole was again limited this year in this period with catches varying from fair to poor through July and August but some fair to good catches reported in September on occasion. Catches of crab and lobster were reported as being poor for this period.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 11*

##### **BRIGHTLINGSEA, WIVENHOE AND CLACTON**

With less than half of vessels working regularly from these ports, effort was reduced during this period. Vessels used mostly drift gear for bass, mullet, sole and thornback rays to take their permitted quota amounts. Some potting for crab and lobsters for local stalls was also seen. Catch rates of bass followed a similar pattern to those of the Harwich vessels in this period with catches reducing after the last period and far fewer larger bass as seen the previous year. A lack of quota for thornback ray was still questioned by local fishermen as record numbers of adults and juveniles caught and returned when targeting other species.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 10*

##### **WEST MERSEA**

Drift netting for bass by Mersea vessels died down as the period went on with some vessels reported poor catches from mid-August onwards. However, codling began to show by early September and fair catches were reported by some skippers by the end of the month. Trawlers from West Mersea targeting sole reported high variability in catches at the start of the period but some signs of improvement by the end of August along with slight increases in market price.

Vessels with quota for thornback rays were able to fill up reasonably quickly in July and late September although thornback rays were reported as having gone further offshore during August and early September. Closures for the taking of native oysters under the Shellfish beds byelaw remained in force throughout this period.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 20*

### **MALDON & BRADWELL**

Cultivation of pacific oysters remained at previously reported levels while some bass drift netting was done by vessels from Bradwell at the start of the period but dwindled to low activity levels again by August.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 3*

### **NORTH FAMBRIDGE, BARLING AND ROCHFORD**

Dredging for clams in the Crouch and Roach rivers has continued during this period and with oyster cultivation accounted for the majority of the commercial activity in these ports. Some Southend trawlers used Rochford as the preferred port for landing mixed catches from the northern part of the district but only worked from here intermittently during the summer, choosing to work along the south coast when catches dropped locally.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 6*

### **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA & LEIGH-ON-SEA**

Vessels from these ports reported very poor fishing within the Thames estuary, particularly for sole, which is the main target species during this period. Some codling were seen by the end of the period while landing of sprats were reported as being poor for another consecutive year.

The cockle fishery inside the Regulating Order continued throughout this period with nine vessels operating from Leigh-on-Sea. Meat yields were down from the previous year with cockles reported as not growing as usual due to prolonged cold weather. The autumn survey was conducted in September with a poor spat fall being recorded along with below average growth of the cockles left on the grounds. This resulted in the fishery being closed earlier than planned with trips being reduced from 50 to for the 2015 season

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 26*

### **HOLEHAVEN & THURROCK**

Low activity in this part of the river persisted during the period. The limited number of mostly part-time vessels targeted bass and sole.

*Number of vessels fishing from these ports: 4*

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